



July 10, 2014

Committee of the Whole
Council of the District of Columbia
John A. Wilson Building, Suite 410
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20004

Re: June 26 Joint Hearing on B20-805

Dear Council Members:

The Meridian Hill Neighborhood Association (“MHNA”) submits the following statement regarding the proposed redevelopment of the Franklin Reeves Center site at the intersection of 14th Street NW and U Street NW. MHNA is a nonprofit neighborhood association dedicated to improving our community and open to residents who reside between 12th and 16th Streets NW, and between U and Chapin Streets, NW. The site of the proposed development is located within our boundaries.

Due to the central location of the Reeves Center property in our community, its important role in the redevelopment of the U Street area, its value, and the continuing need for smart development planning in this vibrant area of the District, MHNA firmly believes that a meaningful discussion, which includes a genuine role for public input, is not merely warranted but is necessary.

Without such input, an historic opportunity to build on the project’s success could well be squandered. Areas for input include: appropriate design, preserving public space, ensuring a mix of uses that promotes economic vibrancy, and maintaining racial and economic diversity.

MHNA notes that the Council issued a solicitation, *DCAB-2014-Q3-14FP, District of Columbia Soccer Stadium Cost Benefit Analysis Services*, for a “detailed cost benefit analysis of the real estate transactions proposed in the District of Columbia Soccer Stadium Development Act of 2014.” However, that solicitation does not request analysis of uses other than housing, and seeks no assessment of the economic and social benefits other uses may bring. This failure even to assess other viable options limits the Council’s understanding of the site’s potential and impact on the neighborhood.

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To that end, and to encourage the broader consideration of uses for the property, the MHNA submits the following conditions for MHNA support of the redevelopment of the Reeves Center property:

- (1) Any redevelopment should include space reserved for commercial uses.
- (2) Current tenants of the Reeves Center, such as the DC Center for the LGBT Community and the United States Postal Service, should be permitted to lease the commercial space in the proposed development under terms similar to their existing leases.
- (3) To the extent the commercial space is leased or sold to new businesses, it should not be leased or sold solely to food and dining establishments. Rather, at least half of the commercial space should be leased or sold to businesses or non-profit organizations that attract visitors, including office employees and/or customers, to the neighborhood during daytime hours.
- (4) To the extent that any redevelopment includes residential units, 30 percent of the units should be reserved for low to middle income residents.
- (5) The proposed development should preserve sufficient public space to allow public uses including the 14&U Farmer's Market to continue, without any diminution in the space available to vendors.
- (6) The proposed development should preserve space for other public uses such as art, for example, a public art installation visible from the street.

Although these principles reflect significant input from MHNA members and other neighborhood residents, given the limited opportunity provided for community input so far, they may be updated following further discussions or as new information comes to light.

MHNA does not oppose the construction of a soccer stadium at Buzzard Point, and does not in principle oppose redevelopment of the Reeves Center. However, because this intersection represents a significant neighborhood hub, much like the intersections of Wisconsin Avenue and M Street in Georgetown, or Wisconsin and Western Avenues in Friendship Heights, any redevelopment here deserves special attention, and a role for community input.

MHNA looks forward to providing further input into this important project in our neighborhood.

Sincerely,

Chris Young, President
On Behalf of MHNA