



GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Dupont Circle Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2B

September 23, 2008

Mr. Tersh Boasberg, Chairman
Historic Preservation Review Board
801 North Capitol Street NE Suite 3000
Washington DC 20002

RE: 1400-1418 U Street and 1913-1944 14th Street, NW, HPA #08-033

Dear Chair Boasberg and Board Members,

At its regular meeting on September 10, 2008, the Dupont Circle Advisory Neighborhood Commission ("ANC 2B" or "Commission") reviewed the REVISED concept plans for the Utopia Project located at 14th and U Streets NW. With all of the nine sitting Commissioners in attendance, a quorum at a duly-noticed public meeting, the Commission approved the following motion by a vote of 9-0:

The Commission has consistently registered its position and concern about the compatibility of this project with the surrounding historic neighborhood. In its previous motions and testimony, the ANC2B has recommended that the height and scale of this project be reduced to mesh with the neighboring properties (see attachment).

The Commission was presented with revised drawings that showed the removal of one floor from the CR (northern) portion of the project. The plans also showed, and the architect confirmed, larger penthouse structures on both the CR and C3A portions of the proposed buildings. Concern was expressed about the changes in the penthouses, which occupy a large percentage of the roof area. The architect stated that the penthouses were not for residential use and would only house mechanical systems. Expanded built-up of the roof area, which contradicts the previous HPRB actions and approved plans, increases the building height and we do not approve these changes.

Therefore, consistent with its position for lower height, ANC2B unanimously approved the removal of one floor from the CR portion of the project and expressed concerns about the increase in the square footage of the roof structures.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me as the Commission's representative on this matter. I may be reached at 202-412-9434 or at Ramon.Estrada@dupontcircleanc.net for additional information or assistance.

ON BEHALF OF THE COMMISSION.

Sincerely,
Ramon Estrada, Chairman

Attachment
History of ANC 2B Actions
Utopia Project at 14th and U Streets NW

From the Dec 12, 2008 ANC 2B meeting/letter to HPRB:

We suggest:

1. Reducing the height of the building to relate to the existing historic block, with no more than five stories at the southern (C3A) portion of the parcel, no more than seven stories at the northern (C-R) portion of the project, with two story commercial fronts on 14th Street, for at least five feet back.
2. That due to the unique circumstances that define the historic interior block, including:
 - a. 15 foot wide egress (Historic Waverley)
 - b. high volume, existing usage, including Extra Space Storage and restaurants
 - c. historically designated Treto Way at the rear of the proposal, defining the boundary of the historic residential zone, and
 - d. two historic alley residences fronting on Treto Way with sole street access through Paloma Way and 15' Historic Waverly

We suggest that entry for the underground parking garage be relocated to the existing curb-cut on 14th Street.

3. Additionally, while we appreciate design considerations for historic/residential Treto Way, we oppose the creation of additional residential units opening onto the alley. Instead, to protect the adjacent historic residences, we suggest setting the rear of the building back at least 15' from the alley, providing screening, and moving loading docks and trash to the north end of the alley away from residences. We further suggest that the garage exhaust vent be moved from Treto Way.

From Feb 13, 2008 ANC 2B meeting/letter to HPRB:

We consider the progress drawings to be heading in the right direction; however:

1. The height has not been reduced per our recommendation and that of the HPRB. To recap, we recommended that the height of the building relate to the existing historic block, with no more than five stories at the southern (C3A) portion of the parcel, no more than seven stories at the northern (C-R) portion of the project,
2. We support the location of the entry for the underground parking garage on 14th Street, using the existing curb cut.
3. We oppose the eight story sections of the building that front on 14th Street without a setback. They are too tall and massive for the site.

From April 17, 2008 ANC 2B meeting/letter to HPRB:

ANC 2B continues to disapprove the proposed height of this project, as we think that it is incompatible with the historic neighborhood in which it is located. The overall design of the project is moving in the right direction; however, we request that the developer and architect modify the design, including materials, of the northern portion of the project to make it more visually compelling and sensitive to the historic character of the surrounding neighborhood. Using six story metal bays and painting them in a paint color that highlights their metallic nature is not appropriate. Furthermore, the design elements on the street/pedestrian level need to be reworked in the northern portion of the building. In particular, the design and projection of the bays needs to be revisited. The streetscape façade needs to incorporate more historic references, traditional elements, and signage in order to match the other street level shops in the neighborhood.

These requests are consistent with our view that this project must be blended into the historic fabric of the surrounding neighborhood. We look forward to seeing further modifications of the plans and urge the developer and architect to return to the ANC for another presentation.