

D.C. Zoning Case No. 17-11

Hello Board of Zoning,

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on behalf of OSNF. I am Marla M. Dean, a resident of the 3200 block of O street. As you are aware this has been a very difficult moment in our community. Though we stand here today in support of the customized MU-4A, I find it important to give an historical account of how the need for a custom zone came to be.

When Jair Lynch first informed the community about the plan for PennBranch Shopping Center, they stated they wanted to do a MAP agreement as suppose to a PUD, as it allowed them greater "flexibility." We the adjacent community to the shopping center wondered if flexibility was a euphemism for "less accountability to the community."

As time went on, due to a deep desire of the community to have the shopping center renovated and much desired amenities brought into our neighborhood, both the PennBranch CCA and the ANC took the posture that we will just take whatever Jair Lynch gives us without any negotiation. In fact, the former president of PennBranch CCA kept making promises to meet with O street residents and never kept his promises and our single member commissioner for ANC7B would not allow O street residents to see the resolution he was seeking to have passed through the commission.

Eventually, it became clear to O street residents that we had to organize to protect our interest and to have some of our concerns potentially addressed. We came in mass to the zoning hearing and asked for a custom zone as a means for providing us with some negotiating power. At first, we heard nothing from Jahir Lynch for many weeks. Finally, a man named Anthony Startt appeared on the scene and started meeting with OSNFs. Though a series of meetings, we came to an agreement on the zoning issues and we crafted a Good Neighborhood Agreement.

OSNFs has compromised on many issues because we too want certain amenities in our community, but we refused to have irreparable harm done to our homes in the process. So today, I stand before you saying we have a Good Neighbor Agreement in theory as all of my neighbors have not had a chance to sign the agreement. But we still have concerns:

1. East of the River should not be the only place that supports affordable housing in Washington DC. Each ward should share in the goal of all being housed in the city, not just those who are privileged and of means. Therefore, we have expressed to Jair Lynch that we want for purchase housing or at the very least market rate housing. One of the main reasons the community wants this project so badly is to bring amenities like a grocery store and restaurants into our community. And one of the reasons we are constantly told we can't have such amenities is because of the average income in our community. Well, if indeed that is the barrier to better amenities, then more affordable housing will not serve to alleviate this issue. So, we continue to request of Jahir Lynch to build for purchase townhomes and condominiums so that the children who grew up in Ward 7 and went to college and are desirous of coming back can purchase homes not only in the city but in the community in which they were raised.
2. The name PennHill is an insult to some. I am not a native Washingtonian. But Washingtonians are quick to tell you how many generations their families have lived in DC. The name PennBranch is sacred to some and for those who have lived here for 50 plus years, it represents the struggle for desegregation in housing and the ending of redlining. This issue runs deep and still impacts civic associations today. The reason why PennBranch CCA is now both a civic and citizens association is an attempt to get

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over historic divides. The reason why many older citizens on O street went across Branch Avenue and convened with Dupont Park Civic Association instead of PennBranch, had a lot to do with perceived levels of privilege or not. While, this is not my issue, as I am not a native Washingtonian, and I only moved to PennBranch in 2010 but I represent OSNFs and I understand the historical context of having your name changed without your permission or even engagement. So, we urge Jahir Lynch to maintain the name of PennBranch Shopping Center. It represents a community's struggle to move through and pass issues of division and levels of privilege.

3. Finally, OSNFs concerns began with three major areas: (1) a large structure immediately abutting the backyards of my neighbors on the southern side of the 3200 block of O Street. We believe the setbacks, trees and employee parking lot will create enough distance between our homes and the building, so that we can continue to enjoy some level of privacy. (2) the impact of traffic on our street. We have already witnessed increased traffic with the aisle that was placed on Pennsylvania Avenue. We continue to await the results of the traffic study. We seek for O Street to be turned into a cul de sac at the corner of O Street and Carpenter, the egress to be closed at the laundromat so that cars do not use it as a passthrough from Pennsylvania to O Street to escape the immense traffic in the mornings and evenings during high commuter times, and a traffic light to be place on the intersection of O Street and Branch Ave. (3) due to the tributaries, streams or ravines that run through our community, we want to ensure that when Jhir Lynch begins to dig to create the foundation for the new structure and the underground parking lot that our homes are not destabilized. As a result, we look forward to the environmental study that will be conducted and the inspection of our homes before construction begins. And if our homes do in fact shift or otherwise impacted, we are comforted by the insurance that Jahir Lynch will carry to address any adverse impact of our homes.

Again, thank you to the zoning board for this opportunity to speak and thank you to Anthony Startt for working in good faith with OSNF. Many lessons have been learned from this experience. (1) Jhir Lynch could have initially asked for a PUD instead of circumventing true community engagement with requesting a MAP amendment. But we were able to successfully move pass this issue. Thank you, Anthony Startt. (2) Our single member ANC commissioner could have allowed O Street residents to see the resolution and provide input and feedback before it was taken to the ANC for a vote. But he has sense apologized and an admitted to us privately that it could have been handled better. So, some of us have been able to move pass this issue. (3) The former president of PennBranch CCA could have kept his promise to meet with O Street residents and listen to our concerns. He has never stepped up to admit how he could have handled this better. Instead, he has been on a consistent campaign to silence and isolate OSNF by calling us obstructionist and he has personally defamed me for advocating for my community. We have not been able to move pass this issue because he remains dishonest and manipulative.

Again, thank you and with this long, troubled path we stand in support of the MAP amendment 4A, a custom zone.