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ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION 1B CALLS ON BOWSER ADMINISTRATION TO TAKE STEPS TO BEGIN THE GRIMKE SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT

(Washington, DC) - The Grimke School looms large over our neighborhood due to its historic significance, its promise of acting as a gateway to the immediate neighborhood to the east, and sadly because of its current decrepit state. ANC 1B and the community worked extensively with DMPED and the prospective developers to craft a proposal that would address all of these issues and we believed that with the Roadside and DLR Group/Sorg proposal that we had succeeded. Unfortunately, delays on top of delays by all parties to this deal have created an untenable situation, and we are forced to shed light on the process in hopes of reaching a conclusion.

ANC 1B, the proposed tenants, and neighbors directly adjacent to the property are losing confidence in the timely delivery of the project by Roadside Development, LLC and DLR Group/Sorg Architects. Countless meetings and negotiations on this project have resulted in nothing but empty promises or excuses. On Thursday, November 3, 2016, ANC 1B passed a resolution calling on the Bowser Administration to take action on the Grimke School Development.

Specifically, ANC 1B called on Mayor Bowser to set a date of December 1, 2016 for execution of the deal documents, otherwise the ANC is prepared to:

1. Ask the General Counsel and Attorney General to aggressively pursue legal remedy, fines, and penalties;
2. Either through regulatory authority or legislation, as lead developer bar Richard Lake, Principal, and Roadside Development, LLC from participating in DC Government sponsored real estate projects for 5 years;
3. Either through regulatory authority or legislation, as secondary developer bar Suman Sorg, Principal, and DLR Group/Sorg Architects from participating in DC Government sponsored real estate projects for 3 years; and,
4. Reissue an accelerated RFP for a new developer for the Grimke Redevelopment that retains the proposed tenants and establishes professional space to activate the area for daytime use.

It is worth nothing that the ANC has been a partner in this development, pushing for transparency and completion for many years. ANC 1B held two public informational sessions and three public meetings in
2014 in response to the Grimke RFP and from those meetings it was decided that the following major points should be included in the winning proposal:

1. Defined use of the space for arts, culture, and creative uses per the Duke Plan.
2. Increased daytime and weekend use that would bring new visitors to our neighborhood.
3. Opportunity to leverage commercial corridor space for daytime professional jobs and daytime patronage of restaurants and shops.
4. Recognition of the historic nature of the site and the significance of its location in the greater neighborhood.

The Roadside and DLR/Sorg proposal incorporated all of these points and did so in a creative and unique way. Step Afrika!, City Dance, and Imagination Stage all could provide the arts use directed by the Duke plan, while also increasing daytime use through their employees and artists. Further, weekend use will be increased through performances and classes for the community, and this will all add to a vibrant and beautiful building greeting people as they exit the metro and enter our neighborhood. This proposal included a proper location for the African American Civil War Museum, which will allow the museum to reach a larger audience and be more visible in the community.

ANC 1B also supports the option of changing the micro-unit residential building to professional office space. Our community and businesses need more daytime density so that restaurants can be food focused and shops can be busy every day and not just weekends. ANC 1B has a strong history of supporting affordable, inclusionary housing whether it is our ZPD Committee pushing developers to include more and better IZ units than required, or our Economic Development Committee holding the District accountable for making the proposed Ward 1 homeless shelter a home that works for the families it will be serving. We believe a small footprint micro-unit residential building on a commercial corridor may not serve the needs of our community and that better solutions may be found within our more residential neighborhoods.

All together, these uses recognize the significance of the Grimke School in the history of our neighborhood, the value of a civic plaza of the combined AACW Museum and the AACW Memorial, and the important role it has to play in our future.

The Commissioners of ANC 1B, the most grassroots elected body in DC Government, have worked in good faith with the community, the Council, DMPED, and Roadside and DLR Group/Sorg on the redevelopment. We strongly urge all parties to find a way to make this project move forward and bring daytime use to U Street.