

Zoning Commission Hearing: Wrap-up Statement

hope you have had a chance to look at them. Because this development is being proposed under the appearance of the betterment of our community, we feel that our concerns – the concerns of the immediate neighbors – should hold special weight.

Commissioners, regardless of what kind of building is put up, traffic and parking is going to be an issue for a long time to come. It already is. So the question becomes, do we make it manageable or do we make it everyone's worst nightmare? For the developers, the cost of building an underground parking garage, the cost of removing the hill, and the cost of moving the convent is driving the size of the building. So we ask, why not get rid of the cost then? Why not build small, on top of the hill, around the convent, which would still enable them to receive tax credits?

Commissioners, a denial of this zoning variance will allow adequate time for the needs and concerns of our community to be addressed, while preserving the economic viability of the project.

Esteemed commissioners, fundamentally, we want to stress that what we oppose, together with the Eckington Civic Association, within whose boundaries this proposal lies in, is the size of this development and we would like to see the goals of this project realized within the current R4 zoning. We ask and we hope you deny the request for an R-5-B zoning variance.

Commissioners, I leave you with the following statement from the DC Office of Planning. *“While development is viewed as the economic engine of the District, protecting the integrity of neighborhoods is equally important. The Development Review Division encourages growth in a way that is sensitive to the needs and values of neighborhoods.”*

I thank you commissioners.

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Esteemed Commissioners –

My name is Mirafe Marcos. I live on the 1800 block of North Capitol Street, NE, a mere three blocks away from the proposed development.

Commissioners, allow me to begin my summation with a quote by one of America's prolific writer and social activist, Maya Angelou, who said: "*living a life is like constructing a building: if you start wrong, you will end wrong*". Commissioners, the proposed project in its current form is wrong for our neighborhood. It was planned wrong, it was pushed on us wrong, and it is proposed to be built wrong. We as a community of concerned neighborhood citizens have a unique opportunity to right this wrong. That is why we ask that you deny the request for a zoning variance.

Commissioners, we hope it is evident from tonight's testimonies that our concerns are with the nature and scope of the St. Martin's proposed development, and not with its purpose. Contrary to the misinformed popular opinion, we are for affordable housing, and in that strong belief, we do not differ one bit from the proponents and developers of this project. Commissioners, we have been maligned and slandered by the other side with name calling and racial slurs, but we really wonder, is it just simple malicious smear or is it that they have completely missed our point? They have completely failed to listen! What we are against is irresponsible development, particularly one that promises to result in a traffic and parking nightmare, potentially damage the structural foundations of our houses, completely dwarf existing historic 2-story row houses, and inject over *four hundred plus* residents in a small spot of land in the midst of a quiet residential area removed from a major road. These flaws would be equally concerning regardless of the type of development proposed.

Commissioners, the proposed project glaringly violates a number of PUD requirements. For instance:

- the proposed PUD is inconsistent with the comprehensive plan;
- the PUD does not provide public benefits such as effective and safe vehicular & pedestrian access, measures to mitigate traffic impacts, historic preservation, and environmental benefits; and
- the proposed PUD does not provide a greater amenity than would be provided with a matter-of-right project.

As you are well aware, there are many instances in which a community accepts an amenity package in exchange for a PUD. In this instance we are asking for the project itself to be the amenity. In this instance, it clearly is not!

Commissioners, we have walked door-to-door and spoken with our neighbors that live within 200 ft of this development, plus countless other concerned nearby neighbors. Of the 111 occupied residences within the 200 ft, we spoke with residents of 87 homes, of which 78 (in other words, 70% of the occupied homes), 70% Commissioners, are opposed to this project.¹ We have already submitted their signed petitions to you and we

¹ 121 properties/residents, 79 signatures opposing project, 9 unwilling to sign petition, 1 abstention.