

Testimony for the Public Hearing of CASE NO. 16-11

**Park View Community Partners & District of Columbia –
Consolidated PUD & Related Map Amendment @ Square 2890, Part of Lot 849**

**Before the Zoning Commission
Chairman Anthony Hood**

December 5, 2016

By Sarah Novick
Jews United for Justice

Good evening and thank you Chairman Hood and members of the Zoning Commission for the opportunity to testify tonight. My name is Sarah Novick and I am a community organizer with Jews United for Justice, a DC-based grassroots organization that organizes thousands of people in the local Jewish community to fight for social, racial, and economic justice. I am here tonight to advocate for your approval of the consolidated PUD. I urge you to make it possible for the Park Morton apartments to be redeveloped by ensuring that Bruce Monroe temporary park can be used as the Build First site.

Jewish tradition teaches that each person is made *b'tzelem Elohim*—made in the image of God. Every human being has value and worth and should be treated with loving-kindness, respect, and dignity. If we were truly to treat one another as though we were made in God's image, we in this city would not allow thousands of families and individuals to live in unsafe, undignified, unacceptable conditions as public housing residents. We at JUFJ believe that housing is a human right. Each person deserves a safe, stable, and secure home; a home that provides the foundation for each of us to live full and dignified lives.

JUFJ has been working in solidarity with Park Morton residents and Bread for the City for almost a year now. We fully support the Park Morton residents' demand for livable housing. The consolidated PUD is the best way to accomplish this. Over this past spring and summer, we canvassed the neighborhood and spoke to people who live on Kenyon, Harvard, Irving, Columbia, Hobart, and Sherman Streets. These people represent the project's neighbors; this project will be going on in their backyards. Of the people we spoke to, 43 supported the development plan, and 17 opposed it. Additionally, in the last three weeks over 100 District residents signed a petition in support of the development plan.

JUFJ also supports DC Housing Authority resolution 16-06, which states that Park Morton residents should not be subject to unjust requirements in order to move into their new homes. We ask that you have the developers include the this resolution in their zoning documents and commit to abide by it.

We all know that DC is growing fast. Many people in the District are thriving, and the housing market is booming. At the same time, there is an undeniable affordable housing crisis. Too many people with low and moderate incomes struggle to find and afford housing. The Park Morton project also illustrates the shameful condition that many public housing residents are forced to live in. If approved, this development will aid in the growth of DC's affordable housing stock, making it possible for individuals and families to remain in the District, rather than being displaced. It will also set a precedent for successfully redeveloping public housing in a way that respects the people who live there while also expanding housing options for everyone.

We acknowledge the less-than-ideal parts of this project. The loss of park space is not ideal. The taller buildings are not ideal. The partial privatization of public housing is not ideal. However, the residents of Park Morton have been neglected and subjected to subhuman living conditions for far too long. This solution is the best we're going to get and we need you to make sure it happens.

A primarily white organization with an active millennial base, JUFJ is acutely aware of our role in the gentrification of the District of Columbia. Our awareness of this system and our individual acts to try to counter its negative effects are not enough. We urge you to implement a systemic solution to this systemic problem. Park View, Pleasant Plains, and Georgia Avenue are thriving and will continue to do so, but this must not be at the expense of people who have long called these neighborhoods home. In this time of massive economic development across the District, the people who have `invested their lives here - including low-income families, people of color, seniors, and people with disabilities - must not be displaced. You, the Zoning Commission, can and should institute safeguards against displacement. Approving this PUD helps do that.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.