

**Testimony**

**By**

**Brian Flahaven<sup>1</sup>,**

**Chair, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6B**

**Commissioner, ANC 6B09**

**Testimony on behalf of ANC 6B**

**Before the**

**Committee on Economic Development**

**Roundtable on Major Economic Development Projects**

**Tuesday, September 24, 2013**

**11:00 am**

---

<sup>1</sup> Contact – 202-744-1854, [brianf6b09@anc6b.org](mailto:brianf6b09@anc6b.org)

Good morning Madame Chair and members of the Committee on Economic Development. My name is Brian Flahaven, and I serve as chair of Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6B. My single member district, 6B09, lies in Hill East and includes Barney Circle, the Historic Congressional Cemetery, and the Eastern Branch Boys & Girls Club Building.

I'm here today to testify about the Hill East Development, also known as Reservation 13, the 67-acre former site of DC General Hospital. I'm testifying on behalf of ANC 6B, which approved my testimony 9-0 during the commission's September 10<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Eleven years ago, the DC Council approved a master development plan for Reservation 13. The plan, created with substantial community input, envisioned a mixed-use development that would finally connect surrounding neighborhoods to the Anacostia River waterfront. The plan recognized the site's many advantages – waterfront location, access to Metro and close proximity to two wards – and it envisioned bringing housing, retail and office space to an area of the city in desperate need of all three.

In 2008, the city issued a request for expressions of interest seeking a master developer for Reservation 13. Four development teams responded to the request, and ANC 6B and the surrounding neighbors heard presentations and weighed in on each request. In 2010, citing the economic downturn, the Fenty Administration issued a scaled back request to the four development teams, asking each to submit plans to develop the two parcels closest to the Stadium-Armory metro plaza. Two of the four teams submitted responses to the scaled back request.

The city sat on the two responses until March 2012, when Mayor Gray announced that DMPED would move forward with mixed-use development plans. We applauded the Mayor's announcement and were eager for DMPED to select a development team. Unfortunately, instead of choosing one of the two responses on the table, DMPED chose to begin the process again and issued a new RFEI in Oct. 2012 with responses due in January 2013. At the deadline, only one development team – Donatelli/Blue Skye – submitted a response to the RFEI.

In June, ANC 6B voted unanimously to support moving forward with the Donatelli/Blue Skye response. The response – which consists of two mixed-use residential/retail buildings next to the Stadium-Armory Metro– is consistent with the community-supported Reservation 13 master plan and the Hill East District zoning on the site. We also believe that the Donatelli/Blue Skye plans will help catalyze development on the rest of the site, assuming Mayor Gray, DMPED and the DC Council make the investments and policy decisions necessary to make the long-stalled vision of the Hill East waterfront a reality.

We also continue to urge Mayor Gray and DMPED to take action immediately to prepare the remaining parcels of the Hill East site for development. Specifically, we believe DMPED should be:

- Planning now to ensure that funds are available for the infrastructure improvements necessary to develop the entire Hill East waterfront. The other projects the committee is discussing during this roundtable are receiving infrastructure funding. Public funding will be needed to extend public roads/sewers, demolish buildings and to mitigate any environmental concerns on the Hill East site.
- Working with the Department of Human Services on a plan to close the temporary homeless shelter at DC General and begin transitioning homeless families and individuals into better housing options. The current policy of housing up to 300 homeless families in a dilapidated, deteriorating old hospital building completely separated from the surrounding neighborhood is an embarrassment to the city and completely counterproductive to the ultimate goal of ending homelessness. Instead, the city should be looking to other alternatives for serving the homeless population in less concentrated settings.
- Developing a plan for transitioning social services located on the site. The Reservation 13 master plan envisions, and ANC 6B certainly supports, continuing to provide existing services on the site at a reasonable scale in new facilities constructed on parcel L.

To help this important project proceed forward, we urge the committee to ask DMPED the following questions during this roundtable:

- 1) Does DMPED plan to proceed with the Donatelli-Blue Skye response? What is their timeline?
- 2) Is DMPED seeking funding for infrastructure improvements on the Hill East site?
- 3) Is DMPED working with the Department of Human Services on a plan for eventual closure of DC General?
- 4) What does DMPED plan to do to demonstrate to the development community that the city is serious about developing the Hill East waterfront?

We are eager to hear DMPED's answers to these questions. Hopefully, we won't hear more excuses on why the Hill East development has stalled. We were particularly disappointed to hear Deputy Mayor Hoskins attribute the lack of responses to the latest RFEI to weak real estate market demand in Hill East. The 20003 zip code, which includes Hill East, has been one of the fastest selling zip codes for homes in the city. In the past year, two development teams have announced plans to build large residential buildings – the 77-unit 1600 Penn Avenue SE and a 40-unit 1500 Penn Avenue SE – in my Single Member District, which is adjacent to Reservation 13. That is on top of the new 141 apartment Kennedy Row project across from Eastern High School and the 10-unit Brinkley building at 321 18<sup>th</sup> Street SE.

It is clear that Reservation 13 does not suffer from weak market demand. After years of distractions, three RFPs and numerous delays, the reality is that Reservation 13 suffers from a lack of political will. Beginning with the Donatelli/Blue Skye plans, we hope that DMPED and Mayor Gray will put in the time, energy and resources to move this important project across the finish line.

Thank you for your time, and I'd be happy to answer any questions.