



Dear Councilmember Parker,

We write on behalf of the Brookland Neighborhood Civic Association (BNCA) to highlight our budget and oversight priorities, which include WMATA funding, traffic safety, violence reduction and public safety, and environmental justice.

The BNCA is an all-volunteer, non-profit association whose mission is to advocate for and improve the quality of life of the Brookland neighborhood. With roughly 200 members representing Brookland residents, local businesses, and property owners, we strive, in coordination with our local ANCs, to represent the community's views on issues of common concern.

We recognize the District is experiencing a difficult moment, confronting the immediate challenge of stubbornly high crime affecting the city's residents, visitors, and businesses, while facing the risk of significant fiscal impacts from falling office occupancy and commercial real estate values downtown. Alongside these pressing challenges, we ask for your continued support to provide vigorous oversight of city agencies to meet their obligations to residents and serve as agents of progress – not roadblocks – to make Brookland, Ward 5, and the city a safer, healthier, and happier place to live.

### **WMATA Funding**

WMATA's rail and bus service provide a crucial link connecting Brookland residents to work, school, and businesses and bringing visitors to our neighborhood. We are encouraged by the Council and Mayor's commitment of \$200 million to address WMATA's budget shortfall. We ask for your support in ensuring this commitment is met and to working with your Council colleagues and Mayor Bowser to provide WMATA the funding needed to maintain transit services for the Brookland community.

### **Traffic Safety**

Despite Vision Zero, the city is moving in the wrong direction on traffic safety; last year was the deadliest on DC's roads since 2007. We appreciate you and your staff's attention to and collaboration on traffic safety issues. Sadly, city agencies do not share your team's – or the community's – sense of urgency. Enforcement is non-existent and DDOT continues to drag its feet on common sense actions to build safer streets. We encourage you to use your oversight role to ensure DDOT follows through on its commitments in a timely manner and ensure that bureaucratic issues - such as coordination between DDOT and MPD - do not impede needed safety improvements. Particular areas of concern for BNCA members include:

### *Limiting Truck Traffic Through Positive Signage and Enforcement*

DDOT should adopt the long-delayed positive signage approach and should direct truck traffic onto major arterials, with only limited exceptions. DDOT should combine this approach with monitoring and enforcement on specific streets, such as Franklin or Taylor, where truck violations are common.

We would also encourage the Council to explore additional options for enforcing existing truck routes and to hold companies, rather than individual drivers, accountable when their employees repeatedly violate truck restrictions. The current system relies on MPD to ticket drivers; but MPD rarely, if ever, dedicates officers to enforcement. Further, punishing individual drivers shifts accountability away from the companies, such as Republic Trash Services, Waste Management, and Lucky Dog, whose employees regularly violate truck restrictions. The Council should consider opportunities to leverage Department of Buildings (DOB) and Department of Licensing and Consumer Protection (DLCP) authorities to hold companies accountable.

### *Prioritizing All Road Users, Not Just Cars*

We will not get the safe streets Brookland, Ward 5, and the city deserve until DDOT's culture shifts from designing roads to maximize drivers' convenience to designing streets to maximize safe use for all users. Despite Vision Zero, DDOT still measures success based on car throughput and places the burden on citizens to prove that a particular road or block is unsafe. Safety and equal access must be built into DDOT's culture so that every road design, improvement, or repaving project considers opportunities to make roads safer and improve pedestrian and cyclist access.

You can help drive this culture change by interrogating DDOT's road design and performance standards and building safety and access requirements into DDOT's budget and priorities.

More needs to be done to provide safe routes for cyclists to reach the Metropolitan Branch Trail and create safe routes to schools and businesses. We encourage DDOT to expand the proposed Taylor Street protected bike lane east to at least 12<sup>th</sup> Street NE and ensure this work is prioritized for completion in 2024.

### **Violence Reduction and Public Safety**

We appreciate the attention you have given to public safety, both in your work within the Council to pass public safety legislation and your consistent effort to engage and communicate with the community. Brookland residents remain concerned about crime in the neighborhood, particularly armed robberies, property crime and continued issues at known hotspots such as 14<sup>th</sup> and Rhode Island and Brookland Manor. We encourage you to continue working with the Mayor and Chief Smith to provide the needed police and violence prevention resources and to improve communication and transparency on crime and public safety issues.

## **Environmental Justice**

We applaud your focus on environmental justice, exemplified by your introduction of the Environmental Justice Amendment Act of 2023. While limiting new air pollution permits for overburdened neighborhoods will stop existing pollution challenges from getting even worse, the city must take active steps to reverse the decades of environmental injustice which saw Ward 5 disproportionately burdened with polluting industrial sites and major roadways.

Small changes can have big impacts over time and city agencies should use their authorities to contribute to solutions. DDOE should share more information with residents on neighborhood and Ward-level environmental impacts and resources to help residents mitigate impacts. DDOT should and DPW should enforce truck restrictions for private haulers and *their own employees* to keep heavy, polluting vehicles out of our neighborhoods.

We also encourage your office to partner with BNCA and ANCs to secure commitment from developers to use green materials and install green roofs on any future buildings at major developments mooted for the neighborhood, such as at the Brookland metro site.

The BNCA appreciates partnership and the tireless efforts you and your staff make on behalf of Brookland and Ward 5 residents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Farole', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Steve Farole

Vice President, Brookland Neighborhood Civic Association