

In a different universe, there is no Brookland. No old Victorian homes lovingly restored because they have been knocked to dust. No green space where children play outside because they have been concreted over. There are no block parties or beautiful azaleas in the springtime; no neighbors sharing a meal; no farmers markets; no businesses on 12th Street. There is no Annie's Ace; our historic churches are gone; there no schools, no Civic Association, no, no, no because, in a different universe, a highway has destroyed this place. In such a universe, whatever remains is whatever remains, overshadowed by concrete and never-ending cars and the exhaust they produce. It was what was supposed to happen here, in the 1950s and 60s when the North Central Freeway was slated to run right through our neighborhood because there was no “substantial relocation of persons, loss of taxable property and disruption of neighborhoods that would result from construction of the Northeast, North Central and Northwest Freeways proposed in the 1959 plan” according to a study released by the Kennedy Administration in 1961.

No substantial relocation of persons.

There were thousands of people in Brookland, however, that held a different opinion. Because there were thousands of people who stood to be displaced if the highway project moved forward. These were people who were not only residents of our neighborhood, but took seriously the responsibility for being advocates and stewards of this place we all call home today. Today, there is no highway running through Brookland because of their leadership and stewardship. This is why we, the 200-footers, come before the Civic Association this evening—as today's responsible stewards for this corner of Washington, DC where we have settled. We are parents,

civil servants, friends, homeowners, who live here and love our neighborhood. I personally bought my home because I could hear the swish of the leaves in the fall breeze, and I loved that this area had a homey feeling I could not find anywhere else in DC, and that, at the time, the elders were so welcoming to me. Like all of the 200 footers, this is my chosen home, and like many of us, this house is my first home purchase.

When this development was first slated in 2011, it was the neighborhood elders who fought the fight for reasonable development all the way to the DC Court of Appeals. And won. Many of them are gone now—and I am proud of their stewardship. Now that it is our turn, what a tragedy it would be for one generation to fight off a highway, another generation to win the right for reasonable development, only to have the next generation, our generation, give away the store.

The 200 footers have picked up that mantle. We have had meetings among us, considered discussion about what is coming and what is at stake. These are the top of our concerns, and for the record, we are happy to submit our complete list. But these are the things that we have concerns about and wish to see with the project. We submit these with the caveat that several past meetings on 901 Monroe have either been abbreviated because the meeting agenda is stacked with too many other items, or we have sought answers that are not forthcoming, or shifting, from the Menkiti Group and the Horning Group. In order to be responsible stewards, we are entitled to information, to include access to the drawings and plans prior to, and outside of these meetings, as well as a meaningful opportunity to be heard on this project that will permanently impact our use and enjoyment of our properties and life in the neighborhood:

Construction: As I mentioned, many of us are first time homebuyers and some of us are longtime homeowners. We are all concerned about potential damage to our homes from the construction and the accompanying equipment. These are small streets, and to date, the only ingress and egress point that has been discussed is an alleyway on Lawrence Street. How will the developers ensure that our properties, which are directly adjacent, will not be damaged, and what is the plan for if damage occurs?

Construction parking is also serious concern. Not only the construction vehicles, but where will the workers be parking their vehicles? And many of us either work from home or have small children at home, or both. Noise is a serious concern for those of us who chose this neighborhood because it provided a sense of peace not available in many places in Washington, DC. How is it possible for the development group to provide a certain quiet enjoyment of our neighborhood when this construction will be ongoing for years? And what is their plan for occasions when our quiet enjoyment is interrupted?

The building: There are a number of issues with the building. First, the neighbors are concerned about the height. We have been repeatedly told that the development team “has the right” to build up to 90 feet, but per their letter dated September 6, 2024:

“The property consists of approximately 60,000 square feet of land area and is currently vacant. The property is currently in the MU-3A and R-2 Zone Districts and the Applicant proposes to pursue a related Zoning Map amendment to the MU-5B Zone district for the Property. The Property is located in a Medium Density Residential/Moderate Density Commercial Area as designated on the Comprehensive Plan’s future Land Use Map (“FLUM”).”

Several things about this:

- First, the correspondence does not support a current entitlement to build to 90 feet, as the maximum height for MU-3A buildings is 40 feet. While the maximum height for R-2 Zone Districts is 90 feet, it is our understanding that R-2 zone districts are intended for areas with semi-detached dwellings; and to protect these areas from invasion by denser types of residential development.
- The R-2 zone is intended to provide for areas predominantly developed with semi-detached houses on moderately sized lots that also contain some detached dwellings, which that does not appear to be this project.
- Even if the Zoning Map Amendment is approved for an MU-5b Zone District, it is our understanding that the height allowance for MU-5b is 75 feet, not 90 as has been relayed to the 200 footers. This is troublesome because, when we are seeking information, what we are getting does not seem aligned with the reality on the ground.
 - Further, MU-5 Zoning Districts are intended to:
 - Permit medium-density, compact mixed-use development with an emphasis on residential use;
 - Provide facilities **for shopping and business needs**, housing, and mixed-uses for large segments of the District of Columbia outside of the central core; and

- Be located on arterial streets, in uptown and regional centers, and at rapid transit stops.
- But per the development team, there will be no commercial portion to this project, which calls into question the need for an MU-5B Zoning District.

Parking and traffic: We have similarly not received information about the development team's plans to stave off residential parking issues and traffic in the area once the building is built and occupied (by, for example, offering tenants a transit subsidy or any other solutions to the lack of parking spaces inside the facility). Lawrence, 9th and 10th are small streets, and the addition of 58 cars, not to mention residents who do not have parking privileges in the building, and their guests, will create an unmanageable and dangerous traffic flow in the neighborhood. And since the alleyway facing Lawrence Street is the only slated ingress and egress point, traffic in our neighborhood will skyrocket, causing an exponential increase in hazard to neighborhood residents who walk and bike, as well as to the several children that live in the neighborhood. The alley is too small for types of traffic the development team is proposing (to include not only construction traffic, but cars, garbage trucks, deliveries, which will all go in and out of an alley that, even if widened, would still be way too narrow to support the volume and size of vehicles proposed to use it). There is an existing curb cut on Monroe Street that could be used to for all traffic entering and leaving the building (not unlike the parking that exists between Luke C. Moore High School and St. Anthony's, which is only a block away and has an entrance off Monroe Street).

We are happy to provide a complete list as compiled by our organization, but our top-line concerns are related to both the construction and ultimate development that will be on the property. To recap, concerns about damage to our homes, parking, noise, building height, use of the alley from Lawrence Street as the single ingress/egress point, and lack of any attempt to provide the community with greenspace or any provide anything to improve the quality of life in the neighborhood we love is unfortunate.

This comes down to acting as responsible stewards for our generation and the ones who will come after us. What we are seeking is a right-sized solution for the neighborhood. Again, we will provide a full list for inclusion into the record, but some of our proposed solutions include:

Publicly available greenspace

Restaurants and retail in the building

Public maker space in the building

Perhaps it is up to the development group to go back to the drawing board again, or simply to provide answers to the questions that we have raised over the course of the past few months. Communication between the development group and the community should be based in trust, and to date, the lack of, or conflicting information, makes it difficult to build that trust. I shudder to think of what could have happened to Brookland if the people before us were not mindful of their responsibilities to the future. We as a community cannot responsibly agree to a development for which we have not had a reasonable chance to review the information that impacts us, so for that reason, we trust that the Brookland Civic Association will understand our inability to support the project as it has been presented to us to date.