



COALITION FOR SMARTER GROWTH

December 1, 2011

Mr. Anthony Hood, Chairman
Zoning Commission of the District of Columbia
One Judiciary Square
441 4th Street NW, Suite 210 South
Washington, DC 20001

Support: Case No. 11-07B, American University – 2011-2020 Campus Plan for the Relocation and Construction of the Washington College of Law at the Tenley Campus

Dear Chairman Hood and members of the Commission:

Please accept these comments on behalf of the Coalition for Smarter Growth, a regional organization based in the District of Columbia focused on ensuring transportation and development decisions are made with genuine community involvement and accommodate growth while revitalizing communities, providing more housing and travel choices, and conserving our natural and historic areas.

We are here to express our support for the proposed actions under Case No. 11-07B by American University. Moving the AU law school to the Tenley location will take advantage of excellent transit access by Metrorail and Metrobus, and contribute to greater vitality for Wisconsin Avenue as a major commercial corridor. The Tenley campus plan sensitively increases capacity for the law school while respecting its historic buildings and neighbors.

I also note that our office is a block from Tenley circle, next to the Metro station on Wisconsin Avenue, so we very much welcome our new Law School neighbors. We view this move as a benefit to everyone. More broadly, we recognize that universities play a vital role in the city's economy and offer stable employment for a broad range of workers. We want to help universities take full advantage of D.C.'s assets while pursuing their mission, encourage investment in the city, and contribute to a better surrounding community.

With respect to the specifics of this proposal, we concur with the thoughtful testimony by Ward3Vision. We agree that the front of the law school needs to better connect to Wisconsin Avenue. We appreciate the limitations of historic preservation goals for the buildings and the green space, but we ask that a plaza and a kiosk or vendor cart be encouraged to enliven the space between the buildings and Wisconsin Avenue to create a more people-oriented place.

Parking and Transportation Demand Management (TDM)

We strongly agree with DDOT's recommendations regarding parking supply and management. We agree that AU greatly overestimates parking demand extrapolated from its existing campus that is far from Metro and major bus lines. The proposal would overbuild costly parking spaces and generate unnecessary traffic. The 250 spaces maximum recommended by DDOT is a reasonable supply to support the activities of the law school without attracting vehicle trips that could be easily captured by transit or another mode.

If the university makes a major investment in too many parking spaces, it will want to encourage their use, thus undermining the goal of encouraging walking, biking and riding transit. A key variable that greatly influences mode choice, especially at the highly-transit accessible Tenleytown site, is pricing of the parking. We'd like to reinforce DDOT's recommendations that AU commit to appropriate pricing for the parking so as to encourage transit use.

DDOT's report lays out a reasonable approach to monitoring and more actively managing neighborhood curbside parking as needed. But we suggest an enhancement to Residential Parking Permit zones to ensure more effective enforcement. Instead of a two-hour free parking period in the RPP zone, we suggest requiring any visitor to pay to park using a "pay by phone" system. This would greatly simplify enforcement while offering flexible visitor parking and protecting resident parking.

We want to commend the university for the two Capital Bikeshare stations it will fund, and for offering discounted memberships for staff. This is a great way to promote bicycling as a practical alternative to driving. Improving the bicycling environment between the two campuses will also be critical to encouraging more people to ride. The provision of showers planned by the university to encourage bicycling is a welcome measure.

The additional recommendations by DDOT that build on AU's TDM program will also be important to reducing driving and encouraging transit use. In particular, the recommendation to require that AU install transit information screens on campus and at nearby bus stops will both make transit more convenient for users and educate all viewers about the viability of the option.

I also wanted to note that AU's Tenley campus build-out offers an opportunity to implement relevant portions of the Rock Creek West Livability Study and Janney Safe Routes to School Action Plan. These actions, as recommended by DDOT, benefit AU students and staff, along with neighborhood residents and elementary school students.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.