

STAFF RECOMMENDATION



Hinkle
NCPC File No. MP40

UNIVERSITY OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA VAN NESS CAMPUS PLAN

4200 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C.

Submitted by the University of the District of Columbia

November 22, 2011

Abstract

The University of the District of Columbia (UDC) has submitted a final master plan for its Van Ness Campus for the years 2011-2020. The UDC is currently implementing a long-range program to transition the Van Ness Campus to a selective admission 4-year institution. As such, UDC has developed an updated master plan to accommodate projected student growth at the university through the year 2020. As the campus was originally constructed to accommodate more students than is projected to be on campus by 2020, the campus plan does not include new classroom space. However, to support the proposed population increase in students and associated staff, the campus plan features: construction of a new student center at the intersection of Connecticut Avenue and Van Ness Streets, NW; construction of student housing on the southwest corner of the campus; and other renovations and improvements to substantially “green” the campus, including the installation of new green roofs on existing buildings. No new parking is proposed in the master plan, and as a component of the master plan UDC proposes to improve the regulation of its existing parking supply in order to increase dependence on existing transit for access to/from the campus.

Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Approval of final master plan pursuant to the terms governing the transfer of jurisdiction of the University of the District of Columbia site as recorded in the Office of the Surveyor of the District of Columbia on January 11, 1973.

Executive Director’s Recommendation

The Commission:

Approves the University of the District of Columbia - Van Ness Campus Plan for use by the Commission in future reviews of individual site and building projects, **noting** that the Commission will defer action on the proposed Student Housing and Athletic Zone located in the southwest portion of the campus until additional information on the site plan and design of the student housing is available to allow the Department of State to conduct a security assessment of

potential impacts of the student housing on the embassies located in the abutting International Chancery Center.

Commends the University of the District of Columbia on its efforts to green its campus, improve the streetscape, and add community oriented retail along Connecticut Avenue, NW.

Notes that the Commission supports the development of student housing on the Van Ness Campus, and with the additional security information provided by the Department of State the Commission will be able to assess the degree to which the student housing may impact the embassies within the International Chancery Center during its subsequent review of the student housing project.

Requests that the applicant coordinate closely with NCPC staff and the Department of State throughout design development of the student housing and on any enhancements to the campus perimeter adjacent to the International Chancery Center.

Notes that if the University of the District of Columbia decides to locate the proposed student housing elsewhere other than what is currently depicted in the master plan that additional analysis will be required in order to allow NCPC to meet its obligations under the National Environmental Policy Act and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

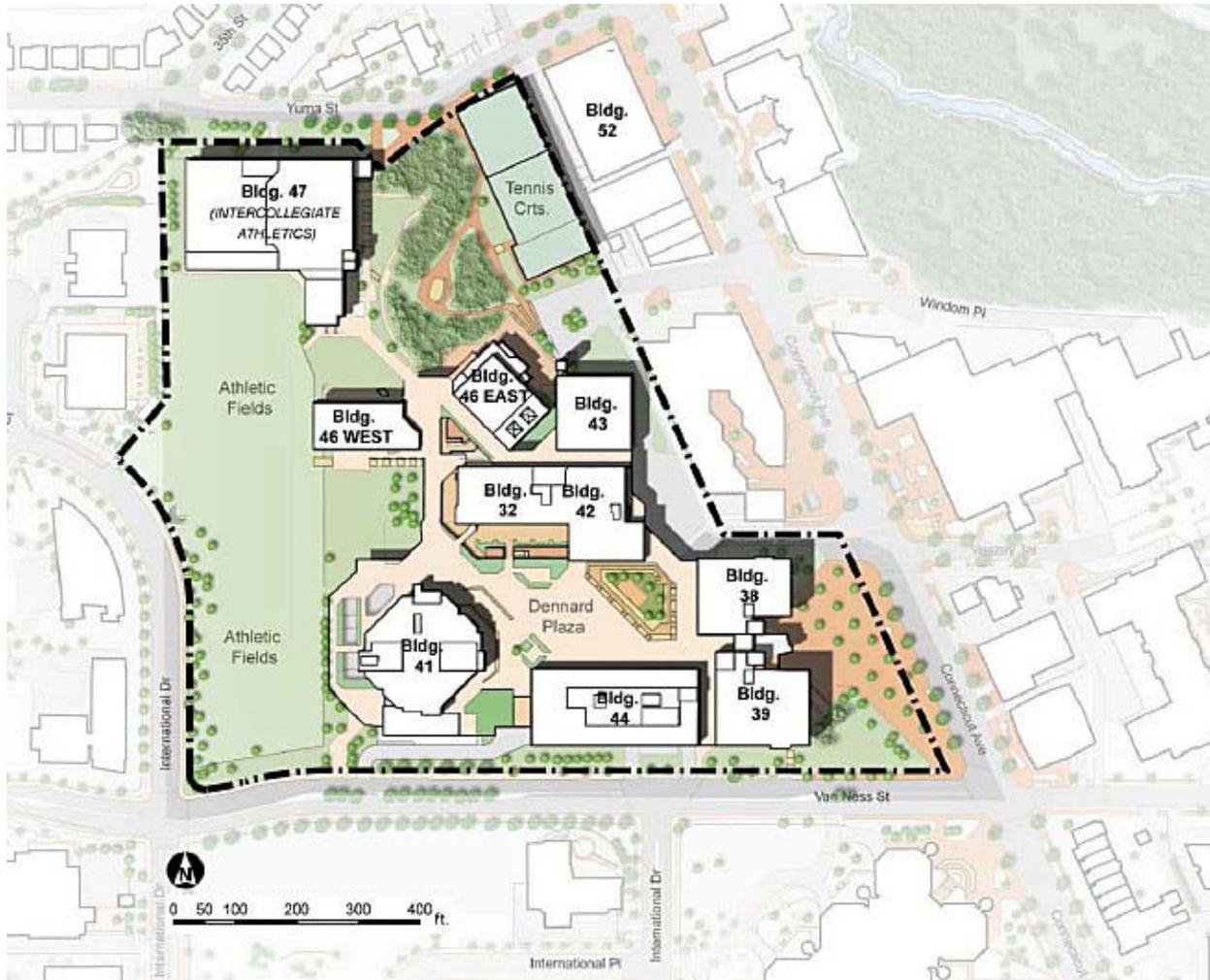
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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Site

The Van Ness Campus is the main campus of the University of the District of Columbia. The campus is located at the intersection of Connecticut Avenue and Van Ness Street, NW. It is immediately adjacent to the Van Ness Metrorail station.

The campus remains on property titled to the United States Government, however, jurisdiction over the property was transferred to the District of Columbia pursuant to a 1972 transfer of jurisdiction by the General Services Administration. While NCPC does not typically review campus plans for universities within the District, the terms governing the transfer of jurisdiction require NCPC approval for any master plan at the site.



Existing site plan

Background

The UDC, while a relatively new institution itself, has its roots in previous institutions of higher education within the District. In the 19th century the Miner Normal School and Washington (later Wilson) Normal School were founded as schools for young women. In 1929 the two schools became four-year teachers colleges—then the only institutions of public higher education in the District of Columbia. In 1955, the two institutions were integrated and combined to form the District of Columbia Teachers College.

In the 1960's, President John F. Kennedy appointed a commission to study the issue of providing comprehensive and affordable public higher education for District residents. Pursuant to the commission's recommendation, Congress established two schools to serve the needs of the community: the Federal City College, of which the board was appointed by the Mayor of the District of Columbia, and the Washington Technical Institute, of which the board was appointed by the President of the United States. Both institutions opened their doors in 1968 as land-grant colleges and received accreditation in the early 1970s.

Following the grant of home rule to the District of Columbia, the District reshaped the city's public higher education system, and consolidated the Federal City College, Washington Technical Institute, and District of Columbia Teachers College into the University of the District of Columbia—located at the Van Ness Campus. Most recently, in 2009, the University established the Community College of the District of Columbia (CCDC) to more directly provide workforce development and professional training to District residents. The CCDC offers a combination of certificate programs in job and professional training and two-year associate degree programs.

In forming the CCDC in 2009, the University established satellite locations throughout the District, including the key locations of the CCDC Center at 801 North Capitol Street, NE and the Bertie Backus School at the southeast corner of South Dakota Avenue, NE and Hamilton Street, NE, near Fort Totten. Placing its community college function in other locations allows UDC to transform its Van Ness Campus into a premier selective admissions university that offers affordable post-secondary education to District residents at the certificate, baccalaureate and graduate levels. The Van Ness Campus Plan will guide the physical transformation of UDC into this selective admission 4-year institution.

In accordance with District regulations, UDC submitted the Van Ness Campus Plan for review by the Zoning Commission of the District of Columbia, which approved the campus plan at its June 27, 2011 public meeting. This approved campus plan is what has been submitted to NCPC for final review; the proposal is described below.

Proposal

Through a public and deliberative planning process, UDC identified the following goals to implement its vision for the Van Ness Campus:

- Establish the UDC Van Ness Campus as a landmark main campus hub emerging as an important economic engine for the District and the region.
- Improve campus visibility from Connecticut Avenue while improving the entry points to the University.
- Create opportunities to enhance the student experience while creating revenue generating activities.
- Establish campus zones within the campus to provide distinct yet connected areas that improve convenience, enhance orientation and improve operational effectiveness.
- Accommodate future growth by establishing a commitment to the environment and new technologies.
- Reduce parking need recognizing that the university is an urban setting with direct access to mass transit.
- Improve campus open space within an urban setting to effectively maximize the utilization of open space; with the aim to provide much needed green space and better pedestrian circulation through the campus.
- Strengthen campus image and character by enhancing public entry to the campus while improving security by establishing a secured campus edge.

Over the next decade, the Van Ness Campus for UDC will function as the principal location for core academic and administrative functions associated with the University's undergraduate and

graduate programs. Additional program space will be made available through the ongoing transition of community college functions to off-site locations. As a result, the University does not project a need for additional facilities devoted to academic/administrative use over the life of the Plan (2011-2020), though existing facilities may be renovated to support contemporary instructional requirements.

The Van Ness Campus Plan features three primary physical changes to the campus site:

- Construction of a new student center at the intersection of Connecticut Avenue and Van Ness Street NW and construction of student housing on the southwest corner of the campus.
- Renovation and improvements to substantially "green" the campus, including the installation of new green roofs and similar improvements.
- Improved perimeter conditions and campus wayfinding.

