



November 11, 2013

The Hon. Muriel Bower
Chair, Planning, Program Development, and Real Estate Committee
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA)
600 5th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

RE: Support for advancing the EYA Takoma Metro Joint Development Agreement

Dear Chair Bower:

Please accept these comments on behalf of the Coalition for Smarter Growth. The Coalition for Smarter Growth is the leading organization in the Washington, D.C. region dedicated to making the case for smart growth. Our mission is to promote walkable, inclusive, and transit-oriented communities, and the land use and transportation policies and investments needed to make those communities flourish.

We wish to express our support for the proposed revised joint development agreement with EYA to construct over 200 housing units in a mid-rise apartment building. We recognize this new proposal addresses one of the key concerns of opponents of the previous plan – the preservation of a large open space in front of the station. We applaud the new proposal for offering a more appropriate multifamily format, a significant improvement to the townhouse format because it is more flexible and can offer a much greater number of homes. This proposed development will significantly increase the number of housing opportunities at the Metro station, and in the heart of downtown Takoma. Overall, this means that we can offer more transit-oriented housing options to meet surging demand. The neighborhood will benefit from the presence of more people living at the Metro station because it fosters greater safety for transit patrons, more customers to walk to local businesses, and fewer cars on the road as new residents will have the most convenient access to transit in the community.

We appreciate that the revised plan has been changed to address a number of concerns. We are pleased to see the parking ratio come down to 0.67 spaces per unit, though this could be lower still. In addition to considering a lower parking ratio, we suggest requiring the developer to implement a robust transportation demand management plan (TDM) that includes transit passes and other measures to reduce driving and car ownership. As the board considers any additional changes to the proposal, we ask that over 200 units be maintained in the plan. We recognize that the project has been reduced to design it in a way that is sensitive to its neighbors' concerns. We think that the current plan strikes a good balance that will be refined at the Planned Unit Development stage with the D.C. Zoning Commission.

Regarding affordability, we ask the Board to honor the D.C. Council's resolution to provide affordable housing at the site which calls for a total of 20% of the units affordable, specifically: 5% at 30% AMI, 5% at 60% AMI, 10% at 80% AMI (per PR 14-614, "Takoma Central District Plan Approval Resolution of 2002").

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Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Cort
Policy Director