



May 23, 2024

Dear Councilmember Parker,

I am writing on behalf of the Brookland Neighborhood Civic Association (BNCA) in response to your request for feedback on the future development at the WMATA Brookland/CUA Metro Station.

Though many Brookland residents have raised concerns about over-development in the neighborhood and its effects on Brooklanders' quality of life, a significant number believe that development around high-opportunity transit such as the Brookland/CUA Station can address the city's housing needs and benefit the neighborhood, provided the developer, WMATA, and the city are committed to meaningful community engagement in the design and delivery of transformative developments. It is in this spirit of community engagement that we offer the following feedback.

***Question 1: Would BNCA prefer development at the Brookland/CUA Station to proceed through a Planned Unit Development (PUD) or through a Map Amendment?***

In considering a PUD or a Map Amendment approach, the principal consideration is which approach best assures a meaningful consultation role for the community and delivers clear public benefits. This same issue was at the fore of the 2007-2009 community-based deliberations over the Office of Planning's Brookland/CUA Metro Station Small Area Plan (SAP).<sup>1</sup> Mindful of the need to balance community benefits and impacts, the Brookland SAP identifies maximum height increases for every Sub-Area addressed by the Plan, including the Metro Station Sub-Area, and specifies that they should be approved through a PUD process.

Notwithstanding the SAP, most BNCA members are inclined to support a Map Amendment approach citing factors such as the increased affordable housing associated with a Map Amendment. While a Map Amendment does not require community consultation or public benefits, your plan to pursue a legislative tax abatement as a means of securing community benefits provides a reasonable alternative. The BNCA appreciates your willingness to engage with us throughout that legislative process. Our expectation, too, is that WMATA will engage with us throughout the process and will begin discussions with you and us on community benefits prior to initiating a Map Amendment request to the Zoning Commission and/or issuing a development solicitation. We suggest that an example of WMATA's good faith to you and to us

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<sup>1</sup> The DC Council approved the Brookland/CUA SAP in 2009, after a multi-year community engagement process. It was then incorporated into the District's Comprehensive Plan and approved by the DC Council in 2021 as part of the Comprehensive Plan Amendment Act of 2021 (DC Law 24-20).

would be to hold any Map Amendment request to the Zoning Commission until after the legislative tax abatement has been enacted.

***Question 2: What community benefits would BNCA members like to see in connection with development at the Brookland/CUA Station?***

At a meeting on March 19, 2024, BNCA members identified amenities believed to benefit community interest. Following this meeting, BNCA distributed an electronic poll asking members to rank their preferences. Based on this member feedback, BNCA suggests the following priorities:

- **Improved Bike/Pedestrian Infrastructure:** Improved bike and pedestrian infrastructure providing safe connections east-west and north-south through the Metro station. Specifically, this should include a dedicated, north-south bike trail connecting Bunker Hill Road NE with Monroe Street NE, preferably behind the current eastern Metro subway entrance and an east-west bike lane along Newton Street NE connecting to the new bike trail. Pedestrian measures should include sidewalks and raised crosswalks along Newton Street and 9<sup>th</sup> Streets, NE a lighted walkway under Michigan Avenue NE, and a raised crosswalk at the pedestrian crossing where Bunker Hill Road NE intersects the walking pathway that passes under Michigan Avenue NE.
  - BNCA continues to believe that the WMATA Staff proposal to turn the end of Newton Street NE into a two-way bus transitway with four new bus bays would have safety ramifications for cyclists and pedestrians as well as other detrimental effects on the Brooks Mansion and the Brookland Green. With your support, we look forward to working with WMATA to consider alternative bus bay options and identify bike and pedestrian infrastructure improvements through the Station.
- **Affordable Housing:** Irrespective of whether WMATA pursues a PUD or a Map Amendment, the new residential buildings should require a 20% affordable housing set aside, consistent with the Inclusionary Zoning Plus requirements for developers pursuing a Map Amendment. Of these units, a sizeable portion of them should be family-sized (i.e., 3+ bedrooms) units and should be reserved for households earning less than IZ's mandatory 60% MFI maximum.
- **Brookland Green:** As documented in the city's Future Land Use Map, any development must maintain the existing size and character of the Brookland Green preserved in its current form as a publicly accessible green space with no additional infrastructure or dedicated use areas. WMATA should continue to provide maintenance for the Brookland Green as it does today.
- **Design, Materials, and Height & Views:** The development should incorporate superior urban design, architecture, quality building materials and fenestration, and landscaping consistent with the architectural fabric of the Monroe Street Market area west of the Station. Consistent with the Brookland/CUA Small Area Plan, building facades should step back in height to preserve views to the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. Streetscape and landscape design should be attractive and inviting and should

include native trees, shrubs, and plants. The development should avoid unsightly overhead utility lines that can interfere with street tree growth by under-grounding utility lines during new development.

- **Community Meeting Space:** As part of development, include a meeting space available to community groups (e.g., ANCs, BNCA, Michigan Park Citizens) for meetings.
- **Green Space Buffer:** Preserve the green space and trees west of the current bus loop (between the bus loop and the tracks) as green space to be maintained by WMATA or its developer.

Thank you for your continued commitment to partnering with the community on this development and similar issues impacting the Brookland community. We look forward to continuing to work with you and your team.

Sincerely,

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