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December 12, 2002

Carol Mitten
Chairperson, D.C. Zoning Commission

Dear Ms. Mitten:

I have testified before the zoning commission before. Sunrise assisted living was allowed to buy the land where the house once stood, where I rented an affordable room for 450/month plus utilities, to build a monstrosity.

But this letter is about Boston-based (?) Stonebridge Assoc. They are about to change life as I have known it for the last 22 months by building a monstrosity of a building. Lets keep the zoning. I'll give you something to think about.

I managed to stay in the same efficiency in McLean Gardens for 14 years, employed briefly by NBC, American University, Hechinger's, and General Cinema at Mazza Gallerie to name a few of dozens in the neighborhood. In 1999, Boston Based GID decided not to renew a contract to allow set-asides in the apartments. My rent was based on my income and had been \$466/mo until December 1998. In January, 1999 it was increased to \$665/mo because the property manager called herself giving me a break. Then in February it went to \$932/mo. Because it was not under rent control, there was nothing I could do. But because of obstinence, pride, need for stability, fear of change, passion for my community that I had worked hard to "create" with my neighbors, I decided to stay. The Village at McLean Gardens got their rent, but they got it 45 days late. They decided to sue me November of 1999. They would sue me 4 times altogether, because I kept paying my rent to their lawyer on the court date. Finally, the judge granted them possession and they won.

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
ZONING COMMISSION
Case # 02-1779
EXHIBIT NO. 179
Exhibit 179

I stayed with some acquaintances, the Kliens, who I barely knew. I met Mr. K ~~and~~ ^{at a} filmmakers network meeting. One day, I was passing by the Avalon and ran into Mr. K. and his wife. They said, let us know if you get evicted. So I did. The next two weeks, I stayed with them. I'm African American. This meant a great deal to me. Then Mrs. K. convinced me to move to 5113 Connecticut Avenue. The homeowner/ restaurateur was compassionate, however he warned me that at anytime I would have to move with 30 days notice because the house had been sold to sunrise. This was February 6, 2000 and I had a new job at General Cinema, Mazza Gallerie.

March 14, literally the day before the settlement, I found a place in a group home in Chevy Chase, where I still live. We had five people. One moved to woman moved to Crystal City to share a 1 bedroom apt with her friend; one 44 year old woman is being evicted. She's an unemployed auditor and has not payed rent, \$750 a month for an English basement, since August. In some ways things are more stable for me. I'm office manager for the Current Newspaper. In some ways they are not.

I worry about property taxes that my current landlord will have to pay if the Washington Clinic is not restored and converted into something else. Will I have to move for the 3rd time in two years?

We learned some things since building Friendship Heights metro. We learned that it increases property taxes, disrupts communities, abolishes affordable housing and ruins lives. We can feel smug about the Infant home, Zeek's House, Friendship House, Regency House, and the many segregated assisted living homes on Connecticut Avenue. Many self-serving folks in government will make these assisted living homes their final crash pad, if not Sommerset in Bethesda or Leisure World.

The rest of us who didn't go on to get a Phd. because they had other priorities or interests will end up living in exiled parts of Maryland or Virginia. I had the dream of working in retail and walking home. Instead, the reality is that retail workers are bused from Friendship Heights to Potomac Avenue. You see them commuting at 5:30 a.m. to their jobs as nannies, housekeepers, ect. They are riding 3 hrs a day to and from their jobs.

Can we learn a lesson from New York City? I was on a Greyhound stopover a year ago and visited a restored hotel not far from the bus station that houses actors, retail workers, and yes, some who would even be in a shelter, allowing them to work minimum wage jobs in the city. Quality of life, increased quality of service are the results, because your not spending 50% of your income on housing.

April C. Womels

For Carol Mitter

From Aeryl Wines

Re : Stonebridge Assoc,
Ford, Washington
Clinic, and Life

3 pages

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