



COALITION FOR SMARTER GROWTH

December 5, 2011

Mr. Anthony Hood
Chairman, D.C. Zoning Commission
One Judiciary Square
441 4th Street NW, Suite 210S
Washington, DC 20001

Via email zcsubmissions@dc.gov

Re: Support for Case No. 11-15, Howard University Central Campus Master Plan (2011)

Dear Commissioners:

Please accept these comments on behalf of the Coalition for Smarter Growth. My organization works to ensure that transportation and development decisions in the Washington, D.C. region accommodate growth, while revitalizing communities, providing more housing and travel choices, and conserving our natural and historic areas.

We wish to express our support for the Howard University Campus Plan. We especially want to commend the university for committing to the reconnection of several important streets – Bryant Street between Georgia Avenue and Sherman Avenue; W Street between Georgia and 9th St, NW; and, College Street between Georgia Ave. and 6th Street, NW. This commitment to reconnect these streets will have a major positive effect on the surrounding community and help mitigate traffic impact from campus growth. This was a key request by surrounding residents and civic groups. We applaud the university for its commitment to make these street connections.

Reconnect Howard Place to Sherman Avenue: While we commend the university for the street connections it is committing to in the campus plan, another important street connection to break up a superblock should also be required – a neighborhood street should be constructed to connect Howard Place to Sherman Avenue. The proposed plan appears to call for a pedestrian connection only through a “workforce housing” complex. We urge the Zoning Commission to require a full street connection to ensure that this superblock is broken up into a truly pedestrian-supportive environment. Reconnecting this street from Sherman Avenue to the service road just north of the park and then to Howard Place would reconstruct the area’s grid, benefiting traffic distribution and fostering a more pedestrian and bicycle-friendly environment.

Expedite the redevelopment of surface parking lots, especially the site east of Sherman Ave. and north of Barry Place: University surface parking lots scattered throughout the neighborhoods have been an ongoing problem. One of the greatest problem parking lots in terms of negative impact on the neighborhood’s pedestrian environment is the large surface lot between Sherman Avenue and 9th Street, north of Barry Place. While this site is slated for a future middle school and workforce housing buildings, redevelopment might not occur for many years. We ask that these uses be expedited and prioritized by the university in order to alleviate the negative effects the surface parking lot and superblock has on the neighborhood. We suggest that accommodating some of the uses planned for the suburban Research and Development Park in Beltsville might be better accommodated at this more transit-accessible location close to graduate students and professors. Moving the research uses from the distant, isolated Beltsville campus to an urban location will better attract the growing number of creative class workers and entrepreneurs who want to be in vibrant, walkable urban environments.

In 2006, the university acquired and demolished an old row house to build another surface parking lot at the triangle intersection of Florida and Sherman Avenues. This was an unfortunate decision by the university and BZA. We appreciate that that university has rethought its parking supply needs and now recognizes that more

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parking is not always better. We commend the university for proposing to reduce its parking supply, but ask that the DDOT recommendation for lower parking supply number be instituted. We also ask that the redevelopment of surface parking lots be expedited and no surface parking lots be created or expanded in the future.

Implementing Georgia Avenue Great Streets Plan: Updating the campus plan offers a great opportunity to ensure that the Great Streets project for Georgia Avenue is fully coordinated with the University's activities. We ask that Zoning Commission give clear direction to the university, per DDOT's recommendations, regarding the coordination on the implementation of the transit-only lane on Georgia Avenue. Georgia Avenue carries the highest ridership bus routes in the entire metropolitan region. This section of Georgia Avenue is a major bottleneck.

Further work on TDM & Parking management: We ask that the Zoning Commission include clear conditions for the TDM program as part of the final zoning order. The basis for specific commitments is the TDM plan submitted by the university. Given its late submission to DDOT, however, the details of a TDM program have not been negotiated. An effective TDM program is a key part of reducing neighborhood impacts and ensuring that a more aggressive parking management approach will work. We support DDOT's recommendation that the university reduce parking supply below what it proposes to avoid the negative neighborhood impacts of unnecessary vehicle trips, pedestrian-unfriendly surface parking lots, and extreme costs of structured parking. Pricing parking appropriately is an essential tool to incentivizing non-drive modes. Parking should be priced so that it's more expensive to drive and park than it is to ride transit. In addition to setting appropriate pricing, we ask that parking be offered in more flexible increments – hourly and daily parking should be offered for a large share of parking facilities so that commuters can choose every time if driving or transit is the best option. Long term parking agreements, such as quarterly or yearly, generate unnecessary vehicle trips as the commuter is encouraged to drive and park due to an available space that is already paid for, even if another option would be viable on certain days.

Install Capital Bikeshare station: We want to reiterate the DDOT recommendation that the university fund and install a Capital Bikeshare station. This innovative program has been wildly popular. Broadening its reach on the campus will be a great benefit to staff and students.

In closing, we wish to reiterate our overall support for the campus plan. The changes we have suggested will make this solid plan even better. We look forward to working with the university and the city to ensure that Howard and the surrounding neighborhoods achieve the full benefit of this plan. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Cheryl Cort
Policy Director