

Statement by New Rochelle Public Library Board of Trustees President Dierdra Gray Clark at the City of New Rochelle's Planning Board Meeting held on October 24, 2019.

Good evening Madame Chair and members of the Planning Committee,

My name is Rev. Dierdra Gray Clark and I am President of the New Rochelle Public Library Board of Trustees. I stand before you today with my fellow trustees and the Executive Director of the New Rochelle Public Library.

As you know the New Rochelle Public Library is a staple in our Community, and also in our downtown. Before there was a Master developer in the City, the Public Library was here serving the needs of the New Rochelle community, and throughout this development stage, the New Rochelle Public Library will continue to serve the community's needs. As journalist, Caitlin Moran so eloquently stated, "A library in the middle of a community is a cross between an emergency exit, a life-raft and a festival. They are cathedrals of the mind; hospitals of the soul; theme parks of the imagination. On a cold rainy island, they are the only sheltered public spaces where you are not a consumer", but simply a New Rochelle resident.

So, it is with dismay that I am here tonight to speak, on behalf of the Trustees about the impact the 11 Lawton Street development could have on the New Rochelle Public Library which has one of its main entrances on Lawton Street. Specifically, we, the library board trustees, are deeply concerned about these potential negative impacts. The project as proposed includes a 48 story, mixed used development with 596 residential units with a front door on Lawton Ave and a 190-room unit Hotel with an entrance again on Main and Lawton. Parking and loading for the 596-residential building will be accessed from North Ave, as well as Lawton Ave.

According to the developer's shadow study, the 48 stories will have a significant impact on the direct sunlight both the Ruby Dee Park and the Public Library receive. For a major portion of the day, the public library will not receive any direct sunlight. For those unfamiliar with the library, one of the main characteristics of the design of the library are the floor to ceiling glass windows which allow sunlight in for our patrons. Further, the Ruby Dee park, currently the only park in downtown New Rochelle, will see a significant reduction in direct sunlight as a result of the 11 Lawton Street development.

This development will also have an adverse impact on parking. Parking in the downtown area is already severely limited and currently there is scarcity of parking for our patrons and employees surrounding the library. We are concerned that during construction our employees and patrons will be displaced due to the additional construction vehicles and workers in the area. In addition, we are concerned that the 635 parking spaces, slotted for a building with 596 residential units and 190 hotel rooms, will not adequately support the new needs of the already inadequate parking situation.

Finally, the building will bring more traffic. With the layout of the building using Lawton as both the residential entrance as well as the hotel entrance, traffic will increase along the street that our patrons use for the library. The developers traffic study acknowledges an increase in traffic but fails to acknowledge or offer suggestions for accommodating the many young families who use the Lawton street entrance all day, every day. Any increase in traffic will impact our young families with strollers, and with very small children who regularly use Lawton street.

For these reasons, we are requesting the following:

1. that the developers provide workable solutions to mitigate the reduction in sunlight that will not only damage the grass and plantings in Ruby Dee Park, but will also change the character-defining features of our library structure, and
2. That the developers provide FREE parking to our library patrons, in spaces adjacent to our library, and that are safely and easily accessible to and from the library

The New Rochelle Public Library remains the life raft, the festival and the heartbeat of the New Rochelle Community. It is our hope that you will consider our very valid concerns and respond to our requests regarding this project.