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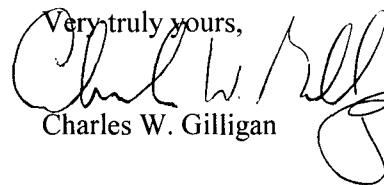
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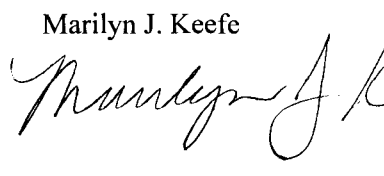
We are writing this letter as concerned citizens and property owners in the Forest Hills neighborhood. It has recently come to our attention that a non-representative minority of activists in the neighborhood have pushed for the adoption of the innocuous- sounding "tree and slope overlay," a new policy that will deprive property owners of their legitimate rights, hurt real estate values in the neighborhood, and spawn substantial litigation. However, we did not become aware of these major changes until after the new policies went into effect. We believe our lack of information regarding these changes may be shared by many other residents. Unfortunately, this lack of information seems to have been misinterpreted as support for the new proposal.

The thrust of the "tree and slope overlay" is to essentially prevent a property owner from removing any large tree from his/her land. Although most of us are appreciative of the arboreal splendor of Forest Hills, many of us also have to deal with the potential pitfalls of large trees on small lots. On our 12,000 square foot lot, there are four trees in excess of seventy feet in height. These trees are a distance ranging from six feet to twelve feet from our house. Their substantial root systems threaten the foundation of our house and have already begun tearing up a patio that was built on the premises many years ago. Trees of this size and age can constitute a threat to property and safety. Anyone who has driven around Ward Three following recent spring storms has seen huge trees that have toppled on homes, power lines and streets. The "tree and slope overlay" proposal ignores this reality, adopting a "trees are our friends" posture more appropriate to Arbor Day festivities at an elementary school, rather than representing the real world concerns that we face as property owners. The result of this simplistic approach would require us to go through an expensive and time-consuming bureaucratic maze in order to protect ourselves and our homes.

The tree and slope overlay is a solution in search of a problem. There has been no wide scale leveling of trees in our neighborhood. Existing zoning laws give us plenty of means of protecting the essential character of Forest Hills. Ironically, consideration of such draconian legislation may well spur homeowners to go out and cut down potential problem trees now, rather than be faced with the huge headaches that will most certainly follow adoption of the tree and slope overlay. It is time that this ill-considered proposal be stopped dead in its tracks. Please consider our household as one vehemently opposing this legislation. We will urge like-minded neighbors to add their voices to this debate.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Very truly yours,

Charles W. Gilligan

Marilyn J. Keefe

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
Case 02-19
Exhibit 131
ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 02-19
EXHIBIT NO. 131