

Good Evening ~~Chairman Mendelson~~, Chairperson Cheh, and members of the Council:

My name is Erika Ruiz and I live at 463 Luray Place NW in the Park View neighborhood. I submit my written testimony today to express my support for rezoning of the Bruce Monroe site for the intended use of development of units for Park Morton residents, additional housing units and park space. I support the rezoning because I believe the Bruce Monroe site offers substantial developable land within the neighborhood boundaries to develop Park Morton replacement units add additional needed affordable housing to our community and a better park than the one we currently have.

I have lived in Park View for over six years, resided in the District for nearly 13 years and I'm a member of the Luray-Warder neighborhood association. I love living in Park View and think it is one of the most economically diverse and walkable neighborhoods in the District and I would love for it to continue to welcome families and individuals of diverse socio-economic and racial backgrounds. In my professional life, I have spent about 13 years working in the field of affordable housing and community development at the local and national level and have a passion for the advocacy of housing opportunities for people at all income levels, but most importantly our low income residents. In my personal life, I was raised in a project based Section 8 building in New York City until I graduated from graduate school and moved to the District. I consider my family securing permanent affordable housing to be the turning point in our stability and critical in allowing me to focus on my education. I've dedicated my entire professional career to helping preserve and create affordable housing opportunities for others as a result of how much it has had an impact on me personally.

I have known about the issues of Park Morton and potential redevelopment since moving into the District. Over the years there were stops and starts with redevelopment plans with little progress made and no improvement in living conditions and frankly, no real plan. Since moving to Park View I have witnessed the decay of the Park Morton development and the continued isolation of the residents. Our neighbors have lived in deplorable conditions for far too long. Our neighborhood has changed a lot in the last couple of years with the addition of new bars and restaurants in addition to being able to access retail in adjacent neighborhoods walking distance from us. This has all happened while the Park Morton development continues to deteriorate. A critical community within our boundaries has been left behind and further delaying development will continue to worsen blight in our neighborhood.

Our neighbors at Park Morton deserve an opportunity to thrive in this neighborhood and I see many benefits for the community at whole in developing on site in addition to the Bruce Monroe site.

First, through the New Communities Initiatives, this redevelopment is poised to be the first in the country to have no displacement of residents. Many of the residents of Park Morton have lived in Park View their entire lives, and they should have a chance to enjoy the safer Park View we have today. **Build First** minimizes family disruption so they can retain access to their employment, schools, transportation and healthcare.

Second, the proposed development deconcentrates poverty which has exacerbated the isolation of neighbors and stigmatizes the residents and families and individuals of similar affordability. Being low income doesn't mean you are a criminal but unfortunately, not everyone agrees. As a country, we have learned the consequences of concentrating poverty and this is an opportunity to undo that. The proposal would better integrate our neighbors and help foster community amongst all neighbors. We can undo the bad design that has helped breed crime in our community through the isolated alleyways and closed off streets.

Lastly, redevelopment on the current Park Morton site and development of housing and a park is a win for everyone in the community. Our neighbors get quality housing that suits their needs, we get additional housing at various income levels and we get more programmed park space. The current park on the Bruce Monroe Park is not the most welcoming space and through this redevelopment we can get a park that is enjoyable for all.

In closing, I want to thank the council for the opportunity to submit written testimony and show my support for the redevelopment and my solidarity with my Park Morton neighbors. I hope the council can support this project as well. Thank you.