



December 23, 2013

921 Pennsylvania Avenue SE
Suite 305
Washington, DC 20003-2141
202-543-3344 (office)
202-543-3507 (fax)
office@anc6b.org

Executive Director
Susan Eads Role

Terry Bellamy, Director
District Department of Transportation
55 M Street SE, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20003

VIA E-MAIL: terry.bellamy@dc.gov

OFFICERS

Chair
Brian Flahaven

Vice-Chair
Ivan Frishberg

Secretary
Philip Peisch

Treasurer
Brian Pate

Parliamentarian
Nichole Opkins

RE: Alley behind the West Side of the 500 block of 8th Street SE

Dear Director Bellamy:

At a regularly scheduled, properly noticed meeting on December 10, 2013, with a quorum present, Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) 6B voted 7-0 to send you this letter and its addendum. ANC6B requests that the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) complete a full depth reconstruction of the public alley behind the properties on the west side of the 500 block of 8th Street SE:

- As soon as possible, but in no event later than the end of fiscal year 2014; and
- In a way that will allow the alley to drain properly and withstand, over the long-term, the heavy commercial vehicles that regularly use it.

COMMISSIONERS

SMD 1 *David Garrison*
SMD 2 *Ivan Frishberg*
SMD 3 *Philip Peisch*
SMD 4 *Kirsten Oldenburg*
SMD 5 *Brian Pate*
SMD 6 *Nichole Opkins*
SMD 7 *Sara Loveland*
SMD 8 *Chander Jayaraman*
SMD 9 *Brian Flahaven*
SMD 10 *Francis Campbell*

This alley is used by dozens of vehicles each day. Heavy (10-30 ton) commercial trucks deliver food and supplies to and pick up trash, recycling, and grease from seven restaurants and bars that back up to the alley. Personal cars and SUVs enter and exit the residential and office parking lots that are only accessible through the alley. And, starting in 2014 or 2015, vehicles will enter and exit an underground parking church garage that will only be accessible through the alley.

The current condition of the alley is unacceptable. The asphalt surface of the alley has worn away in many places, exposing dirt and the original brick surface. The alley has dozens of deep potholes, which are perpetually filled with standing water and grease. The alley does not have any drainage system. The closest storm drains are north and south of the alley on E and G Streets, but the alley is not graded to direct water to those drains. This condition creates public health and safety problems, which are detailed in the attached addendum.

Since July 2013, ANC6B03 Commissioner Philip Peisch has been trying to get DDOT's attention on the appalling condition of this alley. ANC6B appreciates that once Commissioner Peisch brought this problem to the attention of Mr. Sandeep Bhatia on August 17, 2013, an inspection took place. However, the report back indicated that "with the exception of a few potholes the alley is in good shape" and that a Work Order

Page 2

December 23, 2013

ANC 6B Letter to Terry Bellamy

RE: Alley behind the West Side of the 500 block of 8th Street SE

#392126 had been created and submitted to the Street Bridge and Maintenance Division for repaving. After several requests for more information on the type of repairs DDOT planned and the time frame for doing them, Commissioner Peisch was informed on October 30, 2013 that the alley was on DDOT's FY15 alley repair schedule and that DDOT was committed to a "total restoration" by the end of September 2015. That's over a year and a half from now.

This alley cannot wait until fiscal year 2015. As noted above and in the addendum, its current condition contributes to public health and safety issues for the residents and businesses in the four streets that bound the alley: the 500 block of 8th Street SE, 500 block of 7th Street SE, 700 block of E Street SE, and 700 block of G Street SE.

The full depth reconstruction of the alley must include whatever features are necessary for the alley to withstand the dozens of commercial and other vehicles that use this alley each day. ANC 6B understands that such elements should include a concrete base or footer that goes below the frost line and an upper surface of concrete. However, if DDOT is confident that there is a better way to reconstruct the alley to withstand daily use by 10- to 30-ton vehicles, ANC 6B would not oppose an alternative approach. Regardless, using asphalt surface, which appears to have been laid on top of dirt or the original bricks, has clearly not sufficed to withstand the alley's traffic.

In addition, to avoid the problems associated with the standing water described above and in the addendum, the reconstructed alley must include proper drainage: a smooth runoff surface, graded to direct water to storm drains; curbs along both side of the alley to direct water to storm drains; and any other measures that DDOT determines are necessary for the alley to properly drain water. To assure that drainage systems are sustainable, DDOT also needs to work with utilities such as DC Water to repair, if necessary, underground infrastructure that may be contributing to surface issues.

The Commission requests that you respond to this letter with a timeline for and specific details about DDOT's plans to fix this alley such that it will withstand over the long term the heavy commercial vehicles that regularly use it and will include proper drainage.

Sincerely,

Brian Flahaven
Chair

Enclosure

cc: Mayor Vincent C. Gray
Councilmember Mary M. Cheh, Chair, Transportation and the Environment Committee
Councilmember Tommy Wells
Christopher Murphy, Chief of Staff, Office of the Mayor
Martin Smith, Barracks Row Main Street
Kathy E. Hollinger, Restaurant Association of Metropolitan Washington

ADDENDUM

Public Health and Safety Issues Associated With the Unacceptable Condition of the Alley Behind the West Side of 500 Block of 8th Street SE

The condition of the alley has contributed to serious public health and safety problems in the following ways:

- Rodents, mosquitoes, and slippery walkways. Because it hosts dumpsters and grease traps for seven restaurants and bars, as well as for a number of other businesses, the alley is an attractive space for rats. Rainwater mixed with food debris and grease collects in the potholes, creating pools of water, food and grease. Because of the depth of the potholes, this stagnant, contaminated water sits for weeks attracting scores of rodents and mosquitos. This poses a particular health hazard because the alley directly abuts the backyards of residential houses in the 500 block of 7th Street SE and several small apartment buildings in the 700 blocks of E Street SE and G Street SE. Neighbors also report that the alley and the sidewalk where the alley empties onto E Street are often slippery with water and grease.
- Discouraging power-washing. Because water collects in the alley's potholes, the restaurants are reluctant to power-wash the areas around their dumpsters as frequently as needed. While this may minimize the standing water in the alley, the practice of avoiding power-washing increases the rodent-attracting debris in and around the dumpsters and grease traps. With proper drainage, rain water would evaporate quickly, and the restaurants would be able to sweep up food and other debris as frequently as necessary. They would also be able to regularly power wash their dumpsters and the surrounding area.
- Communal trash compactor. Because the alley does not have a concrete footer, it cannot support a commercial trash compactor, which is a more rodent-proof and sanitary form of trash collection than individual dumpsters, particularly in an area with such a high concentration of dumpsters.

Emergency vehicle access. We are concerned about the ability of emergency vehicles (fire trucks and ambulances) to navigate the alley in the event of a fire or other emergency. The deep potholes would likely interfere with fast access. In addition, much of the paved portion of the alley is taken up with dumpsters and grease catches that may make it difficult for the larger fire trucks to access all of the commercial and residential buildings that back up to the alley. If the alley had a footer sufficient to support a single common trash compactor, most of the dumpsters would be unnecessary, which would effectively widen the alley.