

--TO: Zoning Commission

FROM: Residents of Neighboring Properties (See names and contact information below)

RE: Case Number 15-13 (Watkins Alley, LLC – Consolidated Review and Approval of a Planned Unit Development and PUD-Related Map Amendment)

We are residents of a condo on 13th Street, SE, that abuts the Watkins Alley PUD. We support the PUD but find it hard to think about it without considering the development of nearby properties. One such property is contiguous to Watkins Alley and occupied by Bowie, a trash collecting business; the Insight group is taking this PUD through the approval process now. Another is the Buchanan School property across E Street from the OPaL PUD; the Insight group has begun construction on this project. And a third is the property currently occupied by DDOT; developers have talked to DDOT about buying this property for the purpose of building residential units.

The projects will have significant interactive effects on each other and on the lives of the people in our neighborhood. The projects have different timetables and developers but are organically part of the same whole: e.g., the Bowie property and Watkins Alley are on opposite sides of the same alley. The two projects are part of the same whole because they are contiguous, because the residents of each will share vehicular and pedestrian routes, and because the Bowie project's 153 units (and 90 underground parking spaces) will bring almost four times the number of units into the middle of our block as the Watkins project will with its 44 units (and 48 parking spaces).

Given what a PUD is supposed to be, we believe it is important to assess the cumulative benefits and impacts of all the projects as well as the benefits and impacts of each project. This is consistent with DC's Comprehensive Plan. We support the Plan's process standards, such as the following one in paragraph IM-1.1 Development Review:

Development review also provides a means of evaluating the impacts of major projects on public services and the natural environment, and assessing the compatibility of proposed design with adjacent uses and neighborhood character.

And we support the one in IM-1.1.1 Mitigation of Development Impacts:

To the greatest extent feasible, use the development review process to ensure that impacts on neighborhood stability, traffic, parking and environmental quality are assessed and adequately mitigated.

We do not seek a delayed consideration of any proposal. We know time is money. However, we see three issues with that are it related to the development of all the properties: 1) the width of the northern portion of the north/south through alley; 2) access to the Watkins Alley underground garage; and 3) the pedestrian pass-through on E Street. Each issue is significant in its own right AND because it will increase vehicular and pedestrian traffic on the north/south through alley, our only alley with access to abutting streets. The following paragraphs address these issues.

1. Re the north half of the north/south through alley: The width of this portion of the alley allows for just one vehicle at a time and consequently dams the flow of vehicles and pedestrians and endangers. It will also slow construction. We believe this portion of the alley should be widened before construction begins.

We understand that Insight will widen this portion of the alley by five feet but have not seen anything written to confirm this.

2. Re access to the Watkins Alley garage: We thank Commissioners May and Turnbull for raising this matter in earlier Commission hearings. As Commissioner May noted, the PUD's access route to the opening is as far from a street as it can be. We worry that this location will increase and endanger vehicular and pedestrian traffic created by Watkins Alley and the Bowie/Insight projects in our north/south through alley. Traffic generated by the garages of the two projects—plus traffic cutting through the block to and from the Buchanan School development as well as traffic from a future development on the current DDOT site—will be heavy.

We understand that the Zoning Commission asked OPaL to look at other locations for garage access. We do not think there is another good location for garage access but do think that another access route will mitigate vehicular and pedestrian traffic issues on the north/south through alley. This would be via a curb cut on E Street where OPaL now has a pedestrian pass through. We have been told that DDOT does not support this idea but ask Zoning Commissioners to consider it, given safety concerns related to vehicular and pedestrian traffic on the north/south through alley.

3. As noted, OPaL's plan puts a pedestrian pass-through on E Street. We worry about resulting security and safety issues. This is because the plan

allows for open access to the pass-through; i.e., anyone can use it: residents, non-residents, everyone. Anyone who wants to walk through it can, day or night. Our alleys have been safe from crime. That is saying something. We worry that this will change if literally anyone can walk through or hang out in the alley at any time of the day and night.

It is very likely that open access will lead more people (residents and non-residents) to cut through the block on their way to the Metro station, Safeway, or wherever they are going. This will put more people into the north/south through alley, making a dangerous situation there worse. Even with a lot of lighting, cameras, and other bits of technology, we think there will be avoidable problems.

As far as we know, there is no MPD assessment of the effects of open access on crime or a DDOT or OP assessment of open access on pedestrian use of the north/south through alley.

Finally, we assume that we all have fiduciary responsibilities for DC. That is, we should all follow plans that enhance the value of our public and private properties. Our neighborhood and block are increasingly residential and it is very likely that DC will sell the DDOT property in our block to someone to build residential units. Making and implementing plans now to accommodate such development is important. And what you approve regarding the design and use of our alleys will be key. We will welcome our new neighbors once all projects are built. We just want all of us to have as few difficulties as possible.

Thank you for your consideration.

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