

## **Witness Statement in Opposition of 801 Maine Avenue Development**

### **Z. C. Case No. 22-06**

My name is Corinne Carroll. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you regarding my concerns about this proposed development at 801 Maine Ave, SW (aka 899 Maine Avenue).

My husband and I are homeowners at Capital Square Place. Our property is located on 9<sup>th</sup> Street within 200 feet of the development that is being proposed at 801 Maine Avenue. We chose our home as a place to live in our retirement. We were seeking a vibrant walkable community that had a strong sense of history, a diverse demographic, resources for us as we aged in place and opportunities for us to volunteer in service to our community. We might be new to the neighborhood, but we are not strangers to the District. We both lived here as kids and young working parents. Our only child was born here and resides here with his young family. Our granddaughter attends public school here as will her younger sister.

We were aware that the former office building located on the proposed site for 899 Maine was subject to redevelopment. We researched the existing zoning regulations that governed the future development and redevelopment in Southwest and we felt confident that these regulations would guide the growth and redevelopment in a sensible and constructive manner.

We supported the redevelopment of the Southwest Waterfront as a Regional Center now known as The Wharf. We are old enough to remember what the Waterfront was like in the past when other than the fish markets and Hogate's restaurant there was no reason to visit here. We understood that the PUD for the Wharf was approved as a one-time plan and was never intended to encompass the entire Southwest area or specifically alter the zoning regulations for the neighborhoods and the public school adjacent to the proposed building at 801 Maine Ave. The PUD for the Waterfront redevelopment project supported higher density development within the Wharf site south and west of Maine Avenue. It was not intended to encompass self-proclaimed "Wharf-facing" or "Wharf adjacent" projects. Under this special one-time plan for the Wharf, the density across Maine Avenue as you transition into the adjacent neighborhoods would maintain their current designation as having a reduced density to be more compatible with the existing structures and character of Southwest.

The towering structure that is being proposed by the applicant is inconsistent with both the Comprehensive Plan and the Small Area Plan for Southwest. The Future Land Use Map for the neighborhood also clearly identifies the residential portions of the area as being low or medium density. This designation was made by design to preserve the history, the integrity and the quality of life in the Southwest community while guiding any future growth and development. These Plans were thoughtfully and purposefully drafted through extensive community involvement, were based on shared goals and were approved by the DC Council.

The Small Area Plan specifically calls for keeping the Southwest neighborhood diverse and inclusive. It further states that Southwest's most defining characteristic is its people.

We join with our neighbors in Southwest including the more than 200 residents who signed the locally initiated change.org petition to raise our concerns about the proposed development and ask that the Zoning Commissioners support us in challenging this development in its current form. We are not opposed to new development or redevelopment in Southwest that maintains the character of the community and contributes to building a viable, inclusive and supportive community as outlined in the Comprehensive Plan and the Small Area Plan.

The proposed re-zoning of the 801 Maine Avenue site to accommodate an over-sized luxury apartment building is not warranted and it will significantly impact the surrounding area in terms of traffic flow and congestion, parking issues for residents and visitors, impede bicyclist and pedestrian safety and cause excessive shading of the public school and the homes located nearby. It also fails to address the real need for additional new housing for low to middle income individuals and families in Southwest. All these factors are detrimental to the quality of life of the current residents of the Southwest neighborhood. Adding additional high-rise buildings along Maine Avenue does not create an "Urban Gateway" to the Southwest neighborhood as the Applicant has suggested. Instead, this type of development will further divide the community and endanger the diverse and inclusive nature of the neighborhood.

The Applicant offers little to nothing in the form of Public Benefits. To qualify as a Public Benefit, the offering needs to outweigh any adverse impacts and contribute something to the existing neighborhood. Mitigation of problems caused by the development of this site are not to be misconstrued as a Public Benefit. The Applicant has proposed that they will re-work the dangerous intersection of 9<sup>th</sup> and G Streets where they hope to locate. They have declared this to be a Public Benefit, however the steps they propose are outside of their purview and are instead the responsibility of both DDOT and the Interstate Highway system. Reducing the number of travel lanes for cars on 9<sup>th</sup> Street to accommodate their proposed building entrance and wider sidewalk, a necessary PUDO zone for their residents and retail customers and adding bike lanes in an already dangerous and heavily congested roadway will not address the traffic issues currently faced by anyone traveling on 9<sup>th</sup> Street to the Wharf or the nearby residential neighborhoods. Of particular concern is the increased danger this presents to the students and families at Jefferson Middle School Academy.

The Applicant has hinted that the proposed building will house a bank and a grocery store. Banks haven't enjoyed much success in the nearby Navy Yard neighborhood. While a grocery store might be welcome, it is important to note that the Applicant has only committed 6,000 square feet for a store. Currently the average Trader Joe's is 8,500 to 15,000 square feet. The new Whole Foods in Glover Park which features the "Just Walk Out" technology measures 21,500 square feet. Deliveries made to this proposed store will be next to impossible due to the fragmented nature of the collector or local serving streets in this area.

Trucks exiting the narrow alley behind the proposed building would have to make a sharp right turn onto G Street, a one-way street with much needed parking on both sides. A store in this part of Southwest would require adequate parking for customers traveling from other parts of Southwest. The Applicant has recently garnered support from many “grocery store fans” who live outside of Southwest and would be travelling from their homes in Northwest and Northeast to shop at this new grocery store. A grocery store here may also conflict with current no local competition agreements between the District and an existing grocery store chain in Southwest.

Finally, our community-wide focus on maintaining the integrity and character of Southwest cannot be dismissed as some loud NIMBY effort to block the evolution and growth in the area. In addition to the legitimate issues that have been raised by numerous community residents we are also extremely concerned about the precedent that will be set if any variances from the existing Zoning regulations are allowed. Every empty lot or redevelopment opportunity for aging housing units, outdated public facilities or under-used publicly owned land will likely seek this same type of variance to existing regulations. Random zoning variances will create a high-rise canyon along the few major streets of Southwest and exclude all but the most affluent residents.

We respectfully ask that you oppose this proposed project.