



**MURIEL BOWSER**  
**MAYOR**

May 27, 2016

Honorable Chairman Phil Mendelson  
Council of the District of Columbia  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Suite 504  
Washington, DC 20004

Chairman Mendelson:

I am writing to thank you and the members of the Council for your consideration of our plan to close DC General. I recognize your preliminary vote and capital budget shifts to accommodate purchasing property in Wards 1 and 4; moving to District owned sites in Wards 3, 5, and 6; and the attendant changes to the delivery timelines associated with these modifications.

We will work diligently to execute the Council's plan, but our initial review of your plan presents some challenges, which are outlined below. We must make you aware of these challenges and request some changes if we are able to execute the closure of DC General in a delayed but reasonable timeframe.

**Since the first vote on your plan on May 17, we have:**

- Discussed our concerns with several councilmembers, but specifically the Chairman and Members of the Council who selected new sites in Wards 3, 5 and 6;
- Offered our assistance to the Chairman and the Councilmembers who have selected new sites in Wards 3, 5, and 6 in presenting the new sites to the affected communities prior to the final Council vote on May 31<sup>st</sup>. Councilmembers in Wards 3 and 5 will host community meetings this week to discuss their proposed new sites and invited the Executive Agencies to attend;
- Begun preliminary discussions with the owners of the Wards 1 and 4 sites and continue to evaluate the best ways to execute acquisition and construction of those sites;
- Secured architects to conduct "test fits" on new sites in Wards 3, 5, and 6 (850 Delaware Ave, SW). In presentations to the community in February, we included a site analysis and conceptual

drawings to ensure that the site could accommodate the number of units and amenities that we need to serve our families well. These “test fits” can take weeks to develop. We have asked for the architects to rush to ensure that we have some sense of the fitness of these sites prior to the Council vote on May 31<sup>st</sup>. We caution that this analysis is preliminary and will require additional vetting;

- Had detailed conversations with the Ward 6 Councilmember preceding the Council’s preliminary vote and since then on an alternative Ward 6 site that meets the Council’s priorities: government-owned land and more favorable zoning conditions. We recommended 850 Delaware Avenue SW where our preliminary analysis suggests we could construct 50 units of short-term family housing and a community health clinic as the site is currently occupied by Unity Health; and
- Prepared for our June 28<sup>th</sup> zoning hearing. We are prepared to withdraw the deselected sites with the Council’s final action on Bill 21-620. We may also need to withdraw the sites in Ward 1 and Ward 4 until we secure control of the sites. The Ward 7 and 8 submissions will be heard at the June 28<sup>th</sup> hearing. We will work diligently to prepare new packages and secure a new zoning hearing date for the balance of the sites. The Council’s endorsement of expedited zoning hearings and consideration of the balance of the sites as whole would help mitigate further delay.

The plan that you put forth presents several challenges:

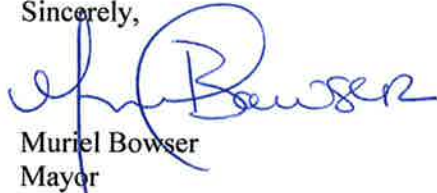
- **Number of units:** We request that the legislation specify only that each site can be no more than 50 units. By specifying the number of units per site as you did in your preliminary vote, you will limit our flexibility to construct the appropriate number of units. Since new properties have been put forward in Wards 3, 5, and 6, we assert that it is impossible, within this time frame, to accurately identify the number of units each site can accommodate.
- **Parking (Ward 3):** The cost of replacement parking has not been delineated. We request that your capital budget changes reflect the need for replacement parking or indicate your preference to forego replacing the parking.
- **Constrained site (Ward 5):** 1700 Rhode Island Avenue NE is smaller than the original site proposed. Based on our cursory review the site is deemed a historic eligible site, which means the site cannot be taken down. Our initial analysis projects that it will deliver below the desired 50 units. We recognize that this is the Ward 5 Councilmember’s favored site and to accommodate that preference we need greater flexibility in the remaining wards.
- **Designated use (Ward 5):** 326 R Street NE – the Penn Center – has been designated as storage space for the Martin Luther King Library beginning in 2017. Utilizing this site for Short Term Family Housing could delay the Library project. The intended use by the Library is the ideal utilization for this warehouse space.
- **Federal approval and construction feasibility (Ward 6):** We are concerned that the Council’s selected site at 200 K Street NW presents considerable approval concerns. The need to gain

approvals from the federal government and the owner of the parking structure on the site makes it impossible to predict if approvals can be achieved with the urgency necessary to close DC General and be on the same timeline as the other ward locations. There is currently an engineering analysis being performed which will determine the feasibility of construction, capacity and costs. We request that the Council designate 850 Delaware Avenue SW as your alternate site instead. It is government-owned, and we would be able to co-locate the short-term family housing units with a new community health clinic.

- **Capital Budget:** As the analysis that the Council commissioned regarding the costs of the short-term family housing program suggests, without detailed construction drawings and/ or building specifications, cost estimates are somewhat speculative. We will continue to work with Council on this appropriate budget as the costs are refined.
- **Project management:** Under the Council's plan, the procurement and construction management of these new sites now falls to DGS. We will need personnel dedicated to the delivery of these units.

In conclusion, we look forward to working with you to make this a plan that works for the Council. The families who need us most deserve nothing less than a plan that allows my Administration to execute the closure of DC General as quickly as possible and deliver safe and dignified short term family housing.

Sincerely,



Muriel Bowser  
Mayor

cc: Councilmember Brianne Nadeau  
Councilmember Jack Evans  
Councilmember Mary M. Cheh  
Councilmember Brandon T. Todd  
Councilmember Kenyan McDuffie  
Councilmember Charles Allen  
Councilmember Yvette Alexander  
Councilmember LaRuby May  
Councilmember Vincent Orange  
Councilmember Anita Bonds  
Councilmember David Grosso  
Councilmember Elissa Silverman