In addition to these physical changes, UDC will continue to leverage its strategic location atop the Van Ness Metrorail station and adopt Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies to fully utilize District transit options and minimize traffic and parking impacts. The physical changes and TDM strategies are described below:

Student center and new student housing

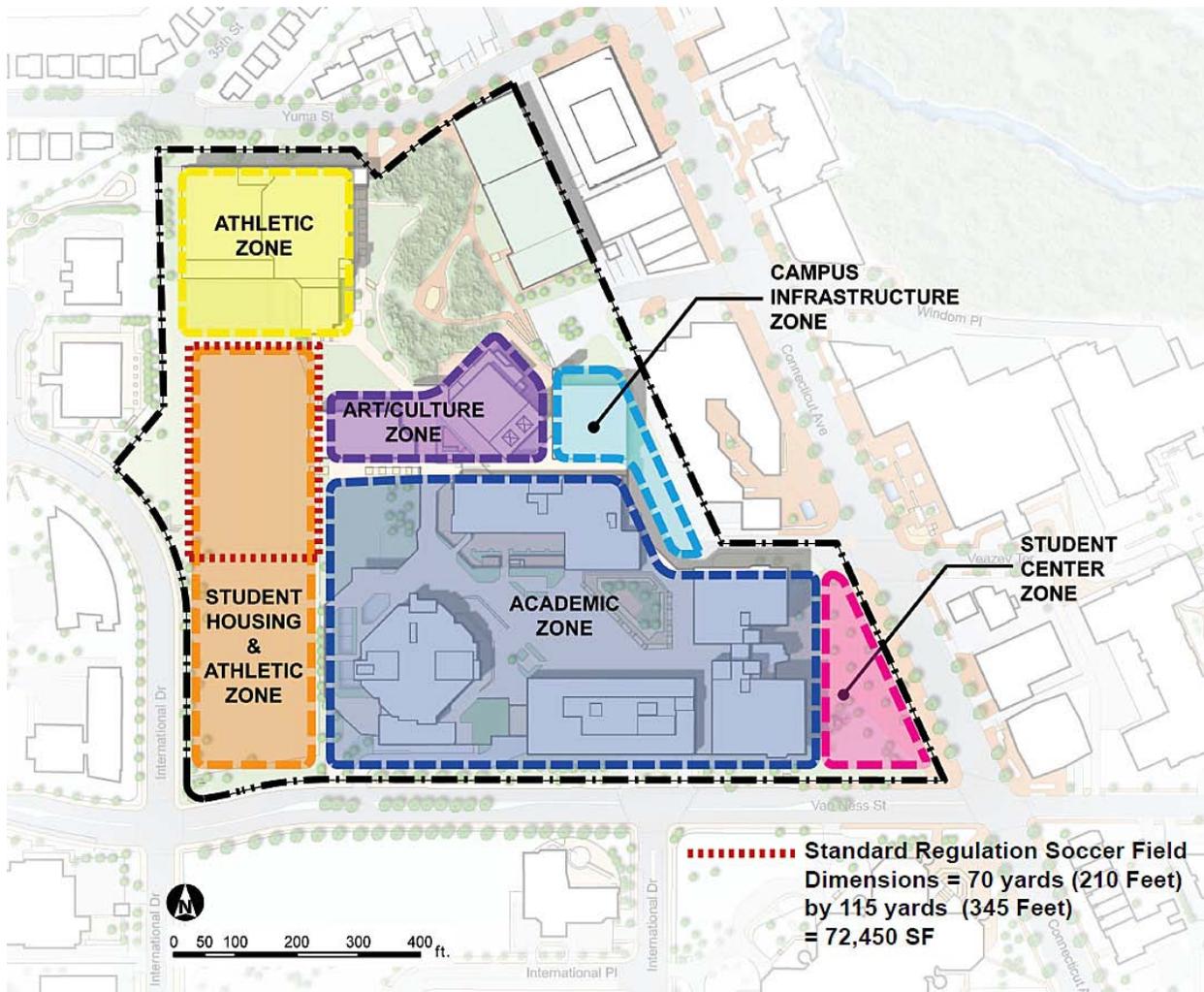
The Van Ness Campus Plan calls for the construction of a new on-campus student center. The facility is anticipated to be a hub of student activity yet also provide resources for the local community. The student center will contain a mix of uses including space for student government and activity offices, assembly space for university programs, and spaces for student leisure and socializing. It will also include food service operations intended to cater to the planned mix of residential and commuter students, as well as faculty, staff, and visitors. The Council of the District of Columbia has already allocated funding for the construction the center. The center is expected to contain approximately 80,000 square feet of floor area in order to accommodate the planned needs of the University as its enrollment continues to grow. The Commission provided comments on a concept design for the student center at its May 5, 2011 meeting¹, and is reviewing the preliminary and final site and building plans for the center concurrently with this final master plan.

The Plan also calls for the construction of approximately 600 on-campus beds so that the University may compete for students that expect a residential undergraduate program experience. Preliminary analyses suggest that the proposed housing could be constructed in a pair of buildings containing a total of approximately 280,000 square feet of floor area. The proposed housing facilities may also contain space for other student amenities.

Alternative concepts were evaluated for the placement of the planned student center and student housing. Site evaluations examined the development potential to accommodate the program needs for each use taking into consideration applicable restrictions on height, bulk, and setbacks. These evaluations also considered the potential for each location to integrate the planned

¹ See NCPC file No. 7228.

facilities into the existing campus in an organized manner that enhances campus life, character, operations, and community engagement.

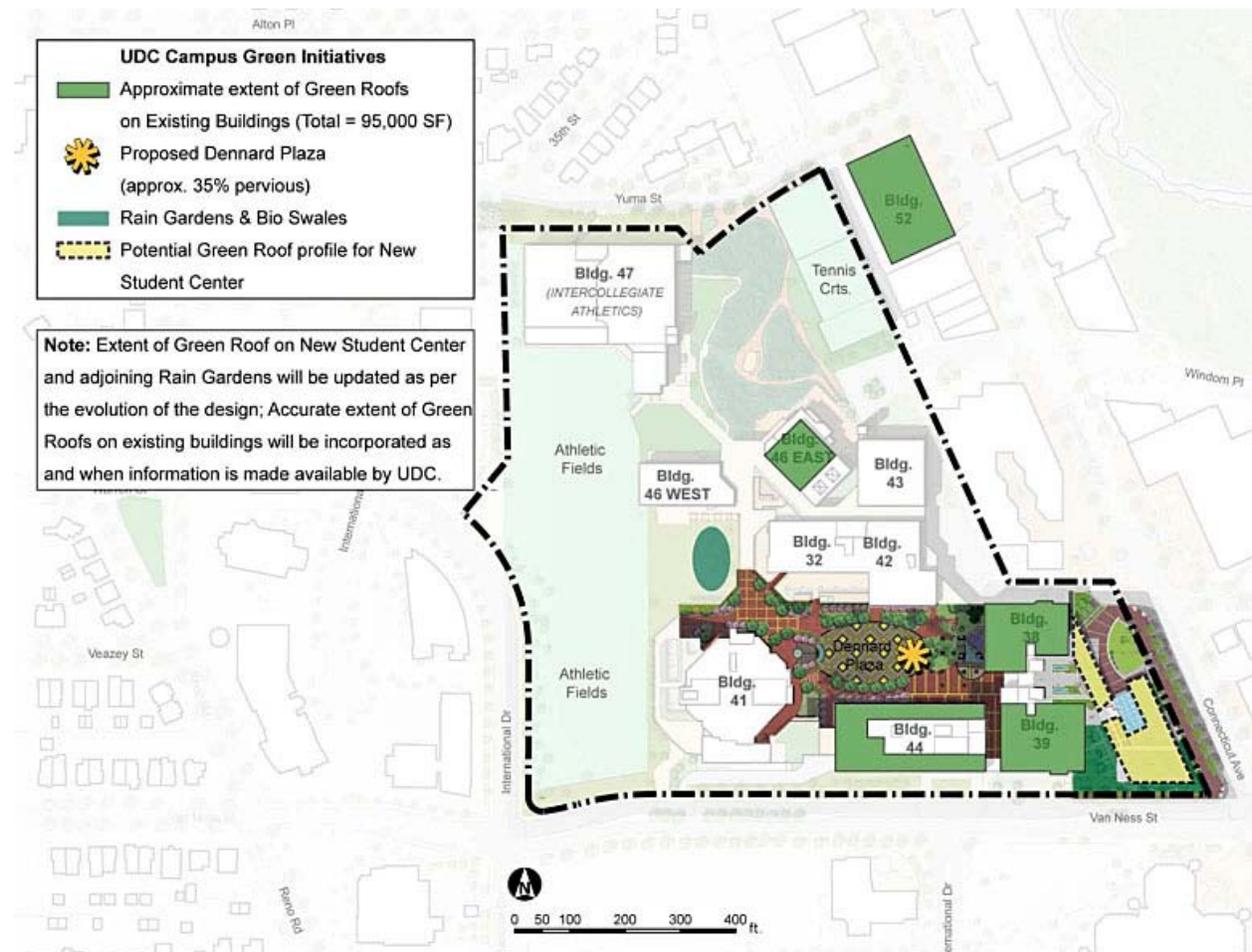


Campus Plan zone map, with the sites identified for the new student center and student housing

Following this evaluation, UDC determined to locate the student center at the corner of Connecticut Avenue and Van Ness Street, NW. This site offers the advantage of high visibility and connectivity to existing campus academic buildings, services and infrastructure. In addition, this location offers the added benefit of re-defining the identity of the campus as it relates to the surrounding commercial district, and creating a stronger entry condition to the campus through the building.

The UDC also determined to locate the student housing near the southwest corner of the campus. Following discussions during the Zoning Commission review of the Campus Plan, the Zoning Commission approved a general site for the student housing that provides some flexibility in how the housing could be situated in relation to the existing and future configuration of the athletic fields. This site is identified as the “Student Housing & Athletic Zone” in the Campus Plan zone map above. The flexibility that this zone provides also allows for further study of the size and massing of the student housing in the future.

Greening the campus



Elements of the campus green initiative. The graphic illustrates where the UDC is proposing to add green roofs to existing buildings, reconstruct Dennard Plaza, add rain gardens and bio-swales, and construct the new student center with a green roof.

The University plans to integrate sustainable design practices into all new construction and also undertake substantial improvements to improve the operation of its existing facilities. The University has reconstructed Dennard Plaza, the pedestrian center of the campus, with pervious pavers to reduce storm water runoff from the campus, and anticipates installing green roofs on several campus buildings, including the new student center, throughout implementation of the campus plan. In addition, the University is planning to ensure compliance with the District requirements to meet the US Green Building Council's LEED Silver standard for all new construction, minimize disturbance to existing trees and open space, adopt the District's goal of a 5 percent increase in tree canopy by 2020, and design landscaped areas to minimize the need for irrigation, or utilize non-potable water for irrigation.

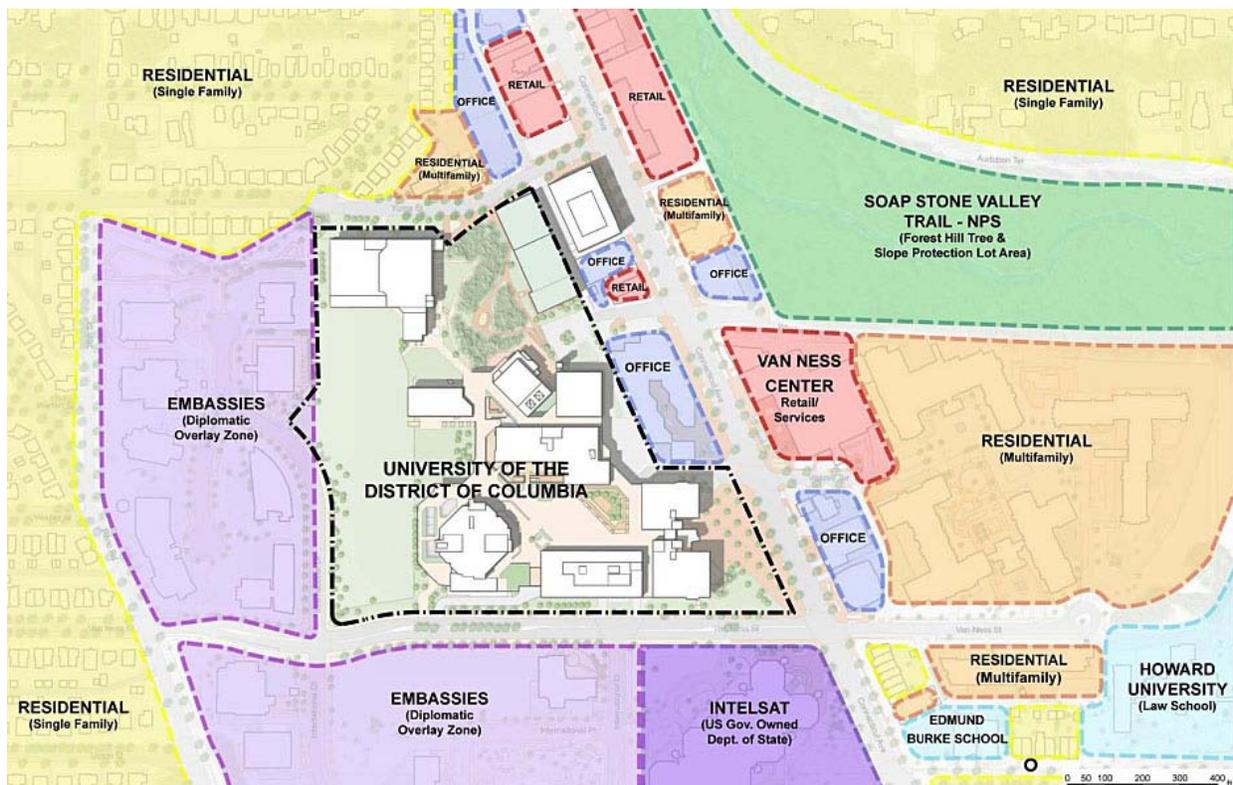
Campus Perimeter and Wayfinding

The Van Ness Campus is located immediately adjacent to the Van Ness Metrorail station. It is roughly bound by commercial development along Connecticut Avenue, NW on the east, Van

Ness Street, NW on the south, a portion of the International Chancery Center (ICC) on the west, and Yuma Street on the north.

