

The Hine Project Misses the Mark

In the January issue of the Hill Rag (The Hine Project Moves Ahead), Roberta Weiner set forth the three questions that need to be answered to determine the appropriateness of awarding Planned Unit Development (PUD) status to the Stanton group's proposed plan for the Hine School site. Though not in the order listed, the questions and the answers to those questions are:

Question One: "What is the value of the PUD, i.e. in allowing height and density beyond the current zoning?"

Answer: Great wealth to the developers and their chosen realtors.

Even without PUD approval, the Hine site is a potential gold mine. One of the very hottest real estate markets in the country is Washington, D.C. One of the hottest spots in D.C. is Capitol Hill. And the very hottest and most sought after location on Capitol Hill is Eastern Market. What more could a developer want? Density! The more units it can build and the more square footage it is allowed, the more the cost to build each unit and each square foot is reduced and, of course, the more sales and/or leases it may make or enter. The taller the buildings, the less open space provided; the larger the building footprint and the smaller the building setback requirements, the greater that density gets.

The potential value of PUD approval to the developers is multi-millions of dollars in sales profits and income from leases.

Question Two: "Is the project of sufficient value to the community that a PUD should be considered?"

Answer: No. The proposed PUD is not consistent with or complimentary to its Eastern Market neighborhood character and characteristics, detracts from its ambiance and it should not be considered.

Neither the now empty Hine Junior High School building, which was always a little too tall and too massive, nor the asphalt former playground which now serves during the week as a large public parking lot, are consistent with, or complimentary to, or add value to the community. On the other hand, a properly sized and

designed building project providing residential housing, retail shops and office space, together with underground parking and ample public open spaces could add both value and character.

Unfortunately, the currently proposed PUD is neither consistent with nor complimentary to its Eastern Market location. Rather than adding value to the community, the plan as now designed will only diminish its extraordinary character.

The current plan appears to call for a massive seven story building to run the entire length of the 700 block of Pennsylvania Avenue and some 200 feet going north on narrow 7th Street before reducing its height to five stories, with only the very top floor set back from the face of the building at all. An urban mountain and a 7th Street canyon will be the result. That might feel right at Friendship Heights, Bethesda, Silver Spring or Ballston, but not at the Eastern Market. The only public open space proposed is a narrow trapezoidal area squeezed between the huge Pennsylvania Avenue facing building and a separate building running along the alley between 7th and 8th Streets.

Question Three: "Are the benefits and amenities offered by the applicant commensurate with the value of the PUD?"

Answer: No. Not if the "benefits and amenities" are those cited:

- * High quality architecture and landscaping should be a given
- * Opening C Street would have an overall negative impact on the pedestrian and automobile traffic flow around the Market and is unnecessary.

- * Participation in job training and employment programs seems like a good thing, if not already required.

- * Environmentally sustainable construction seems like a good thing, if not already required.

- * Parking should be a given.

- * A plaza with space for the weekend flea markets must be part of the functional public open space. The space proposed is neither functional nor big enough for the flea market.

- * More affordable housing than the minimum the law already requires seems like a good thing.

The Eastern Market and its environs are a treasure. People from

around the world come to savor its ambiance. While the Hine property site presents a great opportunity for new housing and new small business entrepreneurs, its great challenge is to provide that opportunity while maintaining the feel and the flavor of the Eastern Market neighborhood. If the project misses the mark, that feel and flavor will be gone forever.

The Stanton group's proposed plan misses the mark.

Christopher "Kip" Howell
kiphowell@email.com

A Violation of Public Trust

As one of the many tireless youth workers in the District, I feel outraged, disgusted, and deeply saddened by the actions of ex-Councilmember Harry Thomas Jr. Stealing over \$300,000 intended for underserved youth is a truly despicable act. Now, his actions have triggered calls to dismantle or defund the DC Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation (DC TRUST). Allowing the TRUST to be another victim of Thomas' crimes would be a disgrace and further rob thousands of youth the quality support they deserve.

As a leader of a non-profit organization with a diverse funding stream, I can assure you that the competitive bidding process, rigorous fiscal and programmatic reporting requirements, and commitment to outcomes mandated by the TRUST are unparalleled. Furthermore, Councilmember Tommy Wells has already enacted legislation requiring all funds dispersed through the TRUST to be competitively bid out. No earmarks are currently allowed. This set of controls did not exist when Harry Thomas began his corrupt scheme. The fact that a public official committed a felony should not be the reason to dismantle such an important institution in this city, especially one that remains committed to quality and oversight.

In addition to its competitive grants, the TRUST provides capacity-building, technical assistance, staff training, and resource-sharing for many youth-serving organizations. Its vision and support collectively saves these organizations millions of dollars. It allows organizations like

mine to leverage resources, provide high-quality and innovative programming, and achieve rigorous and comprehensive outcomes. In short, we cannot do our work without the TRUST's help.

I have worked with youth in the District for seven years now and am constantly amazed at their creativity, insight, love of learning, and compassion for others. The youth in our programs make strong academic, civic, and nutritional gains on every assessment we administer. The real proof, however, is witnessing them gobble down spinach smoothies, jump out of their seats with excitement to answer a question, eagerly participate in yoga class, ask if they can sponsor a toy drive for sick children, confidently recite original poetry, and show off their report cards. Walking into our after-school programs fills me with tremendous joy.

These are the reasons I will fight today and every day on their behalf. We can give them so much more. It is time to reinvest in our city's youth, not a time to reduce resources. We need to find a stable funding stream for the TRUST and ensure that the new oversight and accountability regulations are upheld in the future. Please reach out to your DC Council representative and encourage them to support and reinvest in this vital institution. We cannot do the work we do without its help.

Andria Hollis, Program Director, Kid Power, Inc. andriana@kidpowerdc.org

The January Hill Gardener

Thank you so much for writing that wonderful article. I must say that seeing pictures of Kim [Brenner] and me on the same page was emotional. I took that picture of Kim in Miami only 7 months before she died. Between the two pictures are the words that tether all that is left between us. Your eloquence preserves the spirit of Kim and what we shared. You have my heartfelt thanks and your personal appeal to the community is much appreciated.

Joe Ardizzone

For information on how you can contribute to Kim's Garden, go to kims-gardenc.blogspot.com