



Testimony of
Kristin Taddei, Planning Advocate, Casey Trees
April 27, 2017

Before the Zoning Commission
on
1200 Varnum Street NE Townhouse Development
ZC Case No. 16-17: EYA Development, LLC

Good evening, Commissioners. I am Kristin Taddei, Planning Advocate with Casey Trees. Casey Trees is a Washington DC-based nonprofit with a mission “to restore, enhance, and protect the tree canopy of the nation’s capital.” To fulfill this mission, we plant trees; monitor the city’s tree canopy; and work with developers to encourage tree planting and protection. We are dedicated to helping the District reach its 40 percent tree canopy goal by 2032. As a city, we will achieve this goal when development projects ensure no net loss in tree canopy.

As you know, Casey Trees typically testifies undeclared as our recommendations focus on the preservation of tree canopy, and not on the proposed structures or renovations; we advocate for sustainable developments. Therefore, it is my pleasure to testify tonight in support of the proposed townhouse development at 1200 Varnum Street NE.

Over the past year and a half, EYA openly sought and considered feedback from local residents and organizations, including Casey Trees. The first design, which included 180 townhouses, would have impacted many of the mature trees that make this site beautiful and unique. This design would have removed 65% of the tree canopy that exists on the St. Joseph’s Seminary property today.

EYA received and incorporated feedback from neighborhood residents and Casey Trees, creating a series of new designs. Today, the final design shows 80 proposed townhomes, a large public park, and a plan to protect and plant trees, which will ultimately result in no net loss in tree canopy at this site (Figure 1).

In March 2016, Casey Trees sent formal comments to EYA, proposing further improvements to this design in order to protect the existing specimen trees and enhance green spaces so the new trees that will be planted can live long, healthy lives. These recommendations included preserving the public parks in an easement so they can remain parks in perpetuity, planting trees in bioretention areas, and adding protective metal fencing around the critical root zone of

existing trees to prevent damage from construction equipment and debris. We also asked to be party to the future maintenance plan and tree species selection processes.

EYA has since included these recommendations in their design and agreed to include Casey Trees in future discussions regarding tree selection, protection, and maintenance. Today, EYA continues to follow up with Casey Trees to ensure they are making sound choices for the trees on this site.

EYA's responsiveness and inclusion of sustainable design elements in the 12th & Allison project demonstrates the many advantages of collaborating with the community early in the development process. This type of collaboration is necessary to prevent a decline in our city's tree canopy, which will be essential in order to achieve the District's many environmental goals.

Casey Trees looks forward to continuing to work with EYA as they move forward with this project, and to seeing the young and historic trees on this site continue to benefit St. Joseph's seminary, new townhouse residents, and the Michigan Park neighborhood for years to come.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

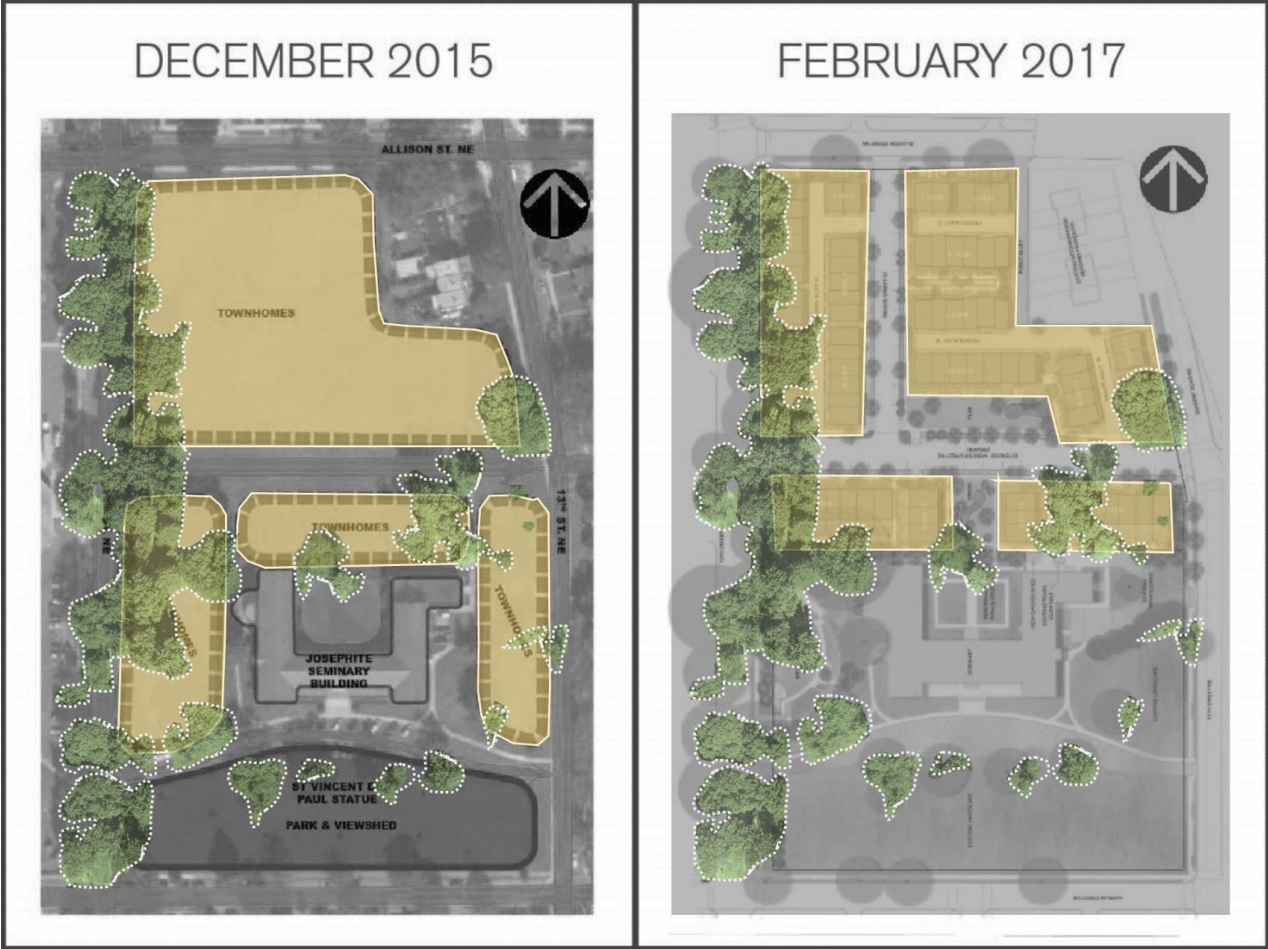


Figure 1. Existing tree canopy at 1200 Varnum Street NE. EYA’s first development plan (left) would have removed 65% of the tree canopy on site. The final development plan (right), which protects most existing trees and commits to planting new trees, results in no net loss in tree canopy long-term.