The campus is sited at the hub of a mix of uses and densities that reflect the location's function as an urban center atop a Metrorail station. The Connecticut Avenue corridor features a mixture of medium and high-density commercial and residential development, including a supermarket and several national retailers as well as smaller businesses, office development, and multiple mid- and high-rise apartment buildings. Buildings surrounding the commercial district range in heights from two to ten stories, and were predominantly constructed within the last 25 years. With few exceptions, most are privately owned. While the Van Ness area functions as an important community shopping district, it suffers from an unwelcoming street environment, an excessive amount of hardscape surfaces, parking problems, a lack of distinctive facades and storefronts, a limited range of retail goods and services, and a loss of ground floor retail space to institutional and school uses. Opportunities exist to improve the identity of the district and create a welcoming appearance similar to the older commercial districts to the south.

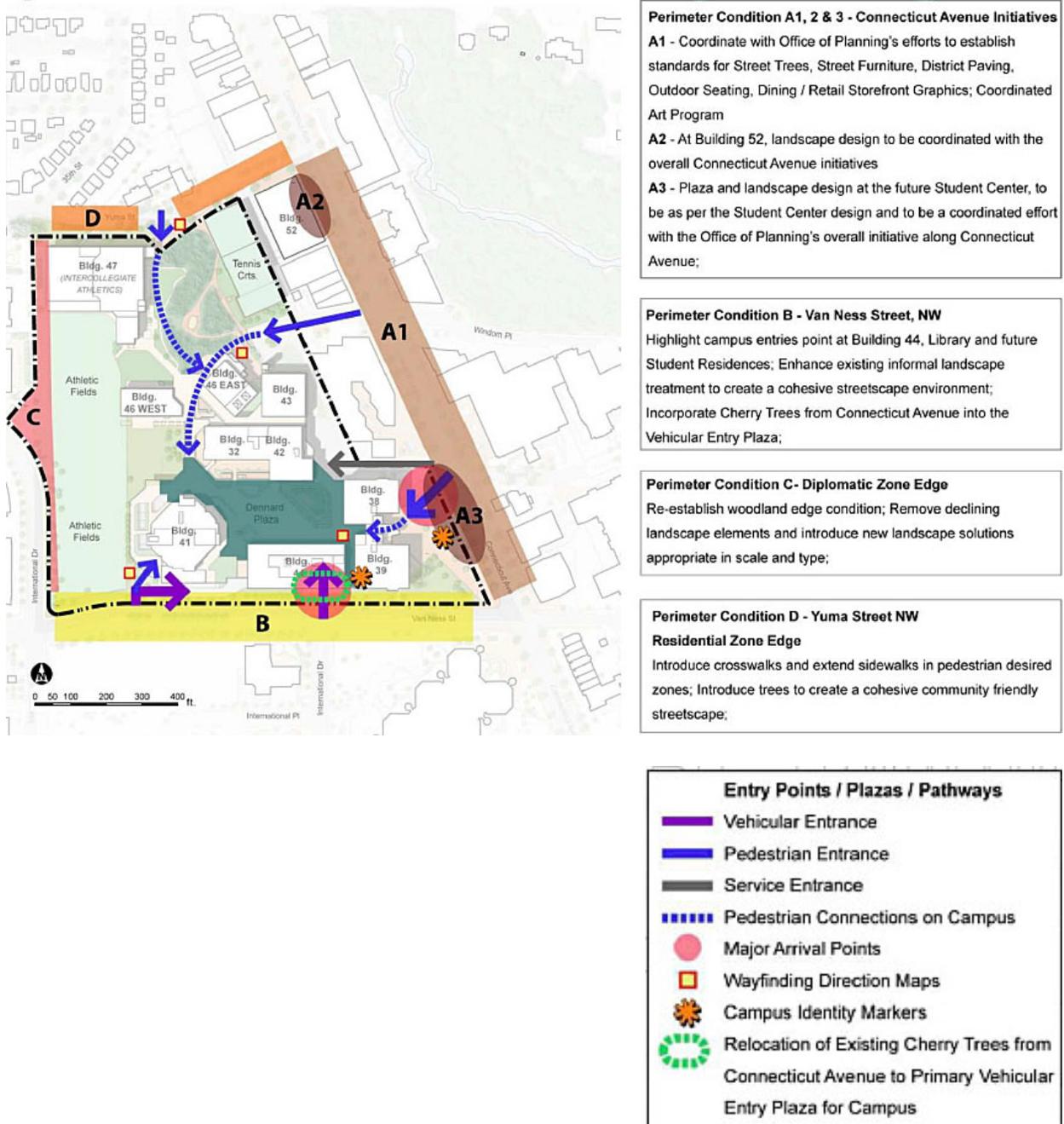
Immediately adjacent to the south and west is Intelsat's administrative headquarters and the ICC, which houses nearly twenty diplomatic embassies. Further to the north and west of the campus are low-density single-family and duplex houses.



Community context of UDC site

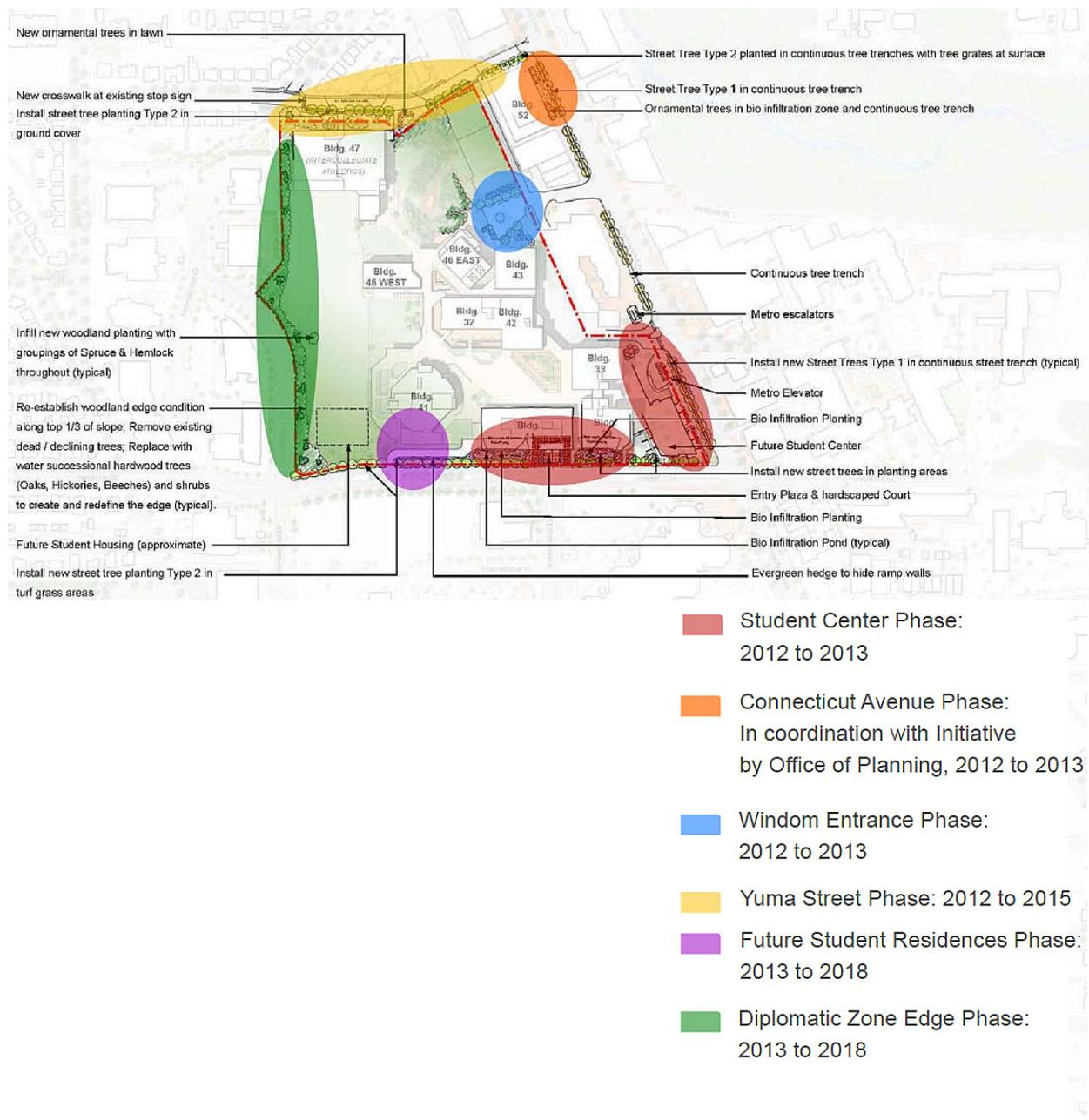
The master plan recommends a number of enhancements for the perimeter of the Van Ness Campus, including streetscape enhancements along Connecticut Avenue, NW and Van Ness Street, NW; improved pedestrian and vehicular access points; improved landscaping along Yuma

Street, NW and the border of the ICC; and improved campus wayfinding signs and markers. These are further detailed in the graphic below.



Perimeter enhancements

The draft master plan also identifies a phasing plan to implement the recommended physical changes to the Van Ness Campus. These are identified in the below graphic.



Phasing plan

Transportation Demand Management strategies

The Van Ness Campus Plan accommodates an increase in population on the campus without adding more parking supply or roadway capacity. UDC proposes that student, faculty and staff will increasingly walk and/or take advantage of Metrorail, Metrobus, and Capital Bikeshare to get to and from campus and has developed a thorough set of Transportation Demand Management (TDM) programs and policies.

