Intro

Good evening. Tonight, I would like to associate myself with testimony of others from Ward 3 Vision re: importance of street retail, confidence that the lack of parking will not be a problem, and will reduce traffic, supporting the value of proposed streetscape and underground utilities.

I primarily want to address consistency of PUD with Comprehensive Plan

1. Growing an Inclusive City
   a. You will probably hear opponents say that this area of the city doesn’t “need” more development, and we should send development to other neighborhoods in the District
   i. Our city is split — and on the eastern side of the divide, the numbers tell the story: lower incomes, poorer health, worse schools, lower educational attainment, higher unemployment.
   1. To be inclusive, we can take two main strategies:
      a. One, is to improve the neighborhoods that need help, and the city is actively pursuing that policy: St. E’s East Campus, Barry Farm, Promise Neighborhood at Kenilworth/Parkside, CCDC and charter schools, HOPE VI (Capper Carrollsburg, Wheeler Creek, Henson Ridge), Camp Simms/Shops at Park Village, THE ARC, SE Tennis and Learning Center, etc.
      b. Two is to provide new housing, and especially affordable units, in neighborhoods with good transit access, excellent schools, attractive green space and safe streets -- neighborhoods, in other words, like Tenleytown
   ii. Hard to hear that argument about putting development where it is needed, without suspecting that there’s a certain aspect to it which is saying, we have a good thing going here, and we aren’t interested in sharing
   iii. In addition, this notion that, if we don’t building higher-density housing in upper Northwest, we will drive development to where it is more “needed” is based on a faulty premise — that if people want to live in one area, that means they’ll be just as willing to go someplace completely different if the proposed building is not built.

2. Encourage development around Metro stations
   a. Meet large and growing demand of residents who don’t desire a car, because they are too old, too young, too disabled, or just interested in a car-free lifestyle. City has become a mecca for 25-34 year olds (a 10% increase in the last six years) but the
average recent college graduate is carrying more than $25,000 in debt from college alone

b. The Comp Plan explicitly aims to encourage development at a scale and character that is complementary with adjacent neighborhoods – Bond is right on major arterial, changing a commercial use to a mostly residential use, separated by an alley from residential to the rear, and with an animal hospital to the west, and a 5-6 story office building with ground floor retail to the south, a vacant parking lot and some very large towers to the east. It is separated from the closest low-scale residential by an alley.

c. The site is listed as mixed-use moderate density residential/moderate density commercial on the Future Land Use Map, but the Generalized Policy Map clearly identifies it as a Main Street Mixed-Use Corridor, immediate across Brandywine Street from the area identified as a Multi-Neighborhood Center.

d. I could kill some trees and submit to you a long list of provisions from the Comp Plan that support this project. However, in deference to the trees, and to the number of people who are testifying, I want to focus on one key quotation from the Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan. As you have heard many times before, particularly with respect to the issues addressed by zoning, the Land Use Element is the preeminent element of the Plan, and provides the key guidance re: future development.

e. I think you will find that the following section from the Comprehensive Plan says it all with respect to this proposal.

LU-1.3 Transit-Oriented and Corridor Development 306

Over the last four decades, the District of Columbia, the federal government, and neighboring jurisdictions have invested billions of dollars in a mass transit system that effectively connects residents in many parts of the city with major employment centers and other destinations. Additional investments in rapid transit, consisting primarily of light rail, streetcars, and busways, are planned along major avenues. These improvements are essential to enhance regional mobility and accessibility, respond to future increases in demand, and provide alternatives to single passenger automobiles. The improvements also create the potential to reinforce one of the signature elements of Washington’s urban form—its boulevards. 306.1

Fully capitalizing on the investment made in Metrorail requires better use of the land around transit stations and along transit corridors. While many of the District’s 40 Metrorail stations epitomize the concept of a “transit village,” with pedestrian-oriented commercial and residential development of varying scales, others do not. Some stations continue to be surrounded by large surface parking lots and auto-oriented commercial land uses. The same is true for those corridors where light rail or bus rapid transit service has been proposed. Some pass through fairly dense, walkable neighborhoods. Others consist of long, undifferentiated commercial strips with many vacant storefronts, little or no housing, and few amenities for pedestrians. 306.2

Much of the city’s planning during the last five years has focused on making
better use of transit station areas. Plans have been developed for Columbia Heights, Takoma, Anacostia, Georgia Avenue/Petworth, and Shaw/Howard University. In each case, the objective was not to apply a “cookie-cutter” model for transit-oriented development, but rather to identify ways to better capitalize on Metrorail and more efficiently use land in the station vicinity. One objective of these initiatives has been to strengthen transit stations as neighborhood centers and attract new investment to struggling business districts. Another important objective has been to accommodate the growth of the city in a way that minimizes the number and length of auto trips generated, and to reduce household expenses on transportation by providing options for “car-free” (or one car) living. 306.3

The District’s Metrorail stations include 15 stations within the Central Employment Area and 25 “neighborhood” stations (see Map 3.5). Looking forward, certain principles should be applied in the management of land around all of the District’s neighborhood stations. These include: A preference for mixed residential and commercial uses rather than single purpose uses, particularly a preference for housing above ground floor retail uses; A preference for diverse housing types, including both market-rate and affordable units and housing for seniors and others with mobility impairments; A priority on attractive, pedestrian-friendly design and a de-emphasis on auto-oriented uses and surface parking; Provision of well-designed, well-programmed, and well-maintained public open spaces; A "stepping down" of densities with distance away from each station, protecting lower density uses in the vicinity; Convenient and comfortable connections to the bus system, thereby expanding access to the stations and increasing Metro’s ability to serve all parts of the city; and A high level of pedestrian and bicycle connectivity between the stations and the neighborhoods around them. 306.4

Beyond these core principles, station area development policies must respond to the unique needs of each community and the unique setting of each station. Some station areas wrestle with concerns over too much development, while others struggle to attract development. Moreover, the District’s role in facilitating transit-oriented development must vary from station to station. In some parts of the city, weak demand may require public investment and zoning incentives to catalyze development or achieve the desired mix of uses. In other areas, the strength of the private market provides leverage for the District to require public benefits (such as plazas, parks, and child care facilities) when approval is requested. 306.5