

*Citizens Aware Block Organization
A Block Organization of the Lamond Riggs Citizens Association,
Representing the Community for Over 40 Years*

***Position on MedStar Property Redevelopment:
No Zoning Change***

June 2005

Dear Neighbors, Community Leaders, Government Officials and All Who May Be Affected by MedStar Property Redevelopment:

As many may know, MedStar Manor is in the final stages of selling its property at 6000 New Hampshire Avenue, N.E. As it stands now, the successful bidder is the West Group. Upon property ownership, West Group will first seek a change in zoning variance to begin construction on the largest new residential development project in our area. The planned zoning change is from the current R-1B designation (all single family homes (SFHs)) to a Planned Unit Development (PUD) (a mixed use of condos, townhouses and SFHs).

Citizens Aware, as one of the communities adjoining the said property ***does not*** support the West Group's current proposal. Our formal position is to keep the zoning, as is, for the entire site. We have a vested interest in what happens to this property as our organization's boundaries include: (1) the 6000-6100 blocks of New Hampshire Ave. NE (southside of Peabody St. NE to the southside of Rittenhouse St. NE); (2) the 6000-6100 blocks of 3rd St. NE (east and west sides of street); (3) the 200-300 blocks of Quackenbos St. NE; and (4) the 200-300 blocks of Peabody St. NE.

Background

Generally, as we understand it, there are two options for developing the MedStar property:

(a) Maintain the existing zoning for a maximum of 80 SFHs on a minimum 5,000 sq. ft. lot. per SFH Under this scenario, a developer can build homes without community input.

(b) Seek a zoning variance for other residential configurations under a PUD." According to the D.C. Office of Planning, a PUD "permits a developer to exceed the existing zoning density limitations and provides greater flexibility in planning and design. In exchange, the developer typically agrees to provide "certain" community amenities. Using this option, by D.C. law the developer and community work together towards a mutually agreeable development proposal.

The current West Group proposal on the table seeks a zoning variance under a PUD to: (1) renovate the existing buildings into 40-50 one and two-bedroom condos selling for \$250,000+; (2) build 129 townhomes with either underground parking or driveways for \$300,000 to \$350,000+; (3) build 17 detached SFHs along the perimeter of New Hampshire and Rittenhouse starting at \$400,000; (4) extend roadways like Quackenbos and other streets leading into the property, provide visitor parking and build a community center; and (5) set aside at least 10 units of “affordable housing” for a citizenry lottery. Including zoning and construction, this process will take 18 months to two years, and will include environmental, traffic and other studies.

The West Group has presented, after seeking community feedback, several revised proposals since the summer of 2004. Imminently, further changes are to come as the Group goes through its 12-18 month review by the D. C. Zoning Board.

April 25, 2005, Community Meeting

On April 25, 2005, a community meeting was jointly sponsored by Councilmember Adrian Fenty, ANC Commissioners Judy Jones and Cherita Whiting and Citizens Aware. The meeting’s purpose was to gather community leaders, area community groups, Neighborhood Advisory Commissions (ANCs), government officials and the West Group in one place to formulate one, unified community position on the project, considering important issues such as aesthetics, density, traffic, property taxes and socio-economic factors. After much discussion on these issues, a consensus vote was sought. By a slim majority, the current West Group proposal received the most votes. However, this vote proved problematic for many citizens. Citizens Aware members and other community group members voiced that they did not have proper notification that the meeting’s purpose was to make a community consensus vote/decision at that meeting and consequently many were not prepared to do so.

Citizens Aware Votes on Formal Position

After further considering the events and consequences of the April 25th meeting, a subsequent May 11, 2005 meeting was held. Citizens Aware, along with a 4B08 mini-Single-District Meeting presided over by ANC Commissioner Cherita Whiting, took a majority vote. The result was to keep the current zoning “as is” for the entire property (and therefore **not** support the current West Group proposal). The discussion leading up to the vote cited many factors for the position taken, including, but not limited to:

- ▶ A zoning variance would drastically increase the community population.
- ▶ Too few SFHs and increased condos and townhouses would change the identity of the property as a SFH property.
- ▶ West Group has not adequately addressed exactly how the new zoning of the proposed property would affect property taxes and resale values of homes in the entire community.
- ▶ Major traffic arteries are jammed currently, especially during rush hours. A large population increase due to the high ratio of townhouses and condos to SFHs would cause more traffic overflow into side streets. Said problem has not been satisfactorily addressed.
- ▶ Townhouse/condo dwellings are more likely to be resold/rented at a quicker or higher rate than SFHs. This could result in constant turnover in the development, which could affect the upkeep and value of properties in the community as a whole.
- ▶ Community services, i.e., ambulance, police, schools and other services could be overburdened by the sudden population increase in the area. Local officials have already casually stated in meetings that they did not see a problem with same.
- ▶ Earlier West Group proposals had more SFHs surrounding the perimeter than the current proposal. No proposal has been presented to our satisfaction that addresses our preference for more SFHs.

Feel free to share our position of “No Zoning Change” to all stakeholders in this matter, and at whatever forums and media outlets are appropriate.

Citizens Aware and the 4B08 Community will continue to follow, and be an active participant in, the progress of the proposed property development.

If you would like more information, or have comments, please contact me at yjeffers@yahoo.com or 202-529-3887.

Cordially,

Yvonne Jefferson

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Citizens Aware President