



March 8, 2016

Dear Mayor Bowser,

On February 25, Ward 5 residents gathered at the New Canaan Baptist Church and shared our deep concerns about subjecting homeless families to living in a heavily industrial area at 2266 25<sup>th</sup> Place NE. Residents noted that your proposed site would pose a host of health hazards to residents, especially for children, due to its immediate proximity to the Metro Bus Garage to the north, auto spray booths to the east, CSX railroad tracks to the west and the Nazcon cement mixing facility to the south. The site also offers insufficient transportation options, is far from other homes or basic amenities that would allow these homeless citizens to be self-sufficient, such as a grocery or drug store.

Mayor Bowser, it is indefensible to place a homeless shelter closer to a strip club than a grocery store. By all accounts, this site location fails your criteria for being a better alternative to DC General. Namely this site is not (1) integrated into a residential setting (2) a dignified place for homeless families to live nor (3) provides for a healthy and safe environment. Moreover, this location is very close to other shelters in one of Ward 5's twenty neighborhoods. This overconcentration of homeless citizens directly contradicts your vision for fair distribution of the new shelters as part of your HOMEWARD program.

Mayor Bowser, there is no disputing that DC General is not dignified, healthy or safe and must be closed. But it accomplishes nothing if you go from dumping homeless families in DC General to dumping them in the same deplorable conditions your program intends to rectify.

During the meeting on February 25 residents of Ward 5 identified alternative locations that meet your criteria for better alternatives to DC General. The sites we identified include:

- A 84,856 square feet site (currently an empty field) for sale at the corner of 13<sup>th</sup> St NE and Rhode Island Ave NE. Contact Bruce Levin with MAC Realty Advisors at 202-296-0459
- The St. Frances De Sales school near Mills Ave NE and Rhode Island Ave NE, which is closed and available. Contact Michelle Shelton at 301-853-4474
- The former tourist home at 2900 Rhode Island Avenue NE, vacant and available for purchase
- The former MPD Youth Division at 1700 Rhode Island Ave NE
- 2900 South Dakota Ave NE, vacant and available for purchase
- Missionaries of Charity Convent at Eastern Ave NE and Randolph NE, vacant and available for purchase
- Potomac Prep Charter School which is closing
- Tree of Life Public Charter which is closing
- A site incorporated into developments underway in Fort Totten area
- A decommissioned DC public school buildings such as Springarn High School or Crummell Elementary

For a complete list of shared ideas – including alternate arrangements such as creating smaller sites scattered throughout the Ward, please review notes from the February 25 meeting, attached here.

Mayor Bowser, it would be unconscionable for you to move forward with your current proposal before fully vetting these dignified alternative locations. We sincerely hope you will do right by the community and homeless families by doing so. We look forward to remaining engaged in helping better serve our homeless citizens in Ward 5.

Sincerely,

Representatives of the Langdon Park Community Association - [www.langdonparkdc.org](http://www.langdonparkdc.org)

# WARD 5 Emergency Meeting

Response to Mayor Bowser's  
Homeward Program



**Meeting Date:** February 25, 2016, 6:30PM – 8:30PM

**Meeting Location:** New Canaan Baptist Church, 2826 Bladensburg Rd NE, WDC

**Purpose:** Discuss Community Concerns; Propose Alternative Ward 5 Site Location

**Organizers:** Langdon Park Community Association \* Woodridge South Community Association

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📍 [www.Langdonparkdc.org](http://www.Langdonparkdc.org), [www.nextdoor.com](http://www.nextdoor.com)

## Community Meeting Notes

### **Background:**

The Langdon Park and Woodridge South Community Associations called for an emergency meeting with Ward 5 residents to discuss the Mayor's plan to place home shelters in all 8 Wards. Mayor Bowser proposed placing the Ward 5 facility at **2266 25<sup>th</sup> Place NE**, which is in an industrial area flanked by the Metro Bus Barn to the left, CSX railroad tracks to the rear, and Nightclubs to the right. There are other environmental issues and concerns with this site location as it is near Waste Management, marijuana cultivation centers, and auto spray booths. The site at 2266 25<sup>th</sup> Place NE also does not offer viable transportation options nor does it provide the sort of amenities (i.e. grocery store or drug store) that would allow our homeless citizens to be self-sufficient. By all accounts, the site location is not appropriate under the guidelines set forth by the Mayor in allowing our homeless citizens to 1) integrate into the community, 2) maintain their dignity, and 3) provides a healthy and safe environment. Moreover, this location is very close to other area shelters in this area of Ward 5 thus creating an over concentration of homeless citizens within the combined communities.

