

**Residents/Homeowners of the Unit Block of South Durham Street
Baltimore, MD 21231**

April 14, 2006

James B. Kraft
Baltimore City Council, First District
Room 505, City Hall
100 N. Holliday St.
Baltimore, MD 21202

Re: Designating the open space/parking area across from our homes
as a greenspace

Dear Councilman Kraft:

We the residents of the unit block of South Durham Street feel that the security and stability of our neighborhood is threatened by outside interests, and will continue to be in the near future, unless we secure a contract with the city reflecting our longstanding informal agreement. Specifically, we seek a contract providing that we continue to maintain the park, as we have for the past thirty years, in exchange for the right to use the parking spaces in front of our homes.

This block was "homesteaded" in the mid-1970s, with the assistance of then-Councilwoman Barbara Mikulski. The homes on the West side of the street, then vacant and in danger of collapse, were sold for one dollar and improved by the "sweat equity" of the original purchasers (two of whom reside here today). A neglected stable on the East side of the street was demolished, and the park and parking spaces were built there. The initial layout provided for eight parking spaces, one for each of the eight facing homes. The upkeep of the park was committed to the residents, along with the use of the parking spaces, on a "handshake" basis.

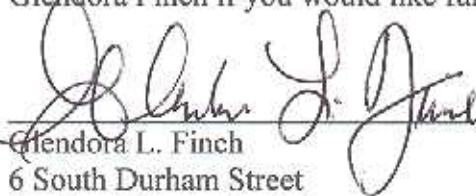
Currently, the progress of nearby development and the increase in housing values are making this unofficial space attractive to developers. For example, an owner of property on the West side of Wolfe Street recently approached us with a plat purporting to show that a portion of the park and parking spaces was deeded to that property. In fact, official records indicate that the property belongs to Baltimore City. Nonetheless, as developers invest in homes valued in excess of a half-million dollars that have no parking facilities, we are concerned that the City will be pressured to discontinue its longstanding agreement with our block. We believe that any subdivision of our park and parking spaces will jeopardize the balance of equities that has preserved a good quality of life in the neighborhood.


In addition to our own use of the park and parking spaces, our neighbors from beyond the block also use the park to walk their dogs—a social opportunity that we all appreciate. In the past, we have had some problems with individuals from beyond the neighborhood seeking to use the park for sex, drug use, and other unlawful or undesirable purposes. It has been our actions as homeowners in "moving along" such problem users that has promoted the proper and safe


enjoyment of the park by ourselves and our neighbors. For all these uses, we seek to have this city property officially designated a greenspace. Further, as mentioned above, our interest in caring for the grounds and maintaining order is supported by the grant of the parking spaces for our use, and we seek to have this understanding memorialized in a way that protects the block from deterioration.

In a city that has been described as hyper-segregated, we are proud of the economic and racial diversity of our small community. It includes (among homeowners): two current state employees, a master electrician, and a retired director of UMBC University Health Services—and the tenants of rented houses also have a variety of interests and occupations. The center of our block is the park, and our use of the adjacent spaces for our automobiles means that we do not contribute to competition for restricted street parking in the larger Washington Hill neighborhood. Our contribution to urban life should be encouraged—the personality of our block should not be sacrificed to increase the wealth of developers attracted by improving local property values.

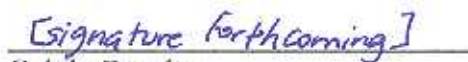
Councilman Kraft, the undersigned property owners are grateful for your attention to our request, and for all the foregoing reasons we would sincerely appreciate your help in designating this an official greenspace area, thereby protecting the “homesteaders” original agreement with the City. Please feel free to contact our spokeswomen Lorie Mayorga, Nancy West, and Glendora Finch if you would like further information or have questions.


Glendora L. Finch
6 South Durham Street
(Original Homesteader)
410-767-1687 (until 3 p.m.)
410-276-5101 (evenings)


Jerry Withers, C.P.A.
20 (20-22) South Durham Street
(Owner since 2005)
24 (24-26) South Durham Street
(Owner since 2001)


Lorie A. Mayorga, J.D.
12 (12-14) South Durham Street
(Owner since 1992)
410-767-1855 (office)
410-537-5011 (home)


Nancy West, M.S.
28 South Durham Street
(Owner since 2001)
410-327-9167


Calvin Brooks
16 (16-18) South Durham Street
(Original Homesteader)


Patrick T. Boyle, A.A.S.
30 South Durham Street
(Owner since 1987)

The following owner was sent a draft of this letter and has not yet responded:

Avon Kendrick
10 (8-10) South Durham Street
(Owner since 2004--nonresident)