

September 26, 2016

Ms. Sara Bardin  
Director  
DC Office of Zoning

Dear Ms. Bardin,

This is a copy of a letter which I have sent to the Business Journal in response to a letter and article that recently appeared in their pages. I would also like it to be entered in the record of the Office of Zoning.

As a resident of Woodley Park for the past 47 years, I take great exception to the views expressed by Mr. Ben Johnson who is not even a resident of Woodley Park and to the proposal for development by JBG.

Woodley Park is by far one of the smallest neighborhoods in the city. But its population is diverse in nationality, income and profession. Not many of us are among those “wealthy social” residents Mr. Johnson mentions. I, myself, am a senior living solely on a small fixed income. He is right that there are high rise buildings on Connecticut Avenue only and have been for a long time. However, the Marriott Hotel is not a high rise but a hotel, nor is it on Connecticut Avenue. The Wardman Tower is and has been on that site for nearly 100 years as well but has a landmark designation. However, the rest of the neighborhood are indeed relatively modest rowhouses with almost no yards and built originally for hotel staff, one of whom still lives, at 95, across the street from me.

The Woodley, built by JBG some 2 years ago is an enormous building built over the neighborhood’s objections and not yet fully occupied even today because the rents range from \$3000 for an efficiency to \$7,000 for a two bedroom apartment. Hardly affordable housing for even the super rich!

JBG’s attempt to develop this site into a concrete canyon with 5 huge new luxury buildings is an overt grab for money. They have tried this on before on the same site for several years. They were allowed to build The Woodley as a matter of right but they have exhausted their legal ability to build any more as a matter of right.

Any neighborhood, rich or poor, would object to nearly doubling its population with barely a .04% increase in parking (regardless of a Metro stop), much less one that is already a major city artery with not one but two access points to Rock Creek Parkway. There is another large hotel (The Omni) as well as a thriving business district, two schools and a Metro stop, all within a block of each other. And that’s not even counting the major impact that thousands of tourists have in using our subway stop and parking their cars on our streets to reach the Zoo. Traffic is at gridlock now. This proposal comes at a particularly bad time as Beach Drive is closing this week for 3 years and all

traffic is being routed through Woodley Park and the Cleveland Park library (3 blocks away) is being demolished in 2 wks and rebuilt over the next 2 years. It will be difficult to get out of my alley much less anywhere else for a very long time.

Any neighborhood that wants to preserve the grade school (Oyster School) it erected through a cooperative agreement with all parties should be applauded, much less one that is among the best in the city. It is one of the main reasons families want to live here. However, an influx of twice the number of people will place unreasonable demands on it. Even today, it lacks a playground and space and it has had to divide the school into two campuses, the original one in Woodley Park and one in Adams Morgan in just the last two years.

Any neighborhood with a Metro stop needs to examine the amount of land available to handle it. Woodley Park's stop is one of the only stations with exits on only one side of Connecticut Avenue because it lacked the land for more exits. If this plan were to succeed, the city would have to undertake a complete rebuild of the existing exits to accommodate twice the number of travelers. The effect on traffic to the Zoo could be devastating.

Finally, the open green space issue. While we may live very near Rock Creek Park, it is not accessible by foot for almost anyone, especially those with young children. I had a tourist ask me where the park was in Woodley Park and I had no answer for him. There is no park in Woodley Park but the hotel's front lawn has always been used by the schoolchildren, their nannies, the dog walkers and their parents in a very respectful manner as an informal park for the whole neighborhood. From the time it opened in the early 1920s, the hotel itself used to offer sleigh rides in the winter and still offers gym and pool memberships to the neighbors.

If JBG's plan succeeds, all of the open green space will be gone forever as well as the congenial relationship we have always enjoyed with the hotel. For the city to install a park in Woodley Park (where?) would cost millions.

The whole concept has been ill-conceived and poorly thought out with no prior consultation with the neighbors, the city, the schools or even a traffic study. For JBG to think any neighborhood, never mind one as small as this, would accept such an outlandish plan gives evidence to their goal of making money. Making money is not even close to making a neighborhood as well-integrated, friendly, and aware as this one.

NIMBY should be eliminated from the discussion as we are not against development. However, we are against the wholesale destruction of the character of the neighborhood that ignores every facet of its situation from parking to schools, from traffic to subway stops. I can think of no other project that would so effectively obliterate a neighborhood and destroy what makes it so attractive.

What we bring to the table is common sense. Only greed would envision a plan so out of touch with reality. In an area already so densely built, we can't support more which should be as plain as day.

Sincerely,

Judy White  
2718 Woodley Place NW