

**CAPITOL HILL RESTORATION SOCIETY**

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June 14, 2012

Anthony J. Hood, Chairman  
Zoning Commission for the District of Columbia  
Suite 210  
441 4<sup>th</sup> Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001

RE: PUD Application ZC 11-24

Dear Chairman Hood,

This letter is the final report of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society (CHRS) regarding the Stanton-Eastbanc (SEB) planned unit development (PUD) application (ZC 11-24). SEB proposes to demolish the closed Hine School, to replace it with two mixed-use buildings and to re-open the previously closed C Street, SE. In the main, CHRS supports the application but still has concerns about some elements of the plans that will be discussed below.

This project has taken five years to reach this PUD hearing. To understand the CHRS decision one must go back to late 2007 when CHRS started to consider how the site should be developed. In February 2008 the CHRS Board laid out its vision of what should be included in a successful development proposal. The Board resolution spelled out 11 criteria:

1. Comply with the recently enacted comprehensive plan,
2. Be the best example of smart growth and sustainable development,
3. Reflect the importance of the location,
4. Be compatible with the surrounding zoning and existing building scale,
5. Restore the original L'Enfant Plan by reopening C Street between 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>,
6. Provide for commercial uses on 7<sup>th</sup> Street compatible with the existing commercial uses,
7. Set aside Pennsylvania Avenue for mixed use with retail on the first floor and office above,
8. Design the 8<sup>th</sup> Street frontage as residential and include a substantial percentage of workforce housing
9. Consider live/work studios on C Street,<sup>1</sup>
10. Accommodate one to two underground levels of parking over 100% of the site, so there is parking for the residential, commercial and weekend parking for the Eastern Market,
11. Provide for green space as well as outdoors areas for craft vendors, food vendors and the flea market.

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<sup>1</sup> In lieu of the criteria, SEB has proposed having 34 affordable housing units in the North building with half being for the elderly. SEB is also providing 10 inclusionary zoning units in the South building. CHRS supports putting 34 units in the North building, especially the ones for the elderly.

Moving forward to June 2009, the CHRS Board reviewed the development proposals and, after receiving a recommendation from a special review committee of the Board, voted to support the development proposal of SEB. The Board believed that the SEB proposal most closely fit the criteria set forth above. CHRS also preferred the SEB proposal because it offered a large number affordable housing units, an excellent mix of uses, and a superior LEED certification.

The 11 criteria are as compelling today as they were in 2008. CHRS continues to support SEB because the PUD matches up fairly well with the criteria, though there is rather less green space than we had hoped for<sup>2</sup> and the scale of the south building on its west side is somewhat out of scale in relation to existing historic buildings in the vicinity. Overall, CHRS is comfortable with the design of most of the buildings but still has reservations about some of the design:

1. The connecting structure on Pennsylvania Avenue SE is completely incompatible with the historic character of Capitol Hill and, in particular, of Pennsylvania Avenue, NE. It is stylistically incongruent with the buildings it connects, its proportions are wrong in relation to abutting project components, and is highly out of place in the historic district. CHRS strongly insists that this structure be redesigned.
2. The 7<sup>th</sup> and Pennsylvania Avenue building's design is inappropriate and incompatible with the historic district. This is not the right design for such a prominent and highly visible location on a primary corner in the heart of the historic district. It is too severe and too sharply rectilinear, with too many visually busy and competing architectural elements. Because of its siting, this structure is the project's signature building, and as such, it should tell a better story about where it is and how it relates to its neighbors. It has little more than red brick and slate trim in common with historic Capitol Hill and includes far too few elements or features that echo or reflect the character-defining aspects of the historic district. CHRS strongly urges that this building's design be revisited and made more compatible with historic Capitol Hill.
3. The previous water features have been removed for redesign. The three structures were too much of a good thing. In order to maximize the use of the plaza CHRS believes that a water fountain, flush with the surface of the plaza, is the best plan.

