



KCA OCTOBER 20 MEETING: SIZE AND SCALE OF PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS PUTS THE APPEARANCE OF OUR HISTORIC DISTRICTS AT RISK YOUR PARTICIPATION IS NEEDED !

At our September 22nd meeting, KCA received a presentation of PN Hoffman's latest plans for "1800 Columbia Road", the current location of SunTrust Bank and Plaza. Hoffman would raze the building and construct a very tall (82 feet on the 18th Street side and 76.5 feet on the Columbia Road side) mixed-use building there. See the plans: <http://www.anc1c.org/index.php/library/category/178-proposed-development-at-1800-columbia-road-nw-currently-the-suntrust-building-and-plaza> Once there, select September 2016 drawings.

Directly below this article is the resolution that KCA approved unanimously at the meeting. Many KCA members and others who lived in the neighborhood in the 1970's may remember that Perpetual Federal Savings and Loan, which built the existing SunTrust Bank and Plaza, designed the plaza for the use which had evolved there, that of a farmer's market, among other sellers, and an outdoor amphitheatre for public speech and presentations (such as live music on Adams Morgan Day). Local attorney Paul Zukerburg has written an opinion that what was created and evolved amounts to a public easement. At our October 20 meeting, I will propose a resolution authorizing KCA to file suit for the purpose of determining whether this is the case. The plaza is a public square in the heart of our neighborhood, where neighbors meet at the farmer's market, where people-watching is a highly-developed art form and though humble, a space that could be programmed to better serve the community. Once it is gone, it will never return. PN Hoffman's plans now shrink the plaza to a useless fraction of what we now enjoy. Please turn out to support the resolution that will help us determine the publics' rights in this matter.

Another development proposal, this time for 1815 Columbia Road (the former site of Comet Liquor) will also be on the DC Historic Preservation Review Board Agenda for October 27. Owner Lisa Drazin proposes to expand the building upward to a height of 80 feet. This for a 22 foot wide single-story commercial building that is shown to be contributing structure in the official paperwork of the National Register, and that abuts a row of single story commercial structures on one side and a two story one on the other. See the plans: <http://www.anc1c.org/index.php/library/category/186-1815-columbia-road-nw>

KCA previously resolved against a very similar plan last year that was withdrawn by the owner. Please turn out to vote against this tasteless affront to the Kalorama Triangle Historic District.

We will also have as our guest, DC Department of Public Works Director Christopher Shorter and various DPW staffers to discuss leaf and snow removal and any of the many other services they provide, such as trash and recycling pick-up and parking enforcement.

Other items may be added to the agenda prior to the meeting.

-Denis James, President

**KALORAMA CITIZENS ASSOCIATION
RESOLUTION OPPOSING
PN HOFFMAN'S REVISED PLANS
TO BUILD A SEVEN-STORY, MIXED-USE
BUILDING AT 1800 COLUMBIA ROAD**

WHEREAS, the Kalorama Citizens Association (KCA) led the efforts to establish the Washington Heights Historic District (2006) and the Kalorama Triangle Historic District (1987); and **WHEREAS**, the *District of Columbia Historic Preservation Guidelines: New Construction in Historic Districts* require that new construction in an historic district be compatible with, and contribute to, the character of the historic district; and

WHEREAS, Perpetual Federal Savings and Loan Association (Perpetual S & L) agreed in 1976, after negotiations with Adams Morgan community representatives, that it would develop the large vacant lot on the southwest corner of the 18th Street and Columbia Road intersection for a new branch office in such a way as to preserve the property's "open quality, attractiveness, and accessibility to the vendors" that were using the then-vacant lot as an open-air market; and

WHEREAS, based on the foregoing agreement with the community, Perpetual S & L constructed a new branch office and a large public space in 1978, now commonly known as the SunTrust plaza due to the fact that SunTrust acquired the branch office and the property in 1998; and

WHEREAS, the Adams Morgan community, starting in about 1970 when the site was a large vacant lot (after the 1969 demolition of the Ambassador Theater, which previously occupied the space) and continuing after the construction of the new branch office and the associated plaza in 1978, has made use of the site as a public square and for various activities, including the farmers market and special neighborhood events such as Adams Morgan Day; and

WHEREAS, developer PN Hoffman (PNH), pursuant to a purchase agreement with SunTrust, proposes to build a seven-story, mixed-use building on the 1800 Columbia

Road site that would not be compatible with the Washington Heights Historic District in various respects and would occupy about 90% of the space that is currently devoted to the plaza; and

WHEREAS, the SunTrust plaza sits at the southwest corner of the 18th Street and Columbia Road intersection, which is the main intersection and geographic center of Adams Morgan and which is shaped and defined by one-, two-, and three-story buildings standing on each of its corners, with compatible height and massing and a sense of balance and openness; and

WHEREAS, the height and massing of the proposed PNH building would overwhelm the architecturally significant buildings on the other three corners of the 18th Street and Columbia Road intersection and would dominate this prominent intersection and fundamentally alter its historic character; and

WHEREAS, the height and massive scale of the proposed PNH building would overwhelm the two- and three-story buildings that abut the site on 18th

Street and the three- and four-story row house buildings that abut it on Columbia Road; and **WHEREAS**, the SunTrust site is part of the Washington Heights Historic District, requiring that any new construction on the SunTrust plaza site undergo review by the District's Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB) to ensure that the proposed new construction is compatible with the historic character of the Washington Heights Historic District; and

