

Testimony for Bruce Monroe Zoning  
Derek Brockbank  
553 Park Rd NW  
Washington, DC 20010

My name is Derek Brockbank, I've lived in the Columbia Heights area for over 12 years, and lived in Park View for over 8 years.

What I love about Washington DC, Ward 1 and my neighborhood in particular, is the incredible diversity. Racial diversity, religious diversity, economic diversity. Young enthusiastic recent grads move in next to grandmothers who live in the same house their grandmothers lived in. Artists and plumbers and entrepreneurs and hill staffers live side-by-side. We, as a city, have a progressive belief that places value on this diversity and we know that we are better as people when we share each other's experiences and put community ahead of personal gain.

But upholding this community is difficult. A lot has changed since I moved to Park View. 11<sup>th</sup> street only had Wonderland Ballroom. The Bruce Monroe site was an operating school. Georgia Ave had fewer occupied storefronts. And recently, side street rowhouses seem to pop up on a daily basis. I can only imagine the changes some of my neighbors have seen. In 8 years, I have been fortunate to see a lot of prosperity move into the neighborhood. But while most of this development has, in my opinion, improved the neighborhood, I know it has made the neighborhood less affordable.

Which is why I support this zoning for the Bruce Monroe site. And why I think it is so important to allow the Bruce Monroe site to be partially developed in conjunction with the Park Morton re-development. Our neighborhood and our city needs affordable housing. Park Morton has passed the point of being renovated, and the Park Morton apartments need to be torn down and re-developed. We need to allow long-time residents to stay in the community. And we need to do this soon. The city has left Park Morton residents in limbo for far too long. They have been told redevelopment was coming for the entire time I've lived in Park View and my understanding is much longer than that. Affordable housing is getting harder to find, and the longer the city waits to add affordable housing the more people get displaced.

This proposal keeps a permanent park along Georgia Ave, which I'm thrilled about, and as little as 5 years ago seemed very unlikely. And while it increases building heights on both Georgia Ave and Park Rd, it upholds the intent of DC's urban planning to increase density – with main avenues having taller buildings and side streets having shorter buildings. Approving this zoning together with the Park Morton zoning is supporting the use of the Bruce Monroe site for the hugely important public purposes of providing affordable housing, allowing longtime residents of Park Morton to have quality housing while staying in the neighborhood, and supporting an economically diverse community in Ward 1. All while maintaining a permanent park on Georgia Ave.

Finally I understand the frustration with the process that brought us to this proposal. I've been frustrated too. But my frustration is how long it's taken. I have spoken at dozens of meetings over the past 8 years, and attended and missed dozens more. We have all heard promises of timely improvements only to see more delays. There has been copious time for public input. Our city government needs to stop talking and start acting. I strongly urge you to move forward with Park Morton and Bruce Monroe development as soon as possible, and approve the zoning. Thank you.