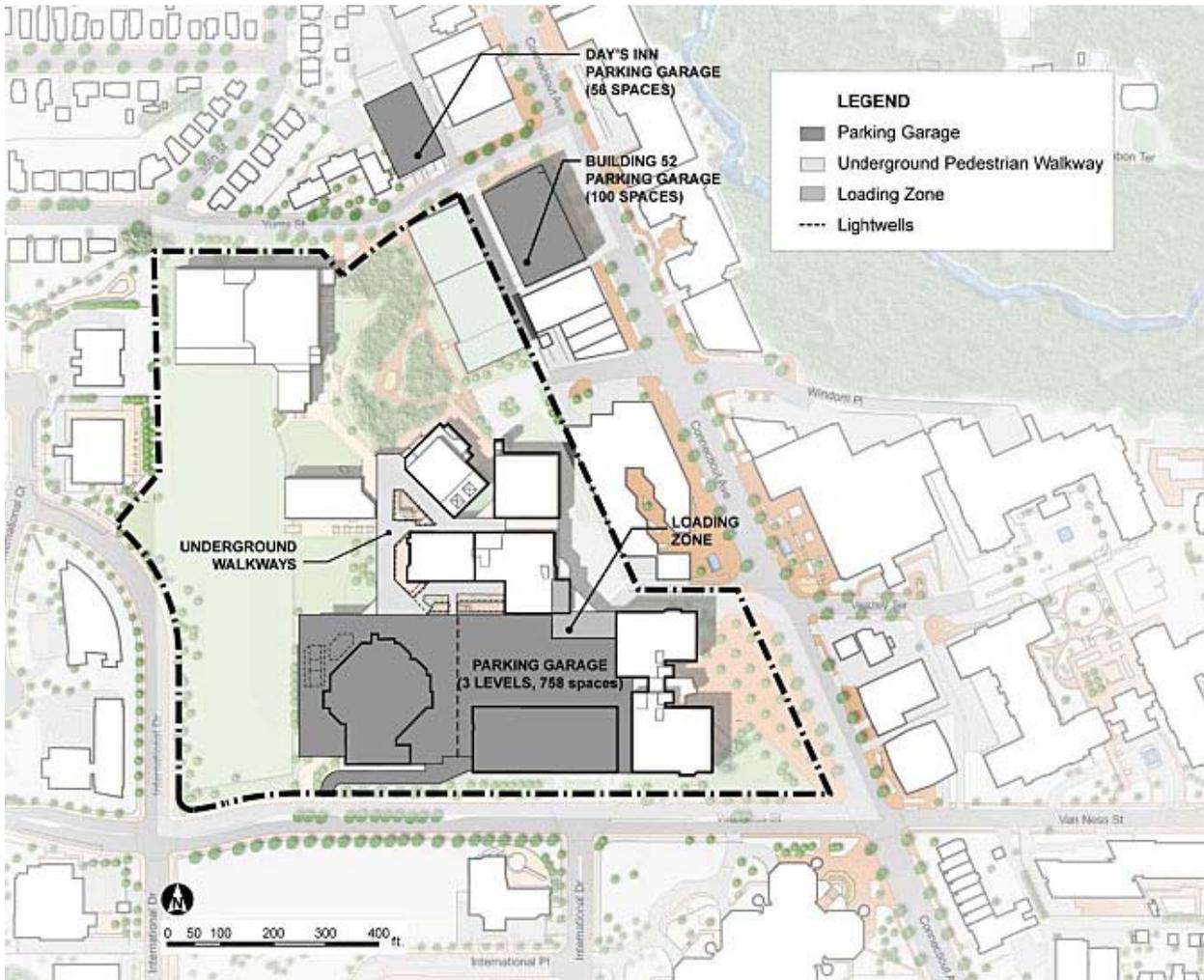
The goal of the TDM program and policies are not only to reduce the vehicular demand to the campus, but to organize, market, and monitor the different TDM strategies employed to ensure efficiency in their implementation. Following the Zoning Commission's approval of the Campus Plan in June 2011, as well as in anticipation of the new school year beginning in the fall of 2011, UDC has already begun to implement its TDM program. This program includes:

- Establishing a single point of contact for managing and monitoring TDM programs and policies.
- Assembling yearly monitoring reports, which collect performance data on the TDM strategies and make recommendations for additions and deletions from the plan based on the relative success of the performance measures.
- Promoting TDM measures through improved marketing activities.
- Incorporating new TDM measures to encourage use of non-automobile based services.

Specific new TDM measures include:

- Evaluating parking policies to significantly deter driving alone to campus, including dynamic pricing of parking within its garage.
- Implementing a carpooling program which could include: providing preferred parking for participants; widening the pricing discount to carpoolers; and the implementation of a Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) program. UDC could also require all carpoolers to register with Commuter Connections to take advantage of their GRH program.
- Providing carsharing on the campus by placing reserved Zipcar spots in the Underground Parking Garage; encouraging more Zipcars to be located on or near campus; and aggressively marketing Zipcar to students as an alternative to private automobile ownership.
- Providing information about bicycle riding in the District, bike routes between campus and major destinations, and on campus locations for bike parking and storage.
- Requiring all students, faculty, and staff to park in University or other commercial parking facilities on or near the Van Ness Campus.
- Prohibiting, to the extent permitted by law, students from parking on the residential streets adjacent to and surrounding the Van Ness Campus. (To accomplish this, the University will employ a system of administrative actions, penalties, and fines for violations of this policy)
- Prohibiting students residing on campus from parking their vehicles within the Van Ness Campus garage.
- Working with the District Department of Motor Vehicles to prohibit students residing on campus from applying for residential permit parking stickers for the residential neighborhoods surrounding the Van Ness Campus.
- Encouraging all visitors attending special events on campus to use transit or park in University or other area parking facilities, and work with area institutions and commercial parking operators to provide additional parking, including attendant parking, as needed during these events.
- Subject non-University events in the Student Center ballroom that are likely to draw more than 100 persons to additional conditions (including directing potential users to notify event guests that parking will not be available on campus or in the surrounding community and that driving is therefore discouraged, and direct potential users to

encourage event guests to travel to the Van Ness Campus by other means such as transit, bus, walking, or taxi).



Existing parking and loading. No changes to the number of parking spaces are proposed within the Van Ness Campus Plan.

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Executive Summary

At its May 5, 2011 meeting, the Commission commented favorably on the University of the District of Columbia's draft 2011-2020 Van Ness Campus Plan. Within this review, the Commission:

- Commended the University on efforts to green its campus, improve the streetscape and add community oriented retail along Connecticut Avenue NW, and reduce reliance on single occupancy vehicles for both current and future students and staff.
- Required the University to provide additional details on proposed aesthetic, access, and security enhancements of its perimeter adjacent to the International Chancery Center at the preliminary stage.
- Noted that the University should continue to work closely with the Department of State as it further develops these enhancements.

As currently submitted, the Campus Plan sets some appropriate guidance for the physical development of the university's main campus into a flagship location that can operate as a premier, selective admissions institution. Under the Plan, the University will capitalize on its mixed-use location in the Van Ness neighborhood and further leverage its strategic location atop the Van Ness Metrorail station and adjacency to other District transit options. In addition, UDC has committed to ensuring that the proposed improvements will adhere to high standards of sustainable design, and the Campus Plan includes renovations to existing buildings and campus landscaping that will represent a marked improvement over the existing concrete structures. However, following recent consultation, the Department of State has noted that the proposed location for the student housing has the potential to negatively impact federal interests—in particular security issues related to the adjacent International Chancery Center. **As such, staff recommends that the Commission approve the University of the District of Columbia - Van Ness Campus Plan for use by the Commission in future reviews of individual site and building projects, noting that the Commission will defer action on the proposed Student Housing and Athletic Zone located in the southwest portion of the campus until additional information on the site plan and design of the student housing is available to allow the Department of State to conduct a security assessment of potential impacts of the student housing on the embassies located in the abutting International Chancery Center.**

Staff's analysis is discussed below.

Campus physical development (not including the proposed student housing)

The Van Ness Campus Plan incorporates the construction of a new Student Center; improvements to the campus' environmental sustainability including new landscape elements; and the provision of on-campus student housing. The new Student Center will be located along the Connecticut Avenue commercial corridor. The Center will occupy an existing open paved area that is minimally used. Placement of the Student Center in this location will help the university establish a positive public presence, and its size and massing, as well as its associated landscape features and its inclusion of retail uses, will appropriately contribute and improve upon the established urban design and streetscape of the corridor. In particular, the proposed building is consistent in size

with most of the neighboring structures and its design will stand out in an area of relatively ordinary commercial properties. To further enhance its presence and visual qualities, a majority of the building's mechanical equipment will be located in its cellar. Associated service and loading activities will occur in the existing service area located within the garage north of Building 38; which is directly accessible from Connecticut Avenue, behind commercial development and removed from residential areas.

Sustainability goals for the campus include providing the first LEED Platinum Student Center in the country and completing green roof retrofits on many of the campus' existing buildings. In addition, the Van Ness Campus Plan incorporates many enhancements to the edges of the campus. These enhancements include new trees, ornamental plantings, bioinfiltration plantings, evergreen hedges to hide ramp walls, and new woodland plantings; the University will implement these enhancements over time. The enhancements also include new streetscape elements along Connecticut Avenue, NW and Van Ness Street, NW; improved pedestrian and vehicular access points; improved landscaping along Yuma Street; improved landscaping along the border to the ICC; and improved campus wayfinding signs and markers. **In light of all these improvements, staff recommends that the Commission commend the University on its efforts to green its campus, improve the streetscape, and add community oriented retail along Connecticut Avenue, NW.**

Transportation

The Campus is located immediately adjacent to the Van Ness Metrorail station, which provides an alternative transportation mode for students, faculty, and staff. Metrobus, Capital Bikeshare and Zipcar serve the Van Ness Campus as well. The entrance to the parking facility is located on the institutional side of campus off Van Ness Street, which is directly accessed from Connecticut Avenue.

The University's traffic analysis finds that the Van Ness Campus Plan will not generate significant changes to nearby roadway volumes and operations, and that its impact on traffic will be minimal. In its review of the Plan, the Zoning Commission of the District of Columbia agreed with the conclusion of the University's traffic analysis and found that its approval of the Plan is not likely to become objectionable to neighboring properties with respect to traffic because of the TDM program, the many transit options that serve the campus, and the proposal to provide more on-campus services. Staff is also in agreement with this determination. In particular, the University's TDM program includes a number of commitments and goals intended to improve mode choice, encourage alternatives to driving, and ensure that impacts of university operations will not become objectionable. Key features of the TDM program include increasing on-campus parking rates for faculty, staff and students; providing preferred parking for carpools and alternative fuel vehicles; maximizing the SmartBenefit commitment; and increasing the availability of bike parking throughout the campus.

No additional parking or vehicle infrastructure is proposed as a part of the Van Ness Campus Plan. However, the Plan does include new parking policies to optimize the use of the University's existing parking supply by students, faculty, and staff, and discourage use of the parking supply for non-University related parking. These policies include adjustments to pricing and the introduction of automated control at the University's main garage. Parking is also available at a University facility across Yuma Street. In addition, all students, staff, faculty, and visitors that

drive are currently required to park in University or other commercial parking facilities on or near the Van Ness Campus. The University will prohibit, to the extent permitted by law, students from parking on residential streets surrounding the Campus, and will encourage all visitors attending special events at the Campus to use transit or park in University facilities or other nearby parking facilities. With these new TDM program features and other new parking policies in place, the Van Ness Campus Plan should not create objectionable traffic and parking conditions to neighboring properties.

Further, during the Zoning Commission review of the Van Ness Campus Plan, the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) provided a report, dated April 20, 2011, that recommended conditional approval of the University's campus plan application. DDOT recommended the following three conditions in its approval:

- Establishing safeguards to protect neighborhood parking.
- Provision of a transportation performance monitoring study
- Immediate increase in the rates for parking on the Campus.

During further public hearings at the Zoning Commission, DDOT testified that it was generally supportive of the campus plan and that the University had proposed laudable action items as a part of its efforts to enhance its TDM.

Student housing

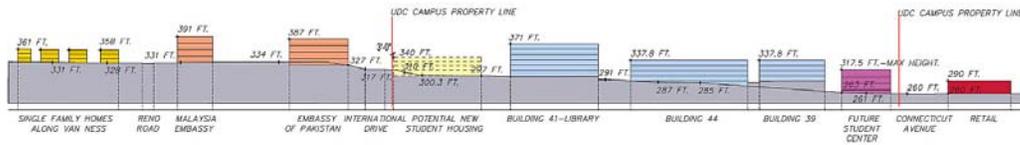
The Van Ness Campus Plan proposes a new student housing facility containing approximately 600 beds in the southwestern portion of the campus. Prior to Zoning Commission review of the Campus Plan, UDC's architects and planners considered and studied four alternate sites for the on-campus housing and found that the designated site presented the fewest challenges. In particular, UDC chose this location because it is adjacent to other institutional uses and away from the residential neighborhood yet proximate to the core of the campus and most student activity.

