

Testimony on 2nd Stage PUD of Waterfront Station II, 1000 4th Street SW, Square 0542, Lot 0822DC
Zoning Commission Case 02-38J, January 31, 2019 6:30 PM

Fredrica D. Kramer, Near SE/SW Community Benefits Coordinating Council

Good evening, Commissioners. I am Fredrica Kramer, Vice Chair of the Near SE/SW Community Benefits Coordinating Council (CBCC), which helps obtain community benefits in the context of redevelopment for the communities represented by ANC 6D. CBCC is also the only local organization with an explicit mission of maintaining social diversity as our neighborhood redevelops. We are in general support of the application but have specific concerns.

We continue to be concerned that locally-owned, community-serving retail and services, which are critical to create the mixing ground for social diversity, remain scarce. Their absence also means that the SW Small Area Plan prescription that 4th Street become a true town center remains unfulfilled.

Of particular concern, promises made in initial agreements have a tendency to morph as redevelopment projects are realized over protracted time frames, potentially compromising the basis on which Zoning Commission and community endorsements rested. In this case, the original application for this Waterfront Station site was approved with the promise of a black box theater and a diner-style restaurant. At the January 23 ANC 6D meeting, representatives of PN Hoffman discussed their failure to date to find a replacement for the now bankrupt theater company that would have occupied the theater space, and it has not yet found a lessee for the diner. Should they not locate tenants for these two spaces, they said they could fill them with some kind of retail.

A neighborhood-serving restaurant is a critical component for maintaining social infrastructure, providing a meeting place for neighbors to cross paths and congregate for meals or coffee and conversation. Our only place for meeting neighbors now for a casual cup of coffee is the limited Starbucks located in an unappealing corner of our local Safeway. We continue to have no truly neighborhood full-day-service restaurant (breakfast, lunch, dinner and beyond) at prices affordable to a wide range of residents.

With regard to the pending approval, the developers should be held to the original commitment to a theater space and locally-oriented restaurant. If rent levels are an impediment for supporting small businesses that would serve all residents of Southwest, arrangements for rent/lease adjustments to support neighborhood-serving enterprises should be a condition of approval. Some new spaces at the Yards rented at below \$40/sq.

ft., and commercial condominiums have been used in other places to stabilize rents over time. If a theater company cannot be located, we suggest they work with the DC arts community to develop other options, or consider an indie movie theater, which Southwest once had. Any entity devoted to the arts will be a win/win for the community and the developer.

If in the end one of these spaces must be used for another enterprise, a thorough explanation of why the commitment cannot be fulfilled should be provided as the basis for a full review of new options. Approval should reflect needs that the community has expressed multiple times. For example, when the original redevelopment of Fourth Street began two decades ago, the community was promised that Safeway, CVS and Bank of America would return. Safeway and CVS returned, but the nearest banks are about a mile away. Other suggestions for smaller spaces (<1200 sq. ft.) have included a hair salon, pet store, bakery/coffee shop, small post office (the current Half Street facility will be lost in the not-too-distant future), stationery store and shoemaker, all of which residents typically travel to Capitol Hill or Virginia for, and are increasingly needed as our population grows and increasing numbers work at home.

We also learned at the January 23rd meeting that PN Hoffman has not yet finalized a lease with Apple Tree Charter pre-school. The Amidon-Bowen PTA raised deep concerns that the Charter would compromise their ability to attract families to the Amidon-Bowen pre-K. Our experience watching Amidon enrollment over many decades is that families who have other options either ignore the local public school entirely or dis-enroll their children by grade 2 or 3. In addition to the benefit for young children, engaging *families* early in order to forge relationships that can last is a way to ensure a stable parent body at Amidon-Bowen that will strengthen the school over the long haul. We don't want Amidon-Bowen to lose that advantage.

Finally, we compliment PN Hoffman on the promise of 32% below market rate housing units, which will be sustained for the life of the building. Given the loss of affordable housing in Southwest, every effort should be made in new development to accommodate low, moderate and middle income families who will otherwise not be able to stay in Southwest, and to support a healthy demographic range. We therefore wish that there were more units larger than 2 bedrooms, and hope that decisions now and in the future will trade some studios for larger units.

We thank you for your careful consideration of the issues we raise and potential conditions for approval.