



ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION 3E

TENLEYTOWN AMERICAN UNIVERSITY PARK FRIENDSHIP HEIGHTS
WAKEFIELD CHEVY CHASE FORT GAINES
c/o Lisner-Louise-Dickson-Hurt Home 5425 Western Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20015
www.anc3e.org

ANC 3E Testimony regarding BZA case 20638

Good afternoon members of the Board of Zoning Adjustment.

My name is Tom Quinn and I am an Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner representing single member district 3E04 which runs along the east side of Wisconsin Avenue from Tenleytown to Western Avenue.

I am here today to testify on behalf of ANC 3E in support of the proposal from Donohoe Development to replace the Fox 5 building at 5151 Wisconsin Avenue with a new mixed use building with approximately 210 units.

ANC 3E has previously submitted to the record in this case a copy of our resolution as well as an MOU¹ signed by both ANC 3E and Donohoe Development and I will also be submitting this testimony to the record.

Our ANC first became aware of a potential project to by Donohoe to redevelop about three-quarters of the block bound by Wisconsin Avenue, 42nd Street, Harrison and Garrison Streets NW in the spring of 2018 with a mixed use project with approximately 280 units and ground level retail on Wisconsin Avenue.

Subsequently in the summer of 2020 until the summer of 2021 we hosted Valor Development at a number of public ANC meetings where they presented plans to redevelop the foot print of just the Fox 5 building and a strip of additional land behind the building into approximately 177 units and again ground floor retail on Wisconsin Avenue until we were advised that the developer was no longer pursuing the deal.

Then in the fall of 2021 Donohoe Development again engaged with ANC 3E about a new proposal to redevelop only the Fox building along with a strip of land behind it into a mixed use building with approximately 214 units.

Donohoe, along with their design team from Torti Gallas, appeared at ANC 3E meetings on December 9, 2021², January 13, 2022³ and February 9, 2022.

¹ https://anc3e.org/wp-content/uploads/MOU_Harrison_Owner_LLC_ANC3E_5151_Wisconsin_FINAL_changes-accepted-signed.pdf

At these meetings ANC 3E heard questions and concerns about the proposal from both the community and the ANC including:

- The nature of zoning relief sought and the measuring point for the buildings height as well as the utilized density
- The number of parking spaces in total and the number allocated to retail uses
- Plans for the remainder of the lot
- The mix of units and number of inclusionary zoning units
- School overcrowding
- Plans for the television tower, retaining wall and surface parking on the remainder of the lot

Simultaneous to ANC 3E engaging with two developers with 3 design proposals for this lot the ANC over several meetings in 2019 and 2020 hosted several discussions about the DC Office of Planning's (DCOP) re-write of the Comprehensive Plan and the Future Land Use Map (FLUM). At ANC 3E's February 13, 2020 meeting ANC 3E unanimously supported changes in the FLUM for lot 2430 (the Fox lot) to be changed from low density to medium density along the Wisconsin Avenue frontage and to moderate density along the 42nd Street frontage which abuts single family homes. DCOP only proposed re-zoning the lot to moderate density which is the proposal that was eventually adopted into law by the DC Council in the fall of 2021.

At its properly noticed meeting on February 9, 2022 ANC 3E voted unanimously to support the proposal that is before the BZA today.

I provide all of this background to make it clear that while ANC 3E supports this project we nonetheless believe that this proposal in net is a lesser proposal than the developer can and should be building utilizing the changes to the FLUM we supported which Donohoe could utilize by pursuing a Planned Unit Development for this site.

Among the benefits of a larger project at this critical site 2 blocks from the Friendship Heights Metro:

- Additional market rate and inclusionary zoning units
- Additional tax revenue for the District, customers for local businesses and transit users
- The opportunity for the removal of the television tower, surface parking lot and wall surrounding the entire property
- One planning process for the development of the entire lot and one construction project rather than two

² <https://anc3e.org/wp-content/uploads/ANC3E-Dec-9-2021-Meeting-Minutes-Final.pdf>

³ <https://anc3e.org/wp-content/uploads/ANC3E-Jan-13-2022-Meeting-Minutes-Final.pdf>

Having said that ANC 3E strongly believes this project is a significant net improvement and supports the special exception Donohoe is pursuing to re-stripe 35 feet of their lot from R-2 to MU-4.

Among the benefits of this redevelopment:

- Replacing an aged building with poor connectivity to the street with a new building that must adhere to DC storm water retention and green area ratio requirements; ANC 3E believes this project will be a measurable net environmental improvement over the current building
- Creating approximately 210 housing units in an affluent neighborhood with housing prices that are increasingly out of reach for many Washingtonians
- Adding housing 2 blocks from the Friendship Heights Metrorail station and bus station which is served by 34 separate bus routes

ANC 3E further believes that as a result of our negotiations with Donohoe we have secured additional benefits, among them:

- A commitment to construct this building to LEED Gold standard and seek such certification. Among this buildings green features is both a green roof and a rooftop solar system.
- A retail agreement that prohibits certain types of retail the ANC considers suboptimal for this location
- A commitment for 11 percent of the gross floor area to be IZ units which ANC 3E believes is greater than the 10% required by law
- A commitment for 5 fully accessible units among the IZ units, an unprecedented agreement for ANC 3E negotiations, which ensures turn-key ready housing for our neighbors living with disabilities/mobility limitations.
- A construction management plan that exceeds the DCRA requirements
- A commitment to remove the surface parking lot behind the project if plans have not been finalized for the re-development of the remainder of the lot when Donohoe seeks their Certificate of Occupancy for this project

ANC 3E respectfully requests that the BZA incorporates all of the conditions of our MOU⁴ into any written orders you issue associated with this case.

While our ANC believes this is not an optimal plan or use of this lot we do believe this is a good project and for that reason we support this proposal and urge the BZA to do the same.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

⁴ https://anc3e.org/wp-content/uploads/MOU_Harrison_Owner_LLC_ANC3E_5151_Wisconsin_FINAL_changes-accepted-signed.pdf