

February 26, 2017
Case Number: 19452

To the Members of the Board of Zoning Adjustment:

I would like to share with you the contents of an email I sent on January 26, 2017, on behalf of the Brookland Neighborhood Civic Association, notifying the Mayor and her staff of significant concerns I have regarding the proposed structure at 1700 Rhode Island Avenue. I believe these concerns may be pertinent to your consideration of the application.

Mayor Bowser and staff of the EOM,

I write to raise to your attention concerns of the Brookland community regarding the short-term family housing project at 1700 Rhode Island Avenue. First, thank you to your staff for their commitment and ongoing involvement in this project, most recently, attending the ANC5B meeting last night in Brookland.

At this meeting, the City presented its current design thinking for the short-term family housing facility planned for 1700 Rhode Island Avenue. The City identified 8 or 9 variances they would need to seek from the BZA in order for the project to move forward. This is due to the large size of the planned building in relation to the relatively small property on which it is to be built. As your staff and other representatives of the City heard at this meeting, while many members of the community support in principle a facility at a suitable location in Ward 5, we have also developed grave concerns regarding the appropriateness of the size of this building at this site. At six stories tall, and 70' in height, it would be at least a floor higher than any comparable building along Rhode Island Avenue east of the railway. Its footprint will be squeezed between two existing structures in an unattractive configuration (notwithstanding the absolutely heroic efforts of the City's architects, for whom I have the utmost respect).

As president of the Brookland Neighborhood Civic Association, and as someone who early on expressed support for the efforts of the City on this matter, I have become increasingly concerned as design plans have progressed, showing increasingly that a building, at least at the size so far presented, would be difficult to conform into the current space and surrounding neighborhood character. In similar circumstances with a private development, at least there would be a process for a community benefits agreement. But so far, representatives of DGS and DHS have not shown a willingness to discuss even that.

I would be happy to continue this conversation with you or your staff. I have great admiration for the work done so far by the City and its contractors to make a meaningful difference in alleviating homelessness in DC. I personally believe Ward 5 can and should do its part. I simply write to express my concerns regarding the current configuration of this building. I hope your administration will take steps to address the community's concerns.

Thank you for your attention to our concerns. Sincerely

/s/ Daniel Schramm

Daniel Schramm
President, Brookland Neighborhood Civic Association