On May 13, 2011, representatives from the University and from the University's design team met with NCPC staff and representatives from the Department of State to review a draft of the Van Ness Campus Plan. At this meeting, the Department of State expressed concern over the proposed location of the student housing, noting that there could be some significant security issues related to locating student dorms near the embassies located in the ICC, and noted that the Department of State may need to complete a security assessment prior to supporting the proposed location of the student housing. At the conclusion of this meeting, it was determined that the Department of State may support the Van Ness Campus Plan if flexibility is built into the Plan that allows for further evaluation of the location, massing, and design of the student housing. Following this meeting and via a letter dated May 26, 2011, the Department of State requested that NCPC continue to coordinate with them as the Van Ness Campus Plan evolved. During the course of the Zoning Commission's public hearings in June 2011, UDC expanded the designated housing zone in response to the concerns expressed by the Department of State as well as other concerns expressed by the community. This adjustment is what was subsequently approved by the Zoning Commission on June 27, 2011.

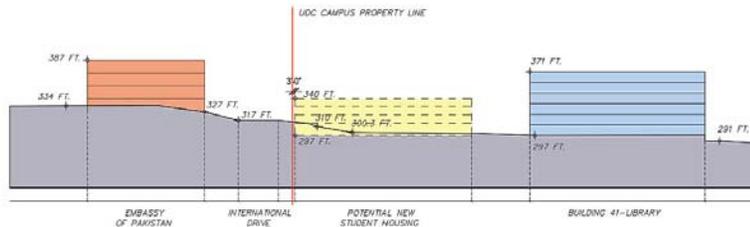
Proposed NSH:
 Total Area = 280,000 SF
 Height of Building = 43 Feet / 4 stories
 Setback from Van Ness Street = 3 Feet

Athletic Fields / Geothermal Wells Area = 53,530 SF

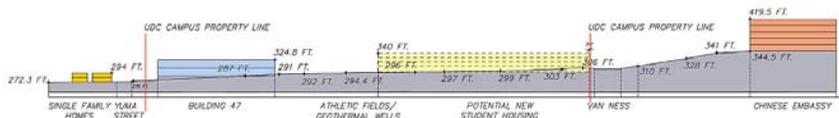
- Proposed New Student Housing
- Existing Embassy Buildings
- Existing Single Family Neighborhood Residential
- Proposed New Student Center
- Extent of Athletic Fields / Geothermal Wells



East - West Site Section



East - West Site Section - Detail



North - South Site Section

New Student Housing, Option 1. The University has studied multiple massing options and placements for the potential new student housing within the “Student Housing & Athletic Zone”—Option 1 is one example. The east/west elevations show the potential proximity of the student housing to embassies within the International Chancery Center (in these illustration, the Embassy of Pakistan and the Chinese Embassy).

In anticipation of NCPC review and approval of the Van Ness Campus Plan, UDC submitted materials that include the expanded housing zone and additional graphics that analyze potential locations and configurations for the student housing, including locations outside of the expanded housing zone such. These materials were provided to the Department of State on October 4, 2011. On November 10, 2011, staff met with the Department of State to discuss these materials. While the Department of State did not express opposition to the programming and updating effort

UDC is making at the campus, it did maintain its concerns over the proposed location of the student housing, with security of the adjacent embassies as well as security of the dorms as the major issues. The Department of State noted that if the student housing is to be placed adjacent to the embassies a thorough security assessment would need to be complete during design development.

Staff recommends that the Commission note its support for the development of student housing on the Van Ness Campus, and with the additional security information provided by the Department of State the Commission will be able to assess the degree to which the student housing may impact the embassies within the International Chancery Center during its subsequent review of the student housing project.

In order to properly address the outstanding planning issues related to security, **staff also recommends that the Commission request the University to coordinate closely with NCPC staff and the Department of State throughout design development of the student housing and on any enhancements to the campus perimeter adjacent to the International Chancery Center.** Finally, staff recommends that the Commission **note that if, after further study, UDC decides to locate the proposed student housing elsewhere other than what is currently depicted in the master plan, that additional analysis will be required in order to allow NCPC to meet its obligations under the National Environmental Policy Act and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.**

CONFORMANCE

Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

The University of the District of Columbia is not inconsistent with the District Elements of the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital, which includes a designation of the Van Ness Campus site for "Local Public Facility" and "Institutional" uses and contains related provisions endorsing change and infill on university campuses consistent with approved campus plans. The Van Ness Campus Plan is also not inconsistent with other District Elements of the Comprehensive Plan, including the Education Element and the Rock Creek West Area Element. In particular, the Van Ness Campus Plan provides for new educational opportunities, which is specifically endorsed by the Comprehensive Plan.

While the Federal Elements of the Comprehensive Plan do not specifically address public universities, the university was specifically sited at the Van Ness Campus through a federal action and has been in operation at the Van Ness Campus since the 1970's. The new uses proposed at the campus are appropriate university functions.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

In a letter dated October 27, 2011, The District has determined that the University is in conformance with regulations defined in the District of Columbia Code, Subsection 8-109.01 - Et Seq. (Environmental Control and Protection). As a result, no District environmental screening form is required to be submitted in conjunction with its request for approval of the Van Ness Campus Plan by the Commission. The letter notes that the Plan itself falls within that category of

actions which will not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the human environment and for which, therefore, neither an environmental assessment nor an environmental impact statement is required.

The letter further notes that the “Plan meets the standard for this designation by virtue of its conformance with the following criteria.

1. Minimal or no effect on the environment. The Campus Plan document outlines guiding principles and policies for the development of the campus over the next 10 years. It includes general recommendations for construction of new facilities, traffic and parking policies, community engagement and sustainability. No actions of environmental consequence are initiated under this plan. New Construction identified in the plan will follow a course of prescribed reviews by local and federal agencies having jurisdiction, and will document their environmental impact as a condition of the further processing review by the Zoning Commission and in the course of obtaining Construction Penn its.
2. No significant change to existing environmental conditions. The Population and Transportation impacts documented in the 2011-2020 Campus Plan are significantly less than the Campus's historic maximums and well below levels documented as recently as 1996.
3. No significant cumulative environmental impact associated with the action. In acknowledgement of the Universities commitment to environmental stewardship, the 2011-2020 Campus Plan incorporates a significant number of strategies, and documents substantial ongoing initiatives that will enhance the Environmental Quality of the District to the benefit of District Residents. Specific data necessary to determine the cumulative environmental impact associated with Campus Improvements will be developed concurrently with designs for campus facilities and included with environmental documentation submitted as a part of the further processing review by the Zoning Commission and in the course of obtaining the Construction Permits.”

As a District project outside the central area, the Commission typically does not have its own National Environmental Policy Act obligations. However, under the terms governing transfer of jurisdiction of the Van Ness Campus site from the federal government to the District government, the District is required to submit to the Commission any modification to the site’s master plan for review and approval. As it has approval authority, NCPC has an independent NEPA responsibility as this approval will constitute a federal action. As such, staff has determined that the project meets the criteria for a Categorical Exclusion C.8. under NCPC’s Environmental and Historic Preservation Policies and Procedures. C.8. allows a Categorical Exclusion for the “Review of an action that a District of Columbia agency has submitted and designated as an exclusion in accordance with the requirements and procedures of the District of Columbia Code, Chapter 9, Environmental Controls, Subchapter VI, Section 6-986.” (Note that Subsection 8-109.01 et seq. has replaced Subchapter VI, Section 6-986 within the District Code).

National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)

As a District project outside the central area, the Commission typically does not have its own National Historic Preservation Act obligations. However, under the terms governing transfer of jurisdiction of the Van Ness Campus site from the federal government to the District government, the District is required to submit to the Commission any modification to the site’s

master plan for review and approval. As it has approval authority, NCPC has an independent NHPA responsibility as this approval will constitute a federal undertaking. On behalf of NCPC's responsibility, On October 6, 2011, UDC submitted a determination of no effect on historic properties. The State Historic Preservation Officer concurred with this determination on October 19, 2011.

CONSULTATION

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the proposal on April 13, 2011, and forwarded the proposal to the Commission with the statement that the project has been coordinated with all participating agencies. However, the representative for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) noted that his coordination is contingent upon concurrence with WMATA's Office of Adjacent Construction. The project designers have since sufficiently coordinated with WMATA. The participating agencies were NCPC, the General Services Administration, the National Park Service; the District of Columbia Office of Planning and WMATA.

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the proposal again at its November 9, 2011 meeting, and forwarded the proposal to the Commission with the statement that it has been coordinated with all participating agencies except NCPC. The representative for NCPC withheld coordination because of outstanding concerns of the Department of State and members of the Van Ness community in regards to the 2011-2020 Van Ness Campus Plan. Staff has worked to address these concerns through a recommendation that will allow for the outstanding concerns to be properly addressed during design development of the student housing. The participating agencies were the District of Columbia Office of Planning; the District Department of Transportation; the National Park Service; the General Services Administration; and WMATA.



COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20004

September 29, 2011

Dr. Allen L. Sessoms, President
University of the District of Columbia
4200 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008

Dear Dr. Sessoms:

Members of the Van Ness Street Residents Association and other residents of the North Cleveland Park neighborhood surrounding the University of the District of Columbia campus have met with us to explain their concerns about the University's expansion. While both the neighborhood and the Council are strong supporters of the University's role in providing affordable education for District residents, there are grave concerns that the expansion, as currently planned, will lead to unacceptable intrusions upon a well-established residential area.

The neighborhood's primary concern is the conversion of the campus to a residential college, with an accompanying increase in enrollment to 6,500 students or more. We are familiar with the complaints of neighborhood groups in areas surrounding other major Washington universities. Because of that familiarity, we see that the location and scale of the dormitories, which are now planned for the southwest corner of the campus along Van Ness Street, threaten to bring the same problems inevitably created when college students live in residential areas—noise, litter, and parking difficulties. The University has already housed 104 students in 31 units in the Van Ness South Apartments. We already know that apartment residents have complained vehemently and repeatedly about inappropriate student behavior. The University's failure to manage and discipline these students sparked the North Cleveland Park area's concerns, and does not inspire confidence that similar difficulties will not also occur closer to the campus.

In recognition of the importance of protecting residential neighborhoods, we ask that you undertake needed revisions of the expansion plans to accommodate the neighborhood's requests:

- **Parking**: Traffic and parking are already a problem, and no new parking is envisioned in the University's campus plan. Notwithstanding the fact that the Zoning Commission and the District Department of Transportation concluded that additional parking is not required, the residents request that the University consider providing more parking in the ratios suggested by the Zoning Regulations, which is 1 space for every 5 beds. This additional parking would serve not only students but also those visiting the campus.
- **Enrollment Level**: The University's enrollment cap of 6,500, approved by the Zoning Commission, does not apply to Building 52 because it is zoned as commercial property, which the Zoning Regulations exclude from campus plans. Because Building 52 is a part



of the University's Van Ness Campus, the students who occupy Building 52 should be included in the enrollment cap. Indeed, the building is now home to UDC law school.