### **Facts:**

Ward 5 has both homeless shelter facilities as well as hotels serving as temporary shelters. These include:

1. Adams Place NE – Men's Shelter\*
2. Days Inn – up to 300 hundred families\*\*
3. Quality Inn – up to 300 hundred families\*\*
4. Holiday Inn – up to 40 families\*\*
5. Fairfield Inn – up to 40 families\*\*
6. Howard Johnson – up to 40 families\*\*
7. New York Ave (Ivy City) – Men's Shelter\*

*\*Denotes designated shelters*

*\*\*Number of families may not accurately reflect current numbers and are approximations based upon past data.*

- Overconcentration of homeless shelter facilities in SMD 5C
- 8-ward strategy – Sites address homeless families that need temporary support. Sites do not address citizens with mental disabilities.
- Need more homes instead of shelters for families rather than distinct shelters. Homes can and should be dispersed throughout Ward 5, integrated into neighborhoods.

### **Legislative Conversation**

1. Hearing Date: March 17, 10AM Room 500  
See: <http://ims.dccouncil.us/Download/35335/B21-0620-HearingNotice1.pdf>
2. Current location requires a use variance from the Board of Zoning.
3. 15 Year Lease with 5 option years – \$2 Million/year; private rooms (no bathroom, kitchen), approximately \$3400 per room

**See the full list of sites here:**

[http://mayor.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/mayoromb/page\\_content/attachments/Short-Term-Family-Housing-Site-Selection-2.pdf](http://mayor.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/mayoromb/page_content/attachments/Short-Term-Family-Housing-Site-Selection-2.pdf) According to the Mayor's office, there were only two sites that were considered in Ward 5.

Residents in Ward 5 agreed we can do better for our homeless citizens.

**Resident Recommended Criteria for Good Homeless Shelter Location**

- Residential Area
- Healthy, dignified, and ethical
- Transportation multiple bus lines or train options
- Green Space
- Near Amenities like grocery store, drug store
- Job Centers within the facility
- Cost effective (come up with locations, homes, smaller sites that cost less than the proposed sites)
- Social services (medical, mental)

**Alternative Sites and Ideas for Consideration from Ward 5 Residents**

- 13<sup>th</sup> and Rhode Island Ave NE Empty lot next to Fire Station
- Fort Totten Area near UDC
- Fort Totten housing development
- Potomac Prep Charter School Closing\*
- Tree of Life Public Charter School Closing\*
- Rhode Island and Newton Street (former tourist home)
- St. Frances DeSales School and Convent vacant (closed and available)\*
- Former MPD Youth Division on (17<sup>th</sup> and RI) Rhode Island Ave NE\*
- 2900 South Dakota Ave NE, still vacant and available for purchase\*
- Bladensburg/NY Ave NE Road Development
- Decommissioned DCPS School Buildings (Spingarn High School, Crummell Elementary)
- St. Joseph's Eastern Ave and Randolph
- DC Housing Stock\*
- Smaller scattered sites throughout Ward 5
- Convert the \$3400 per room into vouchers to afford apartments
- Collaborate with Religious Community, Non Profit Community on suitable locations

**Other Proposed Sites Upon Further Evaluation Determined to Not Be in Ward 5**

- Corner of Riggs and South Dakota Ave
- Thurgood Marshall (will potentially re-open, ANC Commissioner opposes location)
- Walter Reed, Georgia Ave NW (Ward 4)
- Old Soldiers Home (Ward 4)
- St. Benedict the Moor (ward 7)

## Lingering Questions

- What are the plans to fix the management issues in current shelters, group homes, or facilities to help homeless citizens?
- Where and how many Public/Private Shelters exist in all of Ward 5?
- How will this plan be different from existing Shelter system?
- Where is the religious/faith-based community? Most have a homelessness ministry. What about the non-profit and NGOs who specialize in taking care of homeless citizens?

## What if? What do you want to see in the area if the mayor keeps the current site?

- File legal action against the City Government.
- Find out if there are other locations outside of DC where this model worked. Ask the Mayor's Office for proof where this model has worked or is working.
- Have the entire industrial area nearby re-zoned to residential area, mixed use area, or anchor for transformation.
- Require environmental impact study to ensure no health hazards for families.
- Require private bathroom, kitchen within the rooms
- Fund Ward 5 Works; see Office of Planning Website: <http://planning.dc.gov/publication/ward-5-industrial-land-transformation-study>