

**RESOLUTION REGARDING THE PROPOSED MERIDIAN DEVELOPMENT
JUNE 7, 2017**

Advisory Neighborhood Commission 1C (“ANC 1C”) adopts the following resolution and votes to send it to the District of Columbia Historic Preservation Board (“HPRB”).

WHEREAS, the White-Meyer House and Meridian House buildings are listed on the National Register of Historic Places and are listed at the “National level” of significance, and accordingly deserve the highest level of protection by HPRB;

WHEREAS, the Project is to be located within the Meridian Hill Historic District which is listed in the District of Columbia Inventory of Historic Sites;

WHEREAS, ANC 1C has considered the Meridian International development project four times since March 2015, and has voted each of those four times to send a resolution of opposition to HPRB on the basis that it does not comply with *Meridian Hill Historic District Guidelines*, *District of Columbia Historic Preservation Guidelines for New Construction in Historic Districts*, previous ANC 1C resolutions, or previous rulings from HPRB;

WHEREAS, the most recent resolution opposing the project was adopted by ANC 1C on April 5th, 2017, by a vote of 6-1;

WHEREAS, at its meeting on May 4, 2017, HPRB made decisions on all issues of compatibility other than height, and voted 4-3 against allowing the development to proceed until the developers present the design with a reduction in height;

WHEREAS, on May 26, 2017, the developers submitted new drawings for the project, and these iterations were of plans submitted in December 2016 and April 2017, with and without setbacks, with and without the removal of a floor, and with and without changes to the central entrance and to the landscaping;

WHEREAS, ANC 1C has reviewed the new drawings and come to the conclusion that the modified rendering of the April 2017 design including the prominent central entrance, improved landscaping, a one-story reduction and a setback (“Scheme E”), is the version which is most compatible with the other buildings along 16th Street in the Meridian Hill Historic District;

WHEREAS, the version described above, which is lower in total height than the uphill and adjacent Envoy building, is the only version of this project that should be considered for approval by HPRB;

WHEREAS, despite the improvement to the building's height and compatibility with the other buildings on 16th Street, ANC 1C objects to the proposal on the basis of its ongoing failure to comply with the *Meridian Hill Historic District Design Guidelines* and the *District of Columbia Historic Preservation Guidelines for New Construction in Historic Districts*;

WHEREAS, the *Meridian Hill Historic District Design Guidelines* require that “new buildings should be designed to respect the character of the district and be sensitive to their immediate surroundings...particular attention should be paid to their siting, massing, size, scale and materials”;

WHEREAS, the *District of Columbia Historic Preservation Guidelines for New Construction in Historic Districts* guideline 5.1 states “proportion is the relationship of the dimensions of building elements...to each other and to the elevations...the design of a new building should respect, but not necessarily exactly duplication, the existing proportions of neighboring buildings”¹;

WHEREAS, the *District of Columbia Historic Preservation Guidelines for New Construction in Historic Districts* guideline 6.1 states, “the space between free-standing buildings, the contiguousness of row houses and other party-wall buildings, and the heights of roofs, cornices, towers, and other rood projections establishes the rhythm of a street. A new building should respect the rhythm of its neighbors as well as that of the street”²;

WHEREAS; ANC 1C notes that the scale and massing of the project is not proportional to its immediate surroundings;

WHEREAS, the *District of Columbia Historic Preservation Guidelines for New Construction in Historic Districts* guidelines 8.1 and 8.2 state, “while a new building does not necessarily need to be exactly the same height as its neighbors to be compatible, it should be designed to respect existing building heights. Typically, if a new building is more than one story higher or lower than existing buildings that are all the same height, it will be out of character”³;

¹ See District of Columbia Historic Preservation Guidelines for New Construction in Historic Districts, 5.1, at p. 4

² See District of Columbia Historic Preservation Guidelines for New Construction in Historic Districts, 6.1, at p.5

³ See District of Columbia Historic Preservation Guidelines for New Construction in Historic Districts, 8.1-8.2, at p. 6

WHEREAS, even with the improvements noted in Scheme E, the proposed 16th Street structure still towers over and hides the White Meyer House and Meridian House, overwhelming rather than enhancing them in violation of the rules cited above;

WHEREAS, the project's height and mass is also incompatible with respect to its neighbors to the south, as there is no transition from the proposed building to the shorter buildings on 16th Street;

WHEREAS, the *Meridian Hill Historic District Design Guidelines* state that the mansions “were sited to take advantage of views to and through the park along 15th and 16th streets”⁴ and, furthermore, one of the four design principles of the Meridian Hill Historic District states:

Meridian Hill Park is the centerpiece of the neighborhood. Its physical and visual centrality necessitates that alterations to surrounding buildings take into consideration views to and from this nationally significant urban garden⁵;

WHEREAS, Scheme E disregards these guidelines, and, if approved, will result in the irreparable loss of view of the White Meyer House from 16th Street, as well as views to and from Meridian Hill Park from the historic mansions;

WHEREAS, while Scheme E may be compatible with other buildings along the 16th Street corridor, its impact on the views between the mansions and Meridian Hill Park make it incompatible with this particular location;

WHEREAS, the *Meridian Hill Historic District Design Guidelines* require that “alterations and new construction [be] designed with extreme sensitivity” and “the mansions and churches of Meridian Hill represent the most significant aspect of the neighborhood’s built environment and should be treated with the highest standards of sensitivity and care”;

WHEREAS, the portion of the proposed building situated on Crescent Street lacks the sensitivity required by the design guidelines, as its size and mass overpowers the White Meyer House and creates a walled-in effect on the east side of the mansion that will eliminate the existing viewscape;

WHEREAS, in addition to concerns regarding the project's height, scale, and mass, ANC 1C notes that the proposed motor court on Belmont Street violates the guidelines

⁴ see Meridian Hill Historic District Design Guidelines, at p. 2

⁵ see Meridian Hill Historic District Design Guidelines, Design Review Principle #4, at p. 4

requiring new construction to be compatible with and enhancing of the immediate surroundings by truncating the views of the White Meyer House;

WHEREAS, the motor court entrance on Belmont Street should be covered by an opaque gate that would replicate the uninterrupted and continuous wall that currently frames the White Meyer House, thereby preserving the prominent viewscape and blending into the streetscape to highlight, rather than detract from, the White Meyer House;

WHEREAS, ANC1C notes that the proposed conference center, which was previously characterized as "an afterthought" and "a hernia" by HPRB members, still does not reflect sensitive and careful design as required by the guidelines, and will detract from and diminish views of the mansions when viewed from the west;

THEREFORE, ANC1C asks the Board to oppose the project until the developers fully comply with the *Meridian Hill Historic District Design Guidelines*, the *District of Columbia Historic Preservation Guidelines for New Construction in Historic Districts*, and previous resolutions put forth by this ANC; but, in the alternative, should HPRB choose to allow the project to proceed, ANC 1C encourages the Board to adopt Scheme E.