- **Dormitories:** A review of the impact of dormitories and well-known, associated student behavior on residential areas is required in order to minimize adverse impact and tension between UDC and its neighbors. UDC should be responsive to neighborhood requests for use of alternate sites, phased construction, and a reduced number of beds. In particular, the University should commit to study alternate sites closer to the Connecticut Avenue apartment buildings. Instead of constructing a 600-bed dormitory, the University should consider phased development, and the reduction of the number of beds to 250, until it has more experience with management of residential facilities and provides evidence of acceptable student behavior.
- **Freeze on Additional Off-Campus Housing:** Given the problems already experienced in Van Ness South, a freeze on all off-campus housing is critical, until there is suitable campus space, lodging and more experience with and effective supervision of residential students. Although the Zoning Commission approved University's plans for master leases of a maximum of 100 units (or approximately 400 students at the rate they are housed in Van Ness South), no further master leases should be signed by the University.
- **Community Relations:** UDC needs to work more on both effective communication and responsiveness to neighborhood concerns – scheduling the first Community Task Force meeting for the August 23 meeting, while many were away, was not an auspicious beginning. The University's refusal to add a single doorway to the new Student Union in order to preserve pedestrian access to the Metro is representative of its failure to respond to neighborhood concerns. Residents have also pointed to the continued neglect of the Van Ness sidewalk as another example of lack of consideration for the neighborhood. While this work may be primarily a matter for DDOT, we believe that the University should work vigorously with DDOT to have these conditions improved.
- **Construction Management:** There is a need for robust enforcement of a construction management plan to keep trucks out of residential neighborhoods. Effective implementation is key.

We believe that the District should support and encourage the activities of both students and residents. Both make important contributions to the city's economy and cultural life. Modifications to UDC's plans to accommodate the needs of the surrounding residential area are essential to support the District's goals of creating a livable environment for all of its residents and institutions.

Sincerely,

Mary M. Cheh
Councilmember, Ward 3

Kwame R. Brown
Council Chairman

Phil Mendelson
Councilmember, At-Large

Michael A. Brown
Councilmember, At-Large

David A. Catania
Councilmember, At-Large

Vincent B. Orange, Sr.
Councilmember, At-Large



Allen L. Sessoms
President

October 24, 2011

The Honorable Kwame R. Brown, Chairman
The Honorable Mary M. Cheh, Councilmember, Ward Three
The Honorable Michael A. Brown, Councilmember, At-Large
The Honorable David A. Catania, Councilmember, At-Large
The Honorable Phil Mendelson, Councilmember, At-Large
The Honorable Vincent B. Orange, Sr., Councilmember, At-Large
Council of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Chairman Brown and Councilmembers:

In a letter dated September 29, 2011, you requested that the University of the District of Columbia make numerous and substantive modifications to its campus master plan. The University's campus master plan was approved unanimously by the Zoning Commission on June 27, 2011

The requested changes to the University's campus master plan include: creating additional parking spaces; counting law students in the University's enrollment cap; reducing the number of proposed beds by nearly 60%, from 600 to 250; considering alternate dormitory locations away from the Van Ness Campus; and phasing in dormitory construction. In addition, the letter requested that the University refrain from entering into future master leases and expressed concerns over the University's handling of community relations.

While I acknowledge that the approval of our current, and first-ever, campus plan was met with specific concerns from a vocal minority, I trust that the Zoning Commission fairly weighed the concerns of the larger community, the needs of our students, faculty, and staff, and the general interest of the city at large. All parties voicing concerns and

questions were given a public forum to provide testimony and offer evidence by the Zoning Commission; the even-handedness of the Zoning Commission's review and approval procedure has never been questioned. However, in order to fill in any possible gaps that the Zoning Commission's approval order may have left, I will address each of your concerns below.

1. Parking

As referenced in your letter, the Zoning Commission and the Department of Transportation concluded that no additional parking would be required in light of the University's planned expansion and construction of on-campus residential facilities. As you well know, parking is regularly a top concern of residents in neighborhoods where universities are located.

At the request of the Zoning Commission, the University hired a traffic consultant to provide additional evidence of the University's current parking needs, current capacity, projected growth in demand, and projected capacity increases. In addition, the consultant provided the University with recommendations on controlling traffic demand to limit any detrimental impact on the surrounding neighborhoods. The Zoning Commission's order reflects these recommendations, including the implementation of a Traffic Demand Management system by the University, the prohibition of students utilizing on-campus housing to bring their cars with them, notification requirements for special events, and the establishment of proprietary enforcement procedures for students who violate parking restrictions on neighborhood streets.

The University is committed to addressing the neighborhood's parking concerns in any reasonable way. Furthermore, as part of the University's sustainability initiative, we are committed to reducing the number of cars traveling to campus each day; to increase parking capacity would be directly contrary to this goal. I strongly believe the current campus master plan and Zoning Commission Order more than adequately addresses the surrounding neighborhood's parking concerns.

2. Enrollment Level

The campus master plan sets an enrollment cap of 6,500 students for the Van Ness Campus, as approved by the Zoning Commission. The University, as a matter of right, is not required to include any commercial-zoned property in its plan.¹ Acting upon this right, the University chose not include Building 52 in its campus master plan.

¹ Z.C. Order No. 11-02/11-02A (June 27, 2011) at 19.

Your letter correctly states that the David A. Clarke School of Law is now occupying Building 52. It presently has an enrollment of less than 400 students. Building 52 is set apart from the main Van Ness Campus by two blocks and has two large off-street parking facilities at its disposal.

The University chose to exercise its right to exclude Building 52 and law student enrollment from its campus master plan for two reasons. First, to maintain a low, accessible tuition rate at the law school, income from the University's undergraduate programs is utilized to make up the difference between revenue and operating costs. If law students were included in the enrollment cap, the number of subsidized seats in the law program would be ratably reduced, as the law students displaced undergraduate students. Second, the law school is almost entirely self-contained with Building 52 and contributes very little, if at all, to neighborhood concerns of noise, litter, and parking difficulties.

The 6,500 enrollment cap was negotiated between the University and the surrounding community. The Zoning Commission endorsed this number as a fair compromise between both parties and the University continues to act in compliance with it.

3. Dormitories

Your letter makes a number of requests regarding the University's plan to construct on-campus residential housing with 600 beds, including studying alternative sites for the housing, phasing in construction, and reducing the number of beds.

I strongly believe that a complete, on-campus residential college experience is necessary for many students to remain focused on their studies, expand their horizons, and become involved in activities they would rarely be exposed to at home. This is in line with my commitment to rebuild the University of the District of Columbia, inclusive of the community college, into a worthy public institution that provides all high school graduates in the District of Columbia and the region with an accessible, affordable and most importantly, quality post secondary experience that prepares them for careers and contributions in the 21st century. An institution that lacks an on-campus residential option for matriculating students will be unable to fulfill this vision.

The site selected for the University's on-campus housing is optimal for creating a healthy, supervised and complete postsecondary experience. Your letter suggests exploring options closer to Connecticut Avenue. This would invariably drive up costs significantly and require the purchase of additional real property, the demolition of existing facilities, further congestion on the Connecticut Avenue corridor, or all

three. These options contradict the University's commitment to maximum utilization of scarce fiscal and environmental resources.

The same considerations apply to the suggested reduction of total beds from 600 to 250. We currently have a wait list for flagship and community college students who want to live in the university housing currently provided. This would make the construction and operation of the housing units impractical and financially indefensible. Furthermore, it would only provide beds for a fraction of the University's students and would do little to promote the on-campus community culture the University needs.

Finally, your letter suggests that the University consider the phasing in of student housing. The University has already undertaken this approach with its temporary location of students in the Van Ness South complex. This approach was taken to test student demand for on or near campus housing, which has proved strong. It has also allowed the University to establish policies and procedures for managing residential life. Our initial offerings have resulted in minimal actual disruption and it has provided the University with the necessary impetus to expeditiously move toward substantial on-campus housing.

As the planning for the University's first on-campus residence life program continues, I can assure you that the community's concerns will be addressed as appropriate.

4. Freeze on Additional Off-Campus Housing

Concerns over the presence of University students have been expressed by several residents of the Van Ness South apartment building. The University has acknowledged these concerns and taken steps to address them. The University has also agreed to freeze the number of units it has leased in the Van Ness South building.

The University respects the concerns of the Van Ness South residents and seeks to ensure the relationship between the institution and the community is open, meaningful, and effective. However, we do note that the Board of Zoning Adjustment ruled that the University's leasing of units in the Van Ness South building for use as student housing is allowable.² The University entered into a legitimate lease with the building's owner under which the proposed purpose of the units was understood by all parties.

² B.Z.A. Appeal No. 18151 (vote taken April 5, 2011).

As stated previously, the University does not plan to lease any additional units beyond the amount allowable, and thus, is already in compliance with the request contained in your letter.

5. Community Relations

Pursuant to the approval order of the University's campus master plan, a University-Community Task Force was established. The Task Force is currently in operation and held its first meeting on September 13, 2011. I am troubled by your contention that the scheduling of the first meeting on August 23rd was inappropriate. The original University-Community Task Force meeting was scheduled for August 23rd because the Zoning Commission's Order directed the establishment of the Task Force within one month of the campus plan approval date of July 29, 2011.

Two collateral issues were raised under the heading of "Community Relations", and they have been addressed. The student center design was modified to incorporate a pathway to the Metro prior to the Zoning Commission Order and the sidewalk repair as recommended by the District Department of Transportation will take place after the plaza construction is completed.

6. Construction Management

The University is utilizing all available actions to direct construction traffic to avoid routes through adjacent residential communities as required by the Zoning Commission Order. Construction traffic management provisions will be included in future construction contracts as applicable and negotiated. Throughout the construction timeline, this concern will be addressed through the University-Community Task Force.

As initially stated, I firmly believe the Zoning Commission's unanimous approval of the University campus master plan was arrived at under a fair and open process. Community concerns were balanced with the needs of the University in numerous different areas. The approval order cites a long list of evidence, testimony, and legal conclusions that support its decision.

I respectfully take your recommendations under advisement and assure you that the University will continue to work with the community through the appropriate channels to ensure all concerns are addressed. We do not, however, anticipate making substantive changes to the already approved campus master plan.

Please do not hesitate to contact me directly if you would further like to discuss this issue or any other University matters.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Allen L. Sessoms". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Allen L. Sessoms

VAN NESS STREET RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

Dedicated to Preserving the Residential Character of Van Ness Street

Comments on the Proposed Campus Plan of the University of the District of Columbia before the National Capitol Planning Commission, December 3, 2011

Executive Summary

The Van Ness Street Residents Association represents residents of the three blocks between Reno Road and Wisconsin, and has worked with residents of surrounding streets in preparing these comments. The residential neighborhood is low density, with single family and duplex homes. It borders the University and the Embassy Park site along Reno Road and Yuma Street.

The Campus Plan doubles enrollment and adds dormitories to a very small site. This site was never designed or intended to house a residential college, which inevitably involves a large number of 18-24 year olds living away from home for the first time, testing the boundaries of their independence, and seeking or creating late-night entertainment. Van Ness South Apartment tenants, where the University now houses 104 students, have complained repeatedly about disruptive student behavior. Ward 3 Councilmember Mary Cheh, D.C. Council Chair Kwame Brown, and all the At Large members of the D.C. Council have written UDC President Sessoms, urging the University to modify the plan to alleviate neighborhood concerns (see letter from 6 Councilmembers, attached). Quite simply, the 21 acre campus can not accommodate the planned expansion. The changes will compound existing problems of traffic, noise, pollution, and parking.

We ask the Commission to mandate modifications to the Campus Plan, including:

- ***Apply the 6,500 enrollment cap to all students at the Van Ness Campus including those in Building 52 and Intelsat (areas now housing educational activities, but omitted from the campus plan);***
- ***Require dormitories to be constructed on Connecticut Avenue or in other locations away from the Chancery Center and North Cleveland Park residential areas; reduce the dormitory to 250 beds from 600 with a strategy of 2 or more smaller buildings; preserve the athletic fields bordering the Chancery Center; and require the University to demonstrate the ability to manage residential housing and provide evidence of acceptable student behavior before beginning construction;***
- ***Require additional parking in the Student Center and dormitories, consistent with established NCPC guidelines;***
- ***Prevent an increase of residential students before construction of dormitories by prohibiting the University from entering new Master Leases in apartments within one mile of the University;***
- ***Preserve Metro access by requiring immediate construction of a safe sidewalk on Van Ness and the addition of a door through the “rain garden” and Student Center to the Metro Plaza; and***
- ***Require robust enforcement of the Construction Management Plan.***

DISCUSSION:

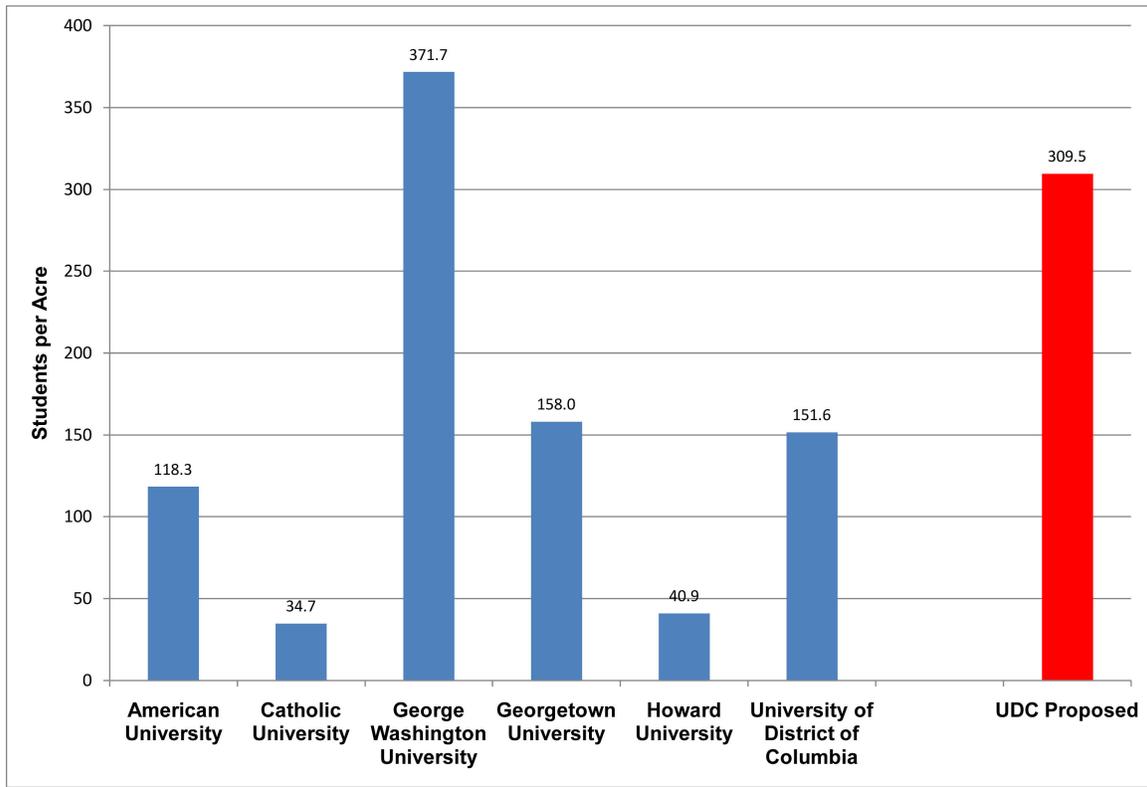
VNRA: The Van Ness Street Residents Association represents the 80 households on the three tree lined blocks between Reno Road and Wisconsin Avenue. The residents are families with children, couples and singles, working professionals and retirees. The homes are a mixture of single family and duplexes, constructed in two tranches --- in the 1920's before the Great Depression, and in the 1940's after World War II. Almost all homes are owner occupied. The area is a popular location for young families and professionals who want urban amenities and reasonable commutes. In developing our comments, we have worked with neighbors on surrounding streets --- Veazey, Warren, Windom Place, Yuma, Reno Road and 36th Street.

Campus Plan: The University was created as a commuter college in the mid-1970's when the Federal City College, the Washington Technical Institute, and the District of Columbia Teachers College were combined on the Van Ness site. The Van Ness campus is one of four sites for University operations. Under its new plan, the University plans to convert the Van Ness campus from a commuter college serving "non-traditional" students to a selective four year residential college. This change assumes that the typical student will range from 18 – 22 years old, instead of the more mature 29 – 35 year old cohort served by the current policy. It will increase enrollment from 3,128 to 6,500, build a new Student Center with a 500 person ballroom and 350 person dining facilities, and build dormitories housing 600 --- all on the 21 acre site. Despite complaints that University parking now overflows onto Van Ness and surrounding streets, the Plan fails to add a single new parking space.

Neighborhood Concerns: The neighborhood strongly supports the role of the University in providing affordable education to District residents. We recognize that in these difficult economic times, education will improve students' ability to find jobs. The neighborhood's primary concern is the conversion of the campus to a residential college, with an accompanying increase in enrollment to 6,500 students or more, vastly increasing the area's population density and exacerbating existing problems with parking, traffic and speeding on Van Ness Street. It is inevitable that student activities will overflow the 21 acre campus, and impact the neighborhood. The residential neighborhood is also dismayed by reports of intrusive and disruptive behavior by 104 students housed by the University in the Van Ness South Apartments, including two incidents that required police intervention. The prospect of disruptive behavior spreading throughout a quiet residential area is alarming. Quite simply, this small site can not accommodate the intensive use proposed by the University. The Campus Plan should be modified.

ENROLLMENT LEVEL

If enrollment is doubled, the University will have one of the highest ratios of students per acre of any District of Columbia university. The site is the smallest of any university in the District.



Washington DC Universities Campus Size			
University	Acreage	Enrollment	Students per Acre
American University	84	9,940	118
Catholic University	193	6,704	35
George Washington University	66	24,531	372
Georgetown University	104	16,437	158
Howard University	256	10,491	40.9
University of District of Columbia	21	3,183	152
UDC Proposed	21	6,500	310

George Washington University, with the highest density, sits in a downtown business area consisting primarily of office buildings. UDC, in contrast, is located next to a low density residential area, where the noise and traffic generated by its expansion are inconsistent with the needs of working professionals and families with young children.

Despite UDC's assertions that the Embassy Park will provide a buffer zone, residents will hear student protests, pep rallies, and cheers at athletic games. University officials have said that they want to create Division II soccer facilities on the athletic fields along Van Ness Street, including stadium seating with a Public Address system. Students heading for the restaurants and bars on Wisconsin Avenue are expected to pass through residential areas late at night and generate noise and litter.

UDC officials suggested that George Mason University was a "model" for their expansion.¹ George Mason has 3 campuses totaling 806 acres, with 32,536 students, or 40 students per acre (like Howard). The comparison suggests that the University fails to recognize the constraints of a 21 acre site surrounded by a residential neighborhood.

Although the University proposes to double enrollment, it has refused to agree that the 6,500 limit should apply to students in Building 52 at the corner of Yuma Street and Connecticut Avenue. For the 2010-2011 school year, Building 52 housed 1,500 Wilson High School students, while the school was renovated. In August, 2011, the University moved the law school to Building 52 and announced plans to increase enrollment from 400 to 650. Students in Building 52 should be included in the enrollment cap. If the University uses other facilities near the Van Ness Campus, such as the Intelsat Building at Connecticut and Van Ness which currently houses some Business School functions, those students, too, should be subject to the cap. The University should not be permitted to evade the cap.

DORMITORIES

The University proposes to construct 280,000 sq. foot dormitories housing 600 beds on the athletic fields along Van Ness Street (adjacent to the Chancery Center). In interviews posted on the University website, University officials have suggested that it would like to expand its intercollegiate athletic program by adding football and lacrosse teams (which would at times compete with its soccer teams for use of these fields). Dormitories will house foreign students, non-District students and athletes. According to the Plan, dormitories may be located along Van Ness Street or on the athletic field near the Swimming Pool. Drawings prepared by UDC's planners (below) demonstrate that these dormitories will be *massive*.

¹ *Northwest Current*, August 17, 2011, p. 1.

New Student Housing – Option 1

Proposed NSH:
Total Area = 290,000 SF
Height of Building = 43 Feet
Setback from International Drive = 3 Feet
Geothermal Wells Area = 53,530 SF

-  Proposed New Student Housing
-  Existing Embassy Buildings
-  Existing Single Family Neighborhood Residential
-  Proposed New Student Center
-  Extent of Geothermal Wells



RTKL

New Student Housing – Option 5

Proposed NSH:
Total Area = 280,000 SF
Height of Building = 73 Feet
Setback from International Drive = 400 Feet
Geothermal Wells Area = 60,000 SF

-  Proposed New Student Housing
-  Existing Embassy Buildings
-  Existing Single Family Neighborhood Residential
-  Proposed New Student Center
-  Extent of Geothermal Wells

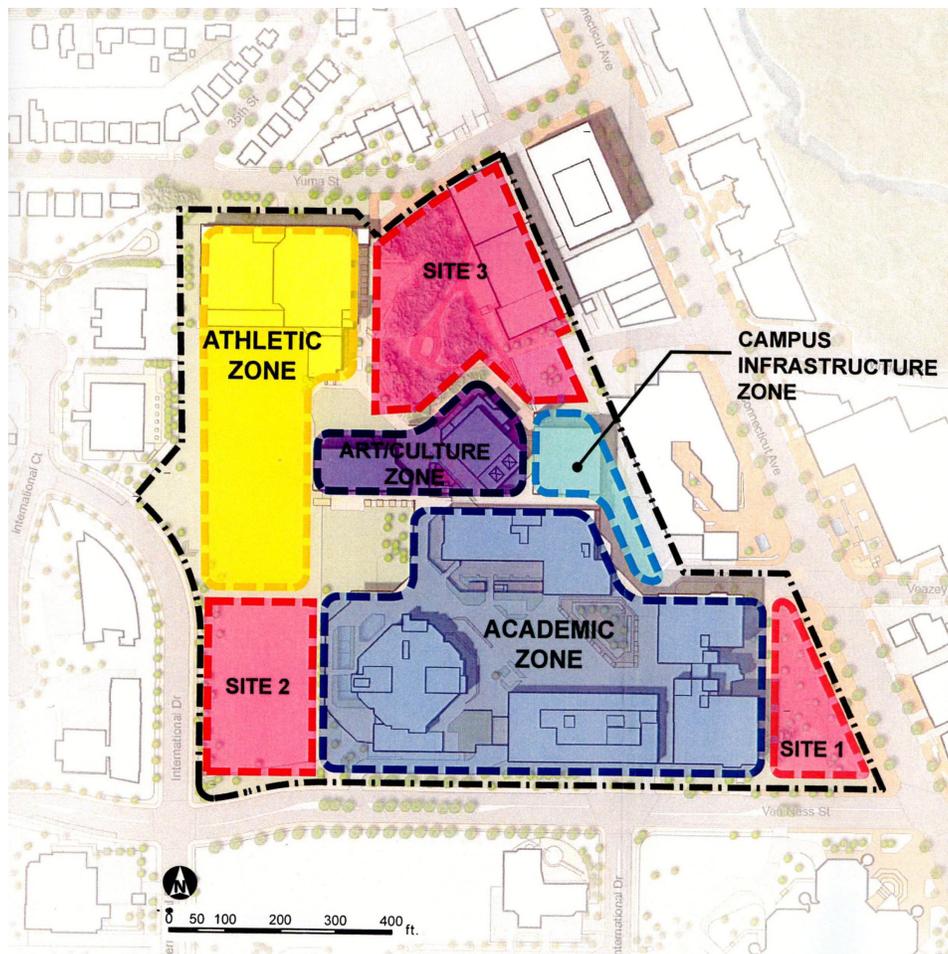


RTKL

Dormitories will consume one of the two athletic fields, leaving no practice field for the Division II Varsity soccer team. Stoddert Soccer and area schools that currently use the fields will have no replacement fields available.

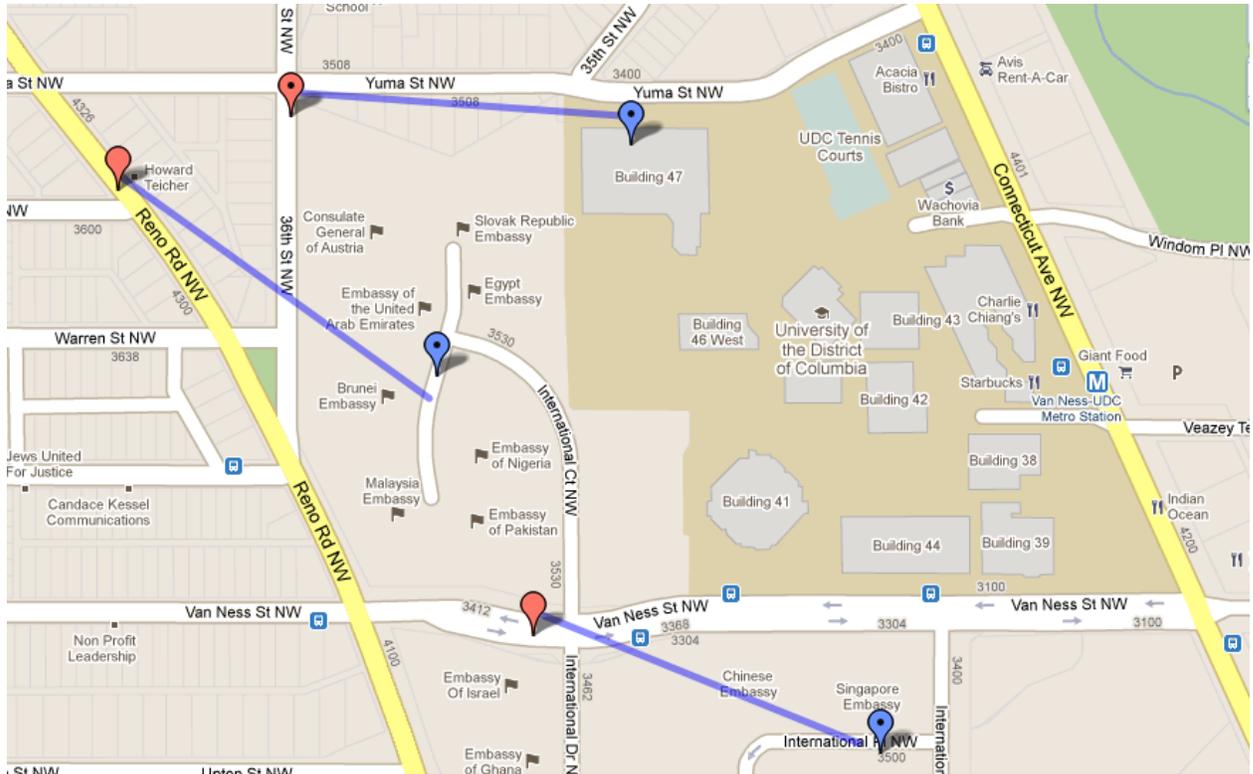
North Cleveland Park residents have proposed several solutions that would reduce the impact of residential students on the surrounding neighborhood.

- Alternate dormitory locations should be found which will channel student activity toward the many public transportation options and higher density apartments along Connecticut Avenue. Possible sites include Site 3 which was considered as a possible site for the Student Union, Building 52 (at the corner of Connecticut adjacent to Site 3), a site at the end of the quadrangle that would close off the quadrangle and focus students toward Connecticut Avenue, a one story building next to Building 52, or even sites off campus.
- Phase in construction of one dormitory housing 250 students to allow the University to gain experience in supervising student residences. It would also demonstrate that the unruly behavior that has marked the Van Ness South Apartments will not be tolerated in the new dormitories.
- Any dormitory that is constructed should have adequate parking, consistent with established zoning regulations (1 parking space for every 5 beds) or NCPC guidelines.



EVIDENCE THAT CAMPUS NOISE WILL IMPACT RESIDENTIAL AREA

ANC3F Commissioner Adam Tope prepared a chart that demonstrates that campus noise will reach the surrounding residential area. He plotted three noise complaints received in the past year. The distance from the sound origin to the complainant's residence is, respectively, 789 feet, 828 feet, and 738 feet. In each case, the distance between the origin of the noise and the complainant's residence is greater than the distance from the western boundary of the UDC Campus to the residential area.



PARKING/ TRAFFIC/ STREET NOISE

The Campus Plan assumes students, faculty, and staff will only use public transportation.² The Plan ignores the fact that private automobile usage during the day is already heavy. According to the *Transportation Report* by the University's traffic consultant, "the strategy of the transportation component of the Campus Plan is to handle the increased population on campus without adding more parking supply..."³ **This is sheer fantasy.** Although UDC is near Metro and WMATA bus stops, many of its students and faculty live in distant neighborhoods and have long commutes, some in the late evening. Nearly half of its faculty and staff live outside the District. Even if the University adopts TDM measures, they will not be sufficient to prevent overflow into the neighborhood, given the doubling of enrollment to 6,500. Additional students and faculty will not walk or ride bicycles, as the Plan assumes. Commuters with late evening schedules and those fearful of growing crime on the Metro are more likely to use private automobiles --- as current practices prove. ***Existing parking is inadequate, and additional parking spaces should be provided.***

The *Transportation Report* acknowledges that the existing Underground Parking Garage (the "main" garage) operates "above capacity."⁴ Van Ness Street residents already have numerous intrusions into their parking space by UDC students, even at the 3,200 student level, without adding a student center or dormitories. If a 600 student dormitory and a student center are constructed, overflow traffic in the residential area will make an already difficult situation even worse. Given the Plan's acknowledgement that parking spaces are fully occupied during the day, the Commission should require that the University add 200 – 1,000 additional spaces to accommodate current student and staff parking and, to the extent approved, any expanded enrollment.⁵ Failure to increase parking would only increase noise, air pollution, and other pollutants in the residential neighborhoods. These impacts to the neighborhood are significant – directly, indirectly and cumulatively. ***The Commission should require the University to address the current overflow through construction of additional parking.***

² *Transportation Report*, prepared by Gorove/Slade Associates, p. iv: "The strategy of the transportation component of the Campus Plan is to handle the increased population on campus without adding more parking supply or roadway capacity....the Campus Plan ... will not generate significant changes to roadway traffic volumes, operations or geometries. ...student, faculty and staff use of Metrorail, Metrobus, Capital Bikeshare, and walking and bicycling in general will increase over the life of the Campus Plan." This is an unbelievably "rosy scenario."

³ *Transportation Report*, p. 2 and Executive Summary, p. iv.

⁴ *Idem*, p. 24.

⁵ Section 2101.1 of the District of Columbia Zoning Code requires 2 parking spaces for every 3 teachers plus the greater of (1) 1 space for every 10 classroom seats or (2) 1 parking space for every stadium seat, or (3) 1 space for every 10 auditorium seats. The Commission should also consider that, drawing upon evidence based national standards, the Zoning Code requires 1 space for every 2,000 square feet of gross area for a public recreation space or community center encompassing the activities provided in the Student Center.

**RECORD OF NEGLECTED MAINTENANCE, POOR SUPERVISION OF STUDENTS,
DISREGARD FOR RESIDENTS**

The University has a long-standing record of neglected maintenance. Many buildings are in disrepair, and even seven mature oak trees planted along Van Ness Street after construction of the Chinese Embassy were allowed to die without water. Neglected brick sidewalks on Van Ness Street pose a constant threat to pedestrians walking to the Metro.



Ineffective supervision of students in Archstone Van Ness South Apartments (3003 Van Ness across Connecticut Avenue from the campus) has also caused residents to fear that the University expansion requires management skills that no one in the University possesses. The Campus Plan asserts, “UDC takes its responsibility to the neighborhood very seriously, and makes sure that student occupants of the [Van Ness South] apartments are good neighbors and follow all the applicable rules.”⁶ Nonetheless, apartment residents complained forcefully to the *Northwest Current* and at a March 30, 2011 ANC3F meeting with University officials. Residents complained about late night noise and loud parties, “behavior inconsistent with the schedules of young professionals” as one apartment resident tactfully put it, marijuana smells in the halls, and urine smells in the elevators. ANC3F Commissioner Karen Perry stated in sworn Zoning Commission testimony that police were called when students jumped down on the lobby roof and began “partying” and again when a fight involving weapons broke out. The same problems that have alienated Van Ness South tenants threaten our neighborhood, too.

⁶ Plan, p. 23.

The disregard for our area in the Campus Plan sparked concern, because the impact on our residential area was never once considered. All references to “residential areas” covered apartments along Connecticut Avenue and those on Yuma Street. Unquestionably, the University’s community relations record has been marked by examples of disdain and neglect.

Given the record of disregard for residential neighbors and neglect of physical properties, coupled with the failure to supervise student behavior, we can not help but question whether it is prudent or appropriate to add dormitories to this site. Alternate locations, not on the athletic fields, and away from the residential area should be required.

CONCLUSION: From an urban planning perspective, the UDC Campus Plan is flawed in numerous respects. Most importantly – and incontrovertibly - it will compound problems of noise, traffic, parking, and litter, and strain public transportation. The Campus Plan is filled with promises of improved maintenance and new attention to neighborhood concerns. In reality, the University has repeatedly ignored the neighborhood --- it has created barriers to Metro access, the principal sidewalk to Metro has been neglected, and the Campus Plan defined the “neighborhood” so as to exclude the adjacent residential areas of Van Ness/ North Cleveland Park.

Of primary significance, the Plan would significantly impact our neighborhood in ways inconsistent with its fundamental nature and years of urban planning focused on the Van Ness/ North Cleveland Park area and create significant environmental impacts. This area was never designed or intended to house a residential college, which inevitably involves a large number of 18-24 year olds living away from home for the first time, testing the boundaries of their independence, and seeking or creating late-night entertainment. It is already clear that introducing residential students to the area will be like mixing oil and water. The Van Ness South tenants --- a mix of young professionals and retirees --- have objected that the small number of residential UDC students living in their building behave in ways “inconsistent with professionals’ lifestyles and expectations.” We already know from the experience of the neighbors of American University and Georgetown University the issues raised by a residential student body: loud parties, excessive drinking, and often disrespect for the property and schedules of their non-student neighbors. If UDC expands and adds housing, the same issues will permeate the Van Ness/ North Cleveland Park area.

Our neighborhood vigorously objects to the failure to include parking in the Student Center, the ability of UDC to unilaterally increase the number of students beyond the cap by locating them in Building 52 or other properties in the area, and particularly to the creation of dormitories on the southwest corner of the site, as inconsistent with the residential character of Van Ness Street and the North Cleveland Park neighborhood.

We request that the Commission modify the plan:

- *Apply the 6,500 cap to all students at the Van Ness Campus including Building 52 and Intelsat,*
- *For dormitories:*
 - *Require dormitories to be constructed on Connecticut Avenue or in areas away from the North Cleveland Park residential area,*
 - *Reduce the dormitory to 250 beds from 600 with a strategy of 2 or more smaller buildings,*
 - *Require phased in construction, and*
 - *Require the University to demonstrate ability to manage residential housing and provide evidence of acceptable student behavior before beginning construction,*
- *Require additional parking in the Student Center and dormitories,*
- *Prevent increase of residential students before construction of dormitories by prohibiting any new Master Leases in apartments within one mile of the University,*
- *Preserve Metro access by requiring immediate construction of a safe sidewalk on Van Ness and addition of a door through the “rain garden” and Student Center to the Metro Plaza, and*
- *Require robust enforcement of the Construction Management Plan.*

All of these requests are supported by the City Council Chair, Ward 3 Councilmember, and all 4 At Large City Council Members. They can be adopted without impairing efforts to improve the academic quality of the University.

SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF THE VAN NESS RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION BY
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