

ITEM #21



P.O. Box 30703
Bethesda, MD 20824

May 19, 2006

Ms. Marilyn Clemens
The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20910-3760

Re: Zoning Application No. G-850 (Lot 31 Redevelopment)

The Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail represents over 2000 members and advocates for our members and for the close to one million annual users of the trail. We have been closely monitoring the proposed development of Lot 31. As you know, the Bethesda trailhead abuts the western edge of the property proposed for rezoning. Development along this portion of the trail needs to be attentive to the trail use. The design of the building and the activity generated by the retail users will have multiple impacts on the trail.

The developer chosen by the county for this project, Lot 31 Associates LLC, has made every effort to consult with the Coalition as they designed this project. We had many concerns about the design of the intersection, the accommodation of the parking for bike users, and the parking entry and exit points for pedestrian safety. In each of these areas our concerns were listened to and met. The specific points are outlined on our attached letter relating to the mandatory referral. Similarly, we are very pleased with the care and attention they devoted to our concerns relating to compatibility of the development with trail use.

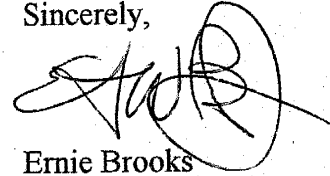
- We asked that the active retail uses be organized in a way that did not interfere with or detract from the heavy usage of the trail at the Bethesda Avenue trailhead. The plan proposes residential use at the southwest corner, includes convenient elevator access to the parking garage adjacent to the trail, and limits retail nearer to Bethesda Avenue.
- We asked for a convenient drop off access to the trail. The proposal incorporates a circular drop off point on Woodmont Avenue, and an attractive, direct path to the trail at a point close to the public rest area and information kiosk.
- We asked that any outdoor eating areas provided not be adjacent to the trail because of the potential for restaurant patron/trail user conflicts. We are assured that any restaurants with outdoor seating will be located nearer the Bethesda-Woodmont intersection.

Together with the developer, we continue to discuss appropriate enhancements to the trailhead, amenities tailored to trail users, and additional landscaping where the trail abuts this

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project. Many of these improvements will be presented at site plan. Based on the willingness of the developer to work with us, and their demonstrated understanding of the importance of the trail at this location, we have every confidence that the final project will be sensitive to the trail use, and will be a handsome addition to the urban fabric. We urge you to recommend approval of the rezoning request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ernie Brooks', written over a circular stamp or mark.

Ernie Brooks
Chair CCCT

CC: Derick Berlage, MNCPPC
John Carter, MNCPPC
Rose Krasnow, MNCPPC
Shahriar Etemadi, MNCPPC
Daniel Janousek, MNCPPC
Scott James, MNCPPC
Douglas M. Firstenberg, Stonebridge Associates
Monty Hoffman, PN Hoffman

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P.O. Box 30703
Bethesda, MD 20824

May 19, 2006

Mr. Dan Hardy
The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20910-3760

Re: Mandatory Referral Lot 31 Redevelopment

The Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail represents over 2000 members and advocates for our members and for the close to one million annual users of the trail. We have been closely monitoring the proposed development of Lot 31, the provision of underground public parking and the associated improvements to the intersection of Woodmont and Bethesda Avenues. We would like to go on record with the following comments:

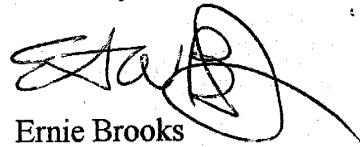
- Woodmont/Bethesda Avenue intersection. Our organization has been advocating for changes and improvements to this intersection for almost twenty years. Today it is dysfunctional for the trail users crossing from the Crescent Trail to the Georgetown Branch Trail and tunnel under Wisconsin Avenue. We enthusiastically support the realignment of Woodmont Avenue, the elimination of free right-turn movements on southbound Woodmont Avenue (currently being accomplished by DPWT) and the proposed alignment of the crosswalk to make a direct connection across these streets for trail users. These changes enhance pedestrian safety, and make a more sensible crossing for continuing trail users.
- The entry and exit points for the parking garage also enhance pedestrian and trail safety. By placing all of the entry and exit points east of the realigned Woodmont Avenue, the developer has eliminated the danger of cars crossing the heavily used sidewalks on the southeast quadrant of the intersection and at the points closest to the trailhead at Bethesda Avenue.
- Likewise, we are in favor of the bike drop-off proposed on the west side of Woodmont Avenue next to the pedestrian path that connects to the trail. People today are in the practice of using the surface parking on Lot 31 to drop off bikes and riders. On many days they do this even though they are unable to find an available space in which to park. Some go on to other lots, others are just using the Lot 31 as a dropping off point. The circular, off-street drop will serve the same purpose.

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- We would also like to support the many other ways in which the garage has been designed to accommodate trail users, especially bikers. The elevators are adjacent to the trail, and are of a size to easily support passengers transporting bikes to the trail. We understand that there will be bike racks on multiple levels within the parking facility, and we favor this effort. We would like to have bike lockers as well since security may be a problem otherwise. Finally, we have been told that there will be spaces assigned for short term bike unloading near the elevator bays. We would like the plan for the garage to have this as a specific requirement.

The developers, Lot 31 Associates LLC, have been excellent to work with, and have been highly attentive to our requests for consideration of trail users as they designed this submission. We support the plan and hope that you will recommend the retention of the improvements outlined above. Please let us know if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Ernie Brooks
Chair CCCT

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