



Government of the District of Columbia Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B

RESOLUTION #4B-19-0406

**Supporting Razing of Buildings 31 & 84 at the Parks at Walter Reed and
Widening of Aspen Street, NW
Adopted April 22, 2019**

Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B takes note of the following:

- The Walter Reed Army Medical Center was an Army medical campus serving the nation from 1909 until 2011. The 110-acre site has been designated a DC historic district. The Walter Reed Army Medical Center historic district includes numerous contributing historic buildings, structures, and landscape features, which remain largely intact and will be preserved or reused.
- Redevelopment of the site has been the subject of “extensive planning with significant community input.” *In the Matter of Walter Reed Army Medical Ctr. Bldg. 38*, HPA No. 18-309 (Mar. 7, 2019), at 4. Redevelopment provides significant public benefits, including over 2,000 housing units, space for community serving entities, two public charter schools, a new ambulatory care facility, and approximately 14 acres of open space, parks, and plazas. *Id.* at 5.
- One goal of the “extensive planning” process was “to integrate the formerly gated campus into the surrounding communities,” including a “new street network” and a “planned modernization of the existing roadway network includ[ing] bringing the roads up to [DC Department of Transportation] standards and providing for pedestrian, bike, and transit (i.e., multi-modal) circulation in addition to vehicular circulation.” Further, “[k]ey elements of the design include bike lanes, turn[] lanes, street trees, planted stormwater collectors ..., sidewalks, and curb bulb outs.” *Id.* at 5.
- Currently, Aspen Street, NW, is unsafe and deficient to serve community needs. It has no turn lanes, no facilities for bicyclists, a narrow and non-ADA compliant sidewalk on the north side of the street, and limited parking on the north side of the street. In March 2018, a fifth-grade student was struck in the 1400 block of Aspen Street, NW, and taken to a hospital in serious condition. Peter Herman, *Washington Post*, “Fifth-

grader struck by vehicle while walking to school in Northwest D.C.” (Mar. 7, 2018). Other accidents, some of which have involved major injuries, have occurred along Aspen Street, NW. See “Crashes in DC,” <http://opendata.dc.gov/datasets/crashes-in-dc?geometry=-77.034%2C38.971%2C-77.023%2C38.974>.

- Building 31 and Building 84, located along Aspen Street, NW, are “secondary buildings on the site” and contributing resources within the Walter Reed Army Medical Center historic district. Walter Reed Local Redevelopment Authority, Final Reuse Plan (July 13, 2012) at 174. Building 31 is a storage shed, constructed around 1921 (with later significant modifications). Building 84 is a wagon shed, constructed toward the end of the period of significance in 1942 (with later modifications). Building 31 and Building 84 limit the ability to address safety and accessibility concerns along Aspen Street, NW.
- The Parks at Walter Reed has agreed to return 20’ of private property to the city for improvements along Aspen Street, NW. Their plans provide for a 10’ pedestrian/bike trail, an 8’ planting area, an 8’ area for parallel parking on the north side of the street, the maintenance of both travel lanes, and the addition of turning lanes at Georgia Avenue and Aspen Street, NW. The DC Department of Transportation has indicated a 10’ pedestrian/bike trail separated by an 8’ planting buffer is its preference, but that it does not wish to make additional design efforts without the assurance that such a proposal would be approved. See Historic Preservation Review Board, Staff Report & Recommendation, Case Nos. 18-308, 18-353, 18-354 (Apr. 26, 2018) at 6.
- These plans would provide significant community benefits in making Aspen Street, NW, safer for all road users, ensuring that the broader community enjoys the benefits of the Walter Reed redevelopment, and providing a safe route to school for children who attend the District of Columbia International School and Latin American Montessori Bilingual School.
- The Walter Reed Local Redevelopment Authority Final Reuse Plan notes that Building 31 and Building 84 “effectively create[] a barrier between the neighborhood and the other support buildings in this portion of the site” and that removal “would provide a benefit to the surrounding community by allowing a physical and visual connection between Aspen Street and this distinctive area of the site.” Further, “Both buildings were originally constructed as simple structures for storage and other basic uses. These uses may be considered minor when compared to more substantial and unique support structures such as the nearby utility plant and gas station; all of which are being retained.” Walter Reed Local Redevelopment Authority, Final Reuse Plan (July 13, 2012) at 174.

- Demolition of Building 31 and Building 84 “is necessary in the public interest.” D.C. Code §§ 6-1105(e), -1106(e); 10 DCMR § 403.4. Specifically, demolition of Building 31 and Building 84 is “necessary to allow the construction of a project of special merit” that would “hav[e] significant benefits to the District of Columbia or to the community by virtue of ... social or other benefits having a high priority for community services.” *Id.* at §§ 1102(10), (11). Demolition of Building 31 and Building 84 is necessary for the safety of pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers who use Aspen Street, NW. The special merit of the safety and accessibility of the proposed pedestrian/bike trail, planting strip, additional parking, and turn lanes outweigh the harm to historic preservation values in the demolition of these two sheds. There is no viable alternative that provides adequate safety and accessibility.
- Community members have provided substantial feedback on their preference for demolition of Building 31 and Building 84 in the interests of safety of students traveling to the local public charter school, as well as area residents. On April 23, 2018, the former ANC 4B Design Review Committee recommended support for the raze permit for Building 31 and Building 84 provided the pedestrian/bike trail be widened from 10’ to 12’.

RESOLVED:

- That Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B supports the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development in seeking a raze application for Building 31 and Building 84 for purposes of widening Aspen Street, NW, to include a 10’ pedestrian/bike trail, an 8’ planting buffer, additional parking along the north side of Aspen Street, NW, and turning lanes at Georgia Avenue and Aspen Street, NW.
- That Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B strongly encourages the DC Department of Transportation to present finalized plans to the Commission and the community and provides conditional support dependent on the inclusion of a 10’ pedestrian/bike trail, an 8’ planting buffer, additional parking along the north side of Aspen Street, NW, and turning lanes at Georgia Avenue and Aspen Street, NW.
- That Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B strongly encourages the Parks at Walter Reed, in conjunction with the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development (and any other relevant entity), to memorialize and commemorate Building 31 and Building 84 through photographs and measurements taken prior to razing these Buildings.

FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the Commission designates Commissioner Erin Palmer, ANC 4B02, to represent the Commission in all matters relating to this resolution.

FURTHER RESOLVED:

That, in the event the designated representative Commissioner cannot carry out their representative duties for any reason, the Commission authorizes the Chair to designate another Commissioner to represent the Commission in all matter relating to this resolution.

FURTHER RESOLVED:

That, consistent with DC Code § 1-309, only actions of the full Commission voting in a properly noticed public meeting have standing and carry great weight. The actions, positions, and opinions of individual commissioners, insofar as they may be contradictory to or otherwise inconsistent with the expressed position of the full Commission in a properly adopted resolution or letter, have no standing and cannot be considered as in any way associated with the Commission.

ADOPTED by show of hands vote at a regular public meeting (notice of which was properly given, and at which a quorum of nine of nine members was present) on April 22, 2019, by a vote of 9 yes, 0 no, 0 abstain.