

Chairman Hood, members of the zoning board,

Thank you for allowing me to testify on this important project. My name is Sam Shipley and I am a resident of the Stronghold neighborhood across from the site.

So here we are - the 4th and final zoning hearing for this project. I think it's a good time to look at some of the main take-aways.

First, we have heard ad-infinitum from the city, the developer, the paid consultants and even some supporters - that the main reason to approve this zoning variance is that the process has "gone on too long."

What bothers me about that phrase, however, is that you would think that if a process has "gone on too long," all of the details would be finalized and there would be few outstanding questions.

But in fact, what we've learned over these past four nights is that there is almost nothing guaranteed and set in stone with this project. Major questions remain, important details have not been thought through, and there's still far too much obfuscation on the part of the developer.

We've learned that this project was sold to us by a slick PR firm out of Baltimore, MD that used a two-pronged strategy: (1) create a fake neighborhood organization to spin the truth from an actual neighborhood organization and (2) to focus everyone's attention on only 2 things - a grocery store and a park - and not on the hideous high-rise medical buildings or the waves and waves of vehicular car traffic.

Per the traffic, we now know that even though there is a Sustainable DC plan on the books, this development is being designed as car-oriented. And we know that North Capitol Street and Michigan Avenue have already received failing grades from DDOT. There is no plan in place by Metro to initiate the necessary new bus lines

and the E/W Streetcar line currently sits in phase III of the plan and doesn't even have the support of Ward 5 Councilman Kenyan McDuffie. The engineers say MD commuters will move east or drive through the site. But it takes only common sense to realize how absurd that claim is - there is no N/S major road east of North Cap and second, what commuter is going to leave North Cap to go through McMillan and down First Street with its dozens of stop signs and traffic signals? I'll answer for you - no one.

We also now know that - in classic 'Music Man' bait and switch fashion - we most likely will not be getting a grocery store. We also know that most of the retail on First Street will not actually happen. And the developers don't seem to mind this - for they'll build it and then leave town heading back to Bethesda and Baltimore. This area will wind up like the Convention Center where everything around it develops, except for the actual site.

Further, we were also led to believe that this development would bring over 3,000 new jobs for Ward 5 residents - yet when you, Chairman Hood, pressed the development team on that, we learned that it's all a fairy tale. This site will be built by workers from Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania.

We learned that there is a design for a park and community center, but DC has not allocated any funding for that yet. And to those that say it'll naturally happen, I say to them to look at what happened in NoMa - and how it didn't happen and how much the city now has to pay to put in a park. Further, we know these two places and the streets inside the development will be privately run and maintained and we have no guarantees that people not residing inside there will have access to any of them. Further, on private streets and parks we do not have the Constitutional right guaranteed to us elsewhere

We now know that the affordable housing component of these houses is not that at all and that workers who

build this development will not be able to afford to live here. While the neighbors here are fighting to try and add more affordable housing to the site, Mayor Gray has chastised various neighborhoods as "NIMBY's" for refusing to accept low-income residents and yet still supports this development team.

We now know what the medical high-rise building will look like and Twitter has started referring to it as "the new Hoover" building in reference to the about to be knocked down FBI building. It's a building with zero redeeming qualities and will serve as a giant middle finger to those living across from it since they dared to oppose this development.

Finally, we've learned that the development team is only negotiating the Community Benefits Agreement with the ANC 5E Commissioners and not the McMillan Advisory Group. The MAG was set up in 2007 and a term of concurrence, in the letter of commitment, is that the MAG would develop 'a detailed community amenities package.' The way the current process is playing out will exclude ANCs 1B and 5A. For example, there's a proposal to fund scholarships for students from only Ward 5.

This does not sound like the plan of a group that has worked on this for "far too long." It sounds like something hastily thrown together to maximize their dollars and leave the neighbors with the fallout mess. This is a site that is on the national register of historic places and will be destroyed with a mediocre, suburban development. It deserves better and I do not think it is too much to ask to take the necessary time to make sure this development is done right.

A first, necessary, step to ensuring that this project does not fall victim to these pitfalls is to vote against the proposed zoning request and reject the high-rise medical buildings. Thank you.

Sam Shipley

Stronghold, DC