



Coalition for Smarter Growth
DC • MD • VA

October 8, 2014

Muriel Bowser
Chair, Committee on Economic Development &
Ward 4 Councilmember
1350 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Suite 112
Washington, DC 20004

RE: Support for 1125 Spring Road, NW Re-Use Project – Creating roughly 200 affordable homes

Dear Councilmember Bowser:

We are writing on behalf of the Coalition for Smarter Growth in support of the creation of affordable housing at 1125 Spring Road. Our organization is the leading non-profit group advocating for inclusive, sustainable communities in the DC region, and counts thousands of supporters in DC.

We support DCHA's proposal for 1125 Spring Road to create 200 rental homes, 90% of which would be affordable. We support the proposed wide range of affordability, including deeply affordable units at 30% AMI that are so desperately needed as market pressure continues to eliminate more and more of the city's most affordable stock. We also ask that some of the units be use for permanently supportive housing.

This project concept represents an excellent example of how the city can leverage public land to create much-needed affordable housing in a highly sought-after neighborhood close to Metrorail and major bus lines. This large site in such a rapidly changing neighborhood also offers the chance to retain long term moderate and low priced housing as local real estate values soar beyond the reach of most low wage and working families.

With other medium scale multi-family buildings throughout the neighborhood, we believe the large parcel size (more than 2.6 acres) allows for a combination of adaptive reuse and new construction to create 200 homes in a way that can comfortably fit the neighborhood character with appropriate urban design. We urge you to support the creation of at least 200 units on the site. Reducing the number of housing opportunities on this 2.6-acre site would set back our efforts to meet the growing need for decent, quality affordable homes for DC residents in such desirable locations.

While street parking is certainly a concern for a number of neighboring residents, reducing the number of homes or building more parking will not address their concerns. Management of valuable on-street parking calls for an approach that directly addresses these concerns and manages on-street parking. DDOT has recently released its parking study recommendations. Working with DDOT, we should

encourage the implementation of programs that better regulate curbside residential parking use in the area to directly address street parking concerns by existing residents.

Far less parking is needed for residents who will live here than proposed (1 space to 2 units) given that low income renters and seniors own far fewer vehicles than the general public. While the Census Tract shows that 60% of renters do not own a car, the mostly affordable and senior development would generate even lower parking demand than this already low number. The tremendous cost of roughly \$35,000 per space for one level of excavation, and more than \$50,000 for two levels below grade, raises the cost of each unit by hundreds of dollars in monthly rent. We urge the city to plan for a much lower and more appropriate level of parking. The cost savings from not building unnecessary parking would reduce the subsidy required, support greater affordability, and allow for more usable amenities for the residents.

Thank you for your support and leadership for affordable housing for this site. We hope we will be able to maintain at least 200 homes and the affordability levels contemplated for this project. We also hope the project can be improved by reducing the excessive number of extremely costly parking spaces proposed, and by including permanently supportive housing units.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cheryl Cort', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Cheryl Cort
Policy Director

CC: Department of General Services, DC Housing Authority