

August 31, 2002

Alberto P. Bastida
Secretary of the Zoning Commission
Office of Zoning, Suite 210
441 4th St. NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Mr. Bastida:

This letter is in reference to Case No. 02-19 (Text Amendment – Forest Hills Tree and Slope Overlay District). We are strongly in support of the overlay as it has been amended and recommend that the Zoning Commission approve it as amended.

The trees are the overwhelmingly important characteristic of the Forest Hills neighborhood. They were preserved by those who built this neighborhood. Most of the larger trees are more than 100 years old and pre-date development of this neighborhood. We see it as our responsibility to preserve this legacy for those who will come to live in this wonderful section of the city.

As housing ages, it is natural to see new homes built that fit the needs of new residents. But the role of zoning rules has been, and continues to be, one of allