

To: Office of Zoning
Zoning Commission for the District of Columbia

From: Pennsylvania Branch Citizens Civic Association
Jimmie Williams, President

Notice of Public Hearing, Monday, October 2, 2017 @ 6:30pm
Jerry R. Kress Memorial Hearing Room
441 4th Street, NW, Suite 220, Washington, DC 20002

Re: Case No.17-11 (3200 Penn Ave PJV, LLC – Map Amendment @ Square 5539, Lots 835, 383,839, and 840)

The Penn Branch Citizens Civic Association (“PBCCA”) submits written testimony to support the petition submitted by 3200 Penn Ave PJV, LLC seeking a map amendment to rezone the Property from MU-3/R-1-B to MU-4 to make it consistent with the Low-Density Commercial land use designation of the Comprehensive Plan.

The general purpose of MU zones is, among other things, to provide for mixed-use developments that permit a broad range of uses at varying densities consisting of housing, shopping, and business needs, including residential, office, service, and employment centers. The MU-4 zone is intended to be located in low-to moderate density residential areas with access to main roadways or rapid transit stops, and permit mixed-use development providing facilities for shopping, office, and housing.

As a matter-of-right, the MU-4 zone permits a maximum building height of 50 feet; a maximum density of 2.5 FAR (3.0FAR with Inclusionary Zoning) of which no more than 1.5 FAR can be devoted to non-residential uses; and a maximum permitted lot occupancy of 60% for residential uses (75% with Inclusionary Zoning).

The Penn-Branch Citizens / Civic Association was formed over 40 years ago by members in the community. The need for an association stemmed from specific neighborhood concerns such as water and sewer problems; the lack of sidewalks and curbs on some blocks; no posted traffic signs; and issues arising from the many District and Federal Parks that surround or are located within Penn-Branch.

Many residents of have expressed a strong desire to see major improvements or rebuilding of the property historically known as Penn Branch Shopping Center, and most recently rebranded by the new owners as “Penn Hill.” Residents have long wanted a viable shopping center with a grocery store, retail shops, restaurants and other conveniences that are ‘walkable’ and available to nearby communities, as well as to the large number of commuters that pass through Pennsylvania Avenue daily.

The shopping center, which is more than 50 years old, has degraded from one of the first of its kind to be built in the DC area featuring prime stores and offices,

including a grocery store and hardware store, to an outdated strip mall of marginal use.

The current outdated shopping center is not in keeping with similar malls that are mixed use, and are both residential and retail in purpose to support the retail/grocery stores restaurants within each development. The current design is not feasible to attract the foot or vehicular traffic or layout needs for many quality merchants or modern-day grocery stores.

The community could benefit from a shopping center that includes a grocery store and retail that attracts both DC residents and many commuters who pass through our community and spend their money outside of the District of Columbia. A remodeled shopping center along with new construction would create jobs and give shoppers a venue to spend their dollars within the city.

Several members of Penn Branch Citizens Civic Association are also representatives that participate in the Pennsylvania Avenue East Economic Development Committee, which was originated by concerned Penn Branch residents who expressed a strong desire to drive improvements of the Penn Branch Shopping Center located at the 3200 block of Pennsylvania Avenue, Southwest. During the meeting that lead to the start of the Pennsylvania Avenue East Economic Development Committee, a now former Penn Branch resident said that he and his family had lived in Penn Branch well over 20 waiting on change that would allow them to eat, shop and do business nearby, and in our community. In frustration, he said they he and his family had grown tired of a waiting on change. Within a year of our meeting, the family moved out of Penn Branch, out of the city, and in to Maryland.

While we strongly support the zoning amendment, we also acknowledge the concerns expressed by some of our residents that want to ensure the project takes the following into consideration and;

- 1) respects the character of our community by taking into height and density of residents whose residences are close to the property;
- 2) takes into consideration of residential uses that are consistent with residents in Penn Branch, and preference to also attract market rate renters or purchasers;
- 3) provides adequate infrastructure, water drainage for the protection of residents who border the development; and, considers traffic and vehicular traffic to minimize disturbances
- 4) consideration of a neighborhood commercial overlay

However, we want to emphasize that many of our residents have strongly expressed the need for a significant and well-planned development that will benefit many of long-time, newer and future residents of our community. We believe this project is long over due, and has the potential to achieve that purpose.

We applaud the participation and interaction of Jair Lynch Real Estate Company, who have been actively involved and seeking input of PBCCA since the purchase of the property in August 2016.

As a community, we strongly believe such a project is long overdue, and we need the development that will benefit our community, and could bring a quality grocery store, offices, retail and restaurants and overall growth that enhances our community and is occurring in many other parts of the D.C. We support and want Penn Hill become a sustaining jewel East of the River/East End.

We are long overdue for development and a change, and the petition submitted by the owners of Penn Hill is a major catalyst for sustainable growth and development, and should be supported.

Respectfully Submitted By:

Jimmie L. Williams

President, Penn Branch Citizens Civic Association (PBCCA)

Contact Information:

PO Box 6730

Washington, DC 20020

202-335-0004