WHEREAS, the District's Comprehensive Plan and the Adams Morgan Vision Framework, developed by the District's Office of Planning in 2015, both provide strong support for preserving open space on the SunTrust site for continued public use of the site; and

WHEREAS, on June 23, 2016, the HPRB, after a public hearing on PNH's May 26, 2016, plans for the site, declined to approve the proposed plans in concept, setting forth a long list of changes in the plans that were required to secure HPRB approval, centering on the need to reduce significantly the scale and height of the building on its 18th Street side to ensure compatibility with the low-rise, two- and three-story buildings that line 18th Street to the south of the proposed site, but also identifying many other concerns about the ways in which the proposed building was not in compliance with the District's historic preservation guidelines for new construction; and

WHEREAS, PNH submitted new plans to the HPRB and to ANC 1C, dated September 10, 2016, that include 52 condo units, first floor retail space, and 32 underground parking spaces (Revised PNH Plans) but do not include a plaza or similar open space for public use (except for a tiny triangular space of roughly 400

square feet where the building meets the intersection of 18th Street and Columbia Road); and

WHEREAS, the Revised PNH Plans involved tweaks to the building's scale, consisting of a stair stepped façade on its southern 18th Street section, made up of three pieces, starting with a four-story piece, with a width of about 20 feet, closest to the existing three-story 18th Street building, then stepping up to a five-story piece, with a width of about 55 feet, and finally stepping up to a large six-story piece plus a large penthouse for the final 75 feet or so of the 18th Street façade; and

WHEREAS, the Revised PNH Plans do not include dimensions but earlier plans as to the building's

overall height (which appear not to have been altered) indicate the building's height to be 88.5 feet on the Columbia Road side and about 95 feet on the 18th Street side; and

WHEREAS, about 50% of the façade facing 18th Street under the Revised PNH Plans will reach about 95 feet or more than twice the height of most of the buildings on 18th Street to the south of the site; and **WHEREAS**, the Revised PNH Plans represent a slight improvement over the May 26 plans in terms of compatibility with the character of nearby buildings due to changes made to the building's proportion (relationship of the building's doors and windows to each other and the building's elevation), rhythm (the repetition of façade details), massing (articulation of the face and roof through projections), details and ornamentation, materials, color, and landscape features.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Kalorama Citizens Association that:

1. It opposes PN Hoffman's Revised Plans for a new building at 1800 Columbia Road based on, among other things, the incompatibility of the proposed building with the Washington Heights Historic District as to scale and height, especially with regard to the buildings to its south on 18th Street and the buildings on the other three corners of the 18th Street and Columbia Road intersection.
2. It urges PN Hoffman to work with KCA and ANC 1C to continue to revise and improve its plans as to the building's details relating to such matters as proportion, rhythm, massing, details and ornamentation, materials, colors, and landscape features in a way that will ensure that the proposed building is fully compatible with the Washington Heights Historic District.

3. It urges the Historic Preservation Review Board and ANC 1C to require PN Hoffman to make further modifications to these plans, especially as to the proposed building's scale and height, to ensure that the proposed building is compatible with the Washington Heights Historic District.
4. It urges PN Hoffman and SunTrust to acknowledge and confirm the validity of the agreement made with the Adams Morgan community in the 1970s by the bank (Perpetual S & L) whose assets were eventually acquired by the property's current owner (SunTrust) to dedicate a portion of the site to community use that is large enough to provide a *bona fide* public gathering space and space for the continuation of the farmers' market and other open-air vending opportunities.

PLEASE SUPPORT KCA WITH YOUR MEMBERSHIP DUES AND DONATIONS TO THE GENERAL FUND

If you have not yet paid your 2016 dues, please use the handy form below to do so. Check your address label - it should either show the date you paid dues for 2016, or request that you pay them. Your support is important and appreciated.

PLEASE USE THE COUPON BELOW TO PAY YOUR KCA DUES, JUST \$25.00, (\$40.00 for couples) OR CONTRIBUTE TO A KCA PROJECT

Annual dues are now due. If your address label states "Please pay 2016 Dues" we ask that you renew as soon as possible. For your convenience, a return envelope was included inside your January, 2016 KCA newsletter. Payments can also be made by credit card through Paypal at: <http://www.kaloramcitizens.org/join> Or use this convenient form and send your check to KCA, PO Box 21311, Washington DC 20009. KCA is a 501(c)(3) organization. All dues and contributions are fully tax deductible to the extent provided by law

- Here's my \$25 dues for 2016 (single membership). Here's my \$40.00 dues for 2016 (couple residing at the same address).
- Here's my contribution to the KCA General Fund_____.
- Here's my contribution to the Biltmore Triangle Garden_____.
- Here's my contribution to support the Walter Pierce Park Archaeology Project_____.
- Here's my contribution to defray the costs of the recently completed Kalorama Park Landmark Nomination:_____.
- I wish to get the KCA newsletter electronically. My e-mail address:_____.
- Second email address for couples residing at the same address:_____.

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**THE NEXT KCA MEETING IS:
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 20, 7PM**

**SAVING SUNTRUST PLAZA;
PLANS FOR OLD COMET;
DPW DIRECTOR;
MORE**

**GOOD WILL BAPTIST CHURCH,
1862 KALORAMA ROAD**