

Good evening chairman and members of the commission:

My name is Rob Fossi, and I oversee the Mid-Atlantic Region for The Community Builders. It's a pleasure to be with you today. I'm joined by my partner in this endeavor, Buwa Binitie with Dantes Partners, and in the next few minutes, we would like to provide you with a brief introduction to our organizations, some background on our collective efforts to redevelop Park Morton, the significance of Bruce Monroe toward achievement of that goal, and why we feel this is one of the most important projects in the District of Columbia today.

The Community Builders (aka TCB) is one of the nation's leading nonprofit, urban developers and place-makers. Our mission is to build and sustain strong communities where people of all incomes can achieve their full potential. We fulfill that mission by leveraging our talent and resources toward sustainable progress at a neighborhood scale for the benefit, first and foremost, of existing residents. As a stalwart non-profit organization; all proceeds that we earn are channeled into new ventures or to support all-too-often underfunded yet essential human capital efforts, such as our Community Life Initiative, which is a critical component of our Park Morton program.

At TCB, our story began like many community development corporations, with neighbors organizing to combat blight that was becoming more and more pervasive in the same South Boston neighborhood where we are headquartered today. While retaining our CDC DNA, we grew steadily into a citywide, then regional and, finally national footprint. In the last two decades alone, we have delivered approximately 25,000 homes and 500,000+

square feet of neighborhood-serving commercial/retail/community space across 14 states and the District of Columbia, never wavering from the belief that: 1) real change is something that happens with, not to, residents of communities like Park Morton and 2) given a level playing field, our fellow citizens can accomplish remarkable things.

Ten years ago, we established Mid-Atlantic Regional headquarters here in the District, which has become like a “second home” for TCB. Among the projects ongoing here are Matthews Memorial Terrace, and Fairlawn Marshall, mixed-finance ventures of just under 100 units each, serving low- and very-low income DC residents east of the Anacostia River, and, in partnership with the faith-based “Emory Beacon of Light,” *The Beacon Center*, located just a few miles north of Bruce Monroe along Georgia Avenue in Brightwood, which broke ground last month and will ultimately deliver 99 affordable apartments, including 8 permanently-supportive housing units, a redeveloped sanctuary for Emory Fellowship Church, substantial community amenities and neighborhood-serving retail space.

Of particular relevance to this hearing is our experience with the progressive “Build First” approach, made possible by the remarkable, forward-leaning commitment to expand availability of quality affordable housing evidenced in the public-private partnership under consideration today. The inclusion of this District-owned site, which has served generations of residents in important ways during good times and bad, prompted a magnificent urban scale site plan to emerge from energetic, representative, and often overflowing process to refresh the outdated master plan.

I want to underscore that the plan that emerged for Bruce Monroe site reflects shared priorities surfaced during this lengthy and robust community engagement effort, striking a masterful balance of enhancing and retaining significant and vastly improved park

space while also delivering quality mixed-income residential development. One obvious example of this is the site plan itself, the orientation of the senior and family buildings represents a significant change from our internal modeling and was precipitated by community steadfastness to ensuring new park space frontage and visibility along Georgia Avenue. This resident and community-led effort, together with the leadership and commitment from our public partner is something to be celebrated and has made Build First possible. What began with a mandate to replace inadequate, obsolete housing for the benefit of 147 families at Park Morton has grown to include the same such opportunity for hundreds of additional DC residents with incomes at or below 60% of area median income, and many others able to afford market rents.

The proposed program for “Phase 1” at Bruce Monroe includes a diverse range of housing options for District residents, including: a mixed-income family apartment building containing 189 apartment homes; a building designed for senior residents in which all 76-units will be affordable, and eight (8) mixed-income townhomes. Of these 273 total units, 90 are set-aside as replacement housing for Park Morton families, another 111 will be work-force housing for residents with incomes at or below 60% of median income, and 72 are slated for unrestricted market-rate renters. The unit mix reflects one of the four principal New Communities goals in creating truly income diverse and inclusive urban environments. The program also includes approximately 4,500 SF of commercial/retail type space that is intended to house a community-oriented service. It is important to note that at present, all Park Morton families are residing in 2 bedroom units – regardless of current household size. Using DCHA-provided summary data of current residents as a baseline, we have designed a unit mix to meet the appropriate housing needs and compositions of each family.

As I mentioned earlier, another critical component of this project are the enriched services that all residents will be able to utilize. In consultation with residents, TCB's Community Life Initiative designs and implements programs focused in areas such as youth development, early childhood education, workforce development, and asset building. These programs encourage and enable residents with opportunities to be successful and create positive outcomes for themselves and their families.

Finally, I want to emphasize that the redevelopment of Park Morton has been a long-time coming and it is the inclusion of Bruce Monroe that has enabled us to "get it right." As you have heard before, most importantly from Park Morton residents themselves, the proximity of Bruce Monroe to Park Morton allows us to not only avoid displacement of existing families, but do so within the same neighborhood that has long been home to so many. This is a landmark opportunity to join together and provide a clarion call that the District truly is a city for ALL people.

With that, I thank you for your time, and I will turn it over to my partner, Buwa Binitie, to provide some additional information about our team and the project.