



District of Columbia Government
Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6A
PO Box 15020
Washington, DC 20003



October 11, 2024

Pamela Smith
Chief of Police
Metropolitan Police Department
441 4th Street, NW, 7th Floor
Washington, DC 20001
Via email

Re: ANC6A Request for drug free zone 800 block of 8th Street NE

Dear Chief Smith:

At a regularly scheduled and properly noticed meetingⁱ on October 10, 2024 our Commission voted 4-1-0 (with 4 Commissioners required for a quorum) to request that you establish a continuous police presence on the 800 block of 8th Street NE and immediately declare a drug free zone for a 30-day period.

We want to acknowledge the efforts made to address the continuing drug sales along 8th Street NE, including adjacent to the Bank of America building. The work of the men and women of the First and Fifth Districts and other MPD units, under the leadership of Commander Hall, Commander Rooney, and Assistant Chief Makal, is welcome and appreciated. Recent efforts resulted in the removal of illegal weapons and dangerous substances from our streets and for that we are grateful. Unfortunately, there has been a spate of recent shootings resulting in increased fear and a decreased sense of safety.

As you are aware, the Secure DC Omnibus Emergency Amendment Act of 2024 provides you with the power to declare an area a “drug free zone.” [D.C. Code § 48-1002(a)] Within such a zone, it “unlawful for a person to congregate in a group of 2 or more persons for the purpose of committing a[] [drug-related] offense . . . within the boundaries of a drug free zone, and to fail to disperse after being instructed to disperse by a uniformed officer of the Police Department who reasonably believes the person is congregating for the purpose of committing a[] [drug-related] offense.” [Id. § 48-1003(a)]

In deciding whether an area should be declared a drug free zone, you must consider whether in the preceding six months, there has been “the occurrence of a disproportionately high number of”:

- drug-related arrests,
- reports of dangerous crimes or crimes of violence,
- homicides,

- “[o]bjective evidence or verifiable information that shows that illegal drugs are being sold and distributed on public space on public property,” or
- “[a]ny other verifiable evidence information” should that that “the health or safety of residents who live in the proposed drug free zone are endangered by the purchase, sale, or use of illegal drugs or other illegal activity.”

Every single one of these tests is amply met. Within the preceding week, there have been two homicides. Multiple individuals have been arrested for drug and weapon offenses. And residents have provided first-hand accounts indicating that drugs are being openly trafficked. The evidence is overwhelming and undeniable. The situation on 8th from G St NE to I St NE is precisely what this statute was written to combat: brazen and lawless drug trafficking that poses an immediate risk to the health and safety of residents, including children.

Importantly, the declaration of a drug free zone is not limited to a single five-day period, as is often reported. The statute states that “[t]he Chief of Police may declare any public area a drug free zone for a period not to exceed 120 consecutive hours.” [Id. § 48-1002(a)]. But you can declare an area to be a drug free zone multiple times during a 30-day period, arguably up to a maximum of 15 consecutive days. [See id. § 48-1002(d)].

Again, we want to acknowledge the work done to date. However, a new, strong approach is entirely appropriate here, where the circumstances indicate a grave and continuing risk to the community, one which has been in place for months, if not years, despite MPD’s ongoing efforts. Now is the time for decisive action to protect public safety and reassure residents.

Should you have any questions, please contact me at 6A04@anc.dc.gov. In addition to me, Commissioner Mike Velasquez (SMD 6A02) is authorized to represent the ANC in this matter.

On Behalf of the Commission,



Amber Gove
Chair, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6A

Copies to:

Ms. Lindsey Appiah, Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice
LaShay Makal, Assistant Chief, Patrol Services South, Metropolitan Police Department
Colin Hall, First District Commander, Metropolitan Police Department
Shawn Rooney, Fifth District Commander, Metropolitan Police Department
Honorable Charles Allen, Ward 6 Councilmember
Honorable Brook Pinto, Chair of the Committee on Public Safety and the Judiciary

ⁱ ANC 6A meetings are advertised electronically on, anc-6a@googlegroups.com, and newhilleast@groups.io, at www.anc6a.org, on Twitter (@ANC6A) and through print advertisements in the Hill Rag.