From the very beginning, CHRS has had as one of its priorities the preservation of the flea market. SEB proposes to provide enough space for the flea market by using the plaza and a closed C Street, along with a closed 7<sup>th</sup> Street from Pennsylvania Avenue to North Carolina Avenue. In the short run, during construction, 7<sup>th</sup> Street will have to be closed on weekends and the Metro plaza used to accommodate the vendors.<sup>3</sup> CHRS believes that this proposal has merit and will ensure a viable and vibrant flea market.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> On Tuesday, June 12, ANC6B approved a MOA with SEB that contains two of the provisions address mitigation for the loss of green space. In the MOA SEB pledges a contribution of \$75,000 towards a playground in the park between 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Streets on Pennsylvania Avenue and \$50,000 for landscaping the Metro plaza.

<sup>3</sup> Confusion arises by the uses of the terms vendors, spaces, and tents. SEB choses to use 10 ft. by 10 ft. tents and this measurement is most accurate. Some vendors use more use more than one 10x10 space.

<sup>4</sup> There is a bill to amend the Eastern Market Real Property Asset Management and Outdoor Vending Act of 1998 that will give management of the Market and surrounding area, including 7<sup>th</sup> Street and C Street, to a newly created Easter Market Preservation and Development Trust. The Trust will close 7<sup>th</sup> Street to provide for the flea market. The bill was set for a hearing before the Committee of the Whole on June 7 when other "events" caused its

The Department of Transportation's (DDOT) report is flawed and a great disappointment. It fails to recognize five years'-worth of planning by this community and, based on that planning, a raised community expectation for solving an intractable parking problem. Unfortunately DDOT, instead of being a part of the process, has decided to wait until just a few days before this hearing to throw a hand grenade into the room. This gross indifference to work the community, the ANC, CHAMPS, EMCAC and CHRS have contributed to the PUD is inexcusable. The process started with the 11 criteria formulated by CHRS followed by community meetings to advise the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development (DMPED) on basic community elements to be included in the RFP. One of the key elements was parking for the occupants of the buildings and parking to compensate for the lack of parking for Eastern Market, Market Row, Barracks Row, the Hill Center and Pennsylvania Avenue businesses.<sup>5</sup>

SEB's successful bid included substantial parking. The award by DMPED included substantial parking. The project and lease approved by the City Council included the same amount of parking. Finally, the application for the PUD and subsequent modifications incorporated this parking. Washington, DC, has a unitary executive with authority centralized with the Mayor. It is astonishing that DMPED and the City Council can approve the parking and then DDOT, at the eleventh hour, can veto it. One might well ask whether DDOT was asleep during the entire, multilayered process. The full amount of parking was planned from the start, and retaining it is essential for the success of the project and the success of the nearby business and residents. DDOT's tardy and feebly considered opinion should be disregarded.


There are a few items that CHRS wants included in the final order:

1. The windows on the first floor of retail will not be blocked to prevent seeing inside the building to a depth of 20 feet.
2. Every doorway on the first floor retail will have a door.
3. Tents and umbrellas on the terraces of the building will be temporary.

Finally, CHRS wants to congratulate SEB for its willingness to meet and work with the community and for its flexibility in negotiating a MOA with ANC6B. ANC6B is also to be commended for the long hours of work not only by the Commissioners, in particular Pate and Frishberg, but also by the community volunteers who worked on the subcommittee.

CHRS urges the Zoning Commission to be concerned about the design, parking and flea market recommendations requested above. Beyond that, CHRS recommends approval of the application.

Respectfully,

  
Gary M. Peterson Chair  
CHRS Zoning Committee

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postponement. Prior to the passage of the bill the city may have to close the street on the weekends. In either event the flea market is preserved.

<sup>5</sup> Traffic surveys conducted by EMCAC prove beyond a doubt that all parking spaces within a 4 to 5 block area of the PUD area are 100% occupied on Saturdays and Sundays. The fact that some of the churches in the area meet on both Saturday and Sunday directly contributes to the 100% occupancy rate on both days.