

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Office of the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services



May 25, 2016

Dear homeowners in Brightwood Park, and members of the larger Petworth and Brightwood community,

Thank you for your letter dated May 23, 2016, regarding the proposed plan to replace DC General with Short-Term Family Housing facilities in each Ward of the District. We are committed to having meaningful, inclusive, and productive dialogue about the plan, especially in the communities where the proposed new facilities are located. As you know, since the announcement of the site in early February, we have hosted and participated in half a dozen community meetings on the subject. We look forward to working in partnership to ensure this type of dialogue continues in the community and we appreciate your general support to close DC General.

In response to your letter, we offer the following information:

On the *“proposed facility location:”*

The DC Department of General Services (DGS) is the lead agency on property management projects for the Government of the District of Columbia. During the site selection process for this project, DGS did consider District-owned sites; however, there are not (and at the time, were not) available District-owned land that would accommodate the requirements of this project. A list of all sites considered for this project, including District-owned sites can be found here:

http://mayor.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/mayoromb/page_content/attachments/Short-Term-Family-Housing-Site-Selection-2.pdf

On the *“financial impact on the District:”*

Information about the estimated cost for each proposed Short-term Housing facility can be found on the Mayor’s website at:

<http://mayor.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/mayoromb/publication/attachments/Attachment-2-Short-term-Family-Rental-Family-Replacement-Sites.pdf>

As you know, last week the Council voted in support of legislation to change the structure of these deals. We are still evaluating the feasibility of the new deal structures and the impact on cost, but will continue to share information as it becomes available.

On “*safety concerns:*”

There will be security personnel on site, as well as program staff around the clock. I want to be clear – these short-term family housing facilities are residential facilities like your home, condo or apartment. Research suggests that adding a facility of this type to a neighborhood rarely impacts property values or crime. In some cases, adding a facility in a vacant space has increased adjacent property values and decreased crime.

Statistically, the best way to prevent crime in your neighborhood is to get to know your neighbors. We will be launching a good neighbor agreement process here before the facility opens to families to ensure we are all good neighbors.

On “*a lack of specifics and concerns for resident quality of life:*”

Families living in Short-Term Family Housing facilities are provided three meals each day in an on-site dining room. In addition, each private family unit will have a small refrigerator, and families will have access to microwaves on each floor so they can store and prepare other food items.

District law mandates that DC General replacement facilities have “a private bathroom, including a toilet, sink, and bathtub or shower, in at least 10% of the DC General Family Shelter replacement units” and “for every 5 DC General Family Shelter replacement units, one private, lockable bathroom that includes a toilet, sink, and bathtub...” Those same standards that were put into law by the DC Council were also what a majority of community stakeholders recommended as a result of the [Committee on Design Guidelines for Emergency Housing for Families Experiencing Homelessness](#) that was formed by the Interagency Council on Homelessness. The proposed designs for each site where designs are completed (Wards 1, 4, 7 and 8) exceed those standards, eliminating the need for multi-fixture congregate bathrooms and increasing the ratio of private, lockable bathrooms to one for every two DC General Family Shelter replacement units.

Also, a playground and outdoor recreation space is part of the design and program requirements for the Ward 4 Short-Term Family Housing facility. You can see current designs for the site on the Mayor’s website at:

<http://mayor.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/mayormb/publication/attachments/Ward4-Design-Overview-Meeting.pdf>

Wrap around services will be provided on-site in each proposed Short-Term Family Housing facilities. On-site wrap-around services include connection to permanent housing programs, housing search assistance, social work staff, early childhood screenings, school liaisons, financial and budget management services, as well as linkages to education, training, employment services, and health care.

These services follow families from emergency shelter to their new housing as part of the rapid rehousing, permanent supportive housing, and/or Temporary Assistance for Needy

Families programs. The length of services depends on the needs and specific situation of each family. Generally, these programs extend for at least a one-year period.

On “*Kennedy Street improvements:*”

Per the District Department of Transportation, advertisements for bids have been submitted for the Kennedy Street Revitalization project with a notice to proceed by November 2016. The project will upgrade streetscape between Georgia Avenue and North Capital Street, NW improving traffic safety and transit operations, sidewalks, street lighting, and ADA facilities as well as other enhancements. The project now has at least \$3.1 M additional funding from Federal, District and DC Clean Rivers (DCCR) sources. There are no plans at this point to increase the funding for the streetscape project beyond current budget of \$14.0 M.

In terms of the Small Area Plan, I would suggest that your community continue to work with Jasmin Benab, from the Mayor’s Office of Community Relations and Services. As you know, the Kennedy Street Small Area Plan (SAP) was completed and the Council adopted it in 2008. The DC Office of Planning coordinated the planning process for this plan. The Kennedy Street SAP identifies, for each recommendation, lead and support agencies and/or organizations for implementation. Please note that Small Area Plans are designed to be implemented over multiple years (up to 5 years or more) by multiple stakeholders, public and private. Implementation of District government-led recommendations is often dependent upon available funding and priorities over multiple budget years, in some cases through the capital budget.

Thank you again for your letter and recommendations regarding the proposed plan to replace DC General with Short-Term Family Housing. I hope our response provides information that is helpful to you, and please do not hesitate to reach out with other questions or comments. We appreciate your engagement in this effort, and we look forward to working with you, as we work to support every family, and give every District resident a fair shot.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Brenda Donald".

Brenda Donald
Deputy Mayor