

**REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ZONING
COMMITTEE OF ANC 6A
November 23, 2007**

Present: Commissioners: Nick Alberti, David Holmes, Gladys Mack
Resident Members: Drew Ronneberg, Annie Swingen, Jeff Fletcher, Linda Whitted,
Barbara Halleck, Rich Luna

Drew Ronneberg chaired the meeting.

Community Comments

None

Status Reports

Vacant Properties. The Commissioners of ANC 6A and 6C were asked to verify vacant properties in their SMD.

Historic District Expansion/Creation. Annie Swingen reported that she met with CHRS and the Rosedale Citizen's Alliance about a historic survey of buildings between 15th and 19th St., Benning Road and Barney Circle.

1383-1835 H St NE. Drew Ronneberg reported that the case was continued at the BZA hearing because the owner did not have the necessary documentation to support his request for the variances and special exceptions.

Condo Conversion and Warranties. Barbara Halleck reported that the committee should 1) better understand the other legal requirements for condo conversions 2) learn where enforcement of these regulations is insufficient and 3) check with other ANCs on their experiences.

Old Business

None

901 H St. NE

Mr. Chip Glasgow of the law firm Holland & Knight and Mr. John Torti and Ms. Sarah Alexander of the architecture firm Torti Gallas presented conceptual plans for the redevelopment of the H Street Connection site with an 8 story building. Torti Gallas was the architects of City Vista at 5th and K NW, The Ellington on U Street, and the Steuart building at 3rd and H NE. Mr. Rappaport, the owner of the H Street Connection, was also on hand to answer questions from the community.

The site currently has a 1-story structure set behind a parking lot that fronts H Street. The lot is the only C-2-B zoned lot in ANC 6A's portion of H Street NE. As a matter-of-right, structures in C-2-B zones can be 65 feet high with a floor-area-ratio (FAR) of 3.5. If the development goes through the planned unit development (PUD) process, which exchanges community amenities for additional height and density, the structure is permitted a maximum of 90 feet and a FAR of 6.0.

Torti Gallas presented 3 conceptual plans for the site. All the plans called for an 8-story building with an FAR of approximately 5.5. The building would house 50,000 sq. ft. of ground floor retail and 7 floors of residential (350 units). Three levels of underground parking were proposed with approximately 500 spaces (3 spaces per 1000 sq. ft. of commercial and 1 space per residential unit). The entrances to the parking garage would be located off 8th and 10th St. and the building's loading docks would be located at the rear of the building. Mr. Glasgow claimed that the building would meet the inclusionary zoning requirement for 8% of the units set aside for affordable housing. The building would also be LEED certified.

The first conceptual design was the most horizontally oriented with the stepdowns to 6 stories on the edges. Bay windows were prominent features in this design. The second design lacked the stepdowns at the edges but had regular projections like the Ellington on U Street. The third alternative did not have a unified design, but rather appear more like two separate buildings with the eastern half having a design similar to the Ellington on U Street and the western half having a curved glass façade.

The discussion centered around two issues: massing and design. Mr. Glasgow said that the developer was using the Capitol Hill Towers building behind the H Street Connection site as the reference point for the proposed height. Neighbors on 8th and 10th St. were concerned that the building would be too tall for the area and asked that the massing be concentrated toward the interior of the building. Several residents expressed that the building would be more appropriate for the area if it were less than 6 stories. Dr. Ronneberg said that the H Street Strategic Development Plan called for a 3-4 story building on the site. Mr. Glasgow said the Plan was inconsistent with the associated Design Guidelines because the site was a Type I development which called for buildings that were 4-8 stories tall. Ms. Marta Wagner said that there is no inconsistency between the Plan and the Guidelines if the building was 4 stories tall. Mr. Rich Luna expressed concern that a large development would increase the land speculation in the Eastern End of H Street and encourage business owners to keep their 2-3 story buildings vacant in hopes of their land would be purchased by a land consolidator. Mr. Anwar Salem said that it was important to attract more residents to H Street and that a large development would help the economic development of the area. Mr. Derrick Woody of the Office of Planning said that the Plan's call for a 3-4 story building was based on market assumptions that were no longer true and that increased density should be encouraged.

For design issues, several neighbors expressed concerns about the modern features of the 3rd design. Commissioner Mack described this design as looking like a "boat". Many residents and committee members mentioned that they wanted a design that fit into the architectural context of H Street. Mr. Torti was asked if he understood the architecture of the surrounding area. Dr. Ronneberg said that in the previous 2 large cases on H Street (600H and 200H), there was a general consensus that 1) designs should fit into the architectural context of H Street 2) designs should emphasize vertical elements and 3) the community encouraged designs that made it look like the site possessed multiple buildings.

Recommendation: The committee unanimously recommends that the ANC appoint Drew Ronneberg, Annie Swingen, Rich Luna and Barbara Halleck to represent the ANC in negotiations over the redevelopment of the H Street Connection site. The negotiators should seek to 1) reduce the mass of the building to what is called for in the H Street Strategic Development Plan, 2) concentrate the massing toward the center and rear of the building, 3) ensure that the proposed architecture fits into the context of the existing buildings on H Street, 4) encourage verticality in the design, and 5) encourage the architects to visually break up the structure so that it appears to be multiple buildings.

BZA 17712: 615 16th St. NE

Mr. Mohammed Sikder presented plans to construct a 2-story townhouse at 615 16th St. NE on what is currently an empty lot. Variances are required because the minimum lot size is 1800 sq. ft. while the actual lot is only 1360 sq. ft. and the minimum lot width is 18 feet, while the actual lot width is 17 feet. Mr. Sikder said that most of the lots on the street do not meet the minimum requirement for building as a matter of right and that his lot was not unique.

The lot currently attracts trash and other questionable activities. The adjacent buildings have windows that face the vacant lot and these windows would need to be covered if the building was constructed. The committee asked Mr. Sikder if he had letters of support from the adjacent neighbors. Mr. Sikder replied that he had not been in contact with them. The committee told Mr. Sikder that it was difficult for the ANC to offer its support without hearing from the neighboring owners. Commissioner Mack was concerned that constructing a new building might harm the adjacent buildings or make them violate fire codes. Mr. Sikder replied that there would be no basement constructed at the site so the structural integrity of the adjacent buildings would not be undermined. He also said that he would be willing to provide information that the construction of his building would not cause the adjacent building to violate appropriate codes.

Recommendation: The committee unanimously recommends that the ANC conditionally support the lot area and lot width variance for 615 16th St. if the developer obtains letters of support from the owners of the adjacent buildings and shows that the construction of the structure does not violate code requirements for the neighboring structures with respect to neighbors' windows on the side walls.

Lack of ANC 6A notice in HPRB cases

During the October ED&Z meeting, the committee recommended that the ANC oppose the HPRB case at 1137 C St. NE. However, the case was heard before the ANC could act. The ANC has requested an IG investigation of HPO for failure to provide proper notice in accordance with the ANC Act of cases that affect our ANC.

Several committee members thought that the ANC should be able to oppose cases like 1137 C St. NE but the lack of notice required that the ANC invest this standing authority in an individual. Discussion ensued on how this authority could be granted and who should receive it.

Recommendation: The committee unanimously recommends that the ANC authorizes Annie Swingen, on behalf of the ANC, to seek postponement of HPRB cases when there has been insufficient notice provided to make a recommendation; and, if the case is not postponed, to oppose the HPO application.

Survey of Historic Buildings on H Street

In July, the ANC passed a resolution supporting the survey of properties anywhere in ANC 6A for potential inclusion in a historic district. Some of this survey will be paid for by the Dreyfus PUD which will survey properties in ANC 6A from 8th to 15th south of the H Street. ANC 6A also recently supported CHRS in its bid to survey properties in the Rosedale neighborhood.

The commercial buildings on H Street are not included in the current survey effort. CHRS has stated that they would like to see community support for a survey before one is conducted. Ms. Swingen said that the cost estimate to survey all the commercial buildings on H Street within 6A would cost \$8000 if

performed by Traceries.

Ms. Swingen said that the survey would generate important information that would augment the current effort to develop a Heritage Trail on H Street. Dr. Ronneberg stated that the survey would take time but that it was important to document the buildings for the context statement about the area's history. He also said that he had talked to Joe Englert, who favored a Historic District on H Street.

The committee decided to recommend that the ANC pay for ½ of the cost of the survey.

Recommendation: The committee unanimously recommends that the ANC grant \$4000 to co-sponsor a historic survey of the buildings on H Street that are within the boundaries of ANC 6A and the H Street Overlay.

**Next Scheduled ED&Z Committee Meeting:
Tuesday, January 20, 2007
7-9 PM
640 10th Street, NE
2nd Floor - Sherwood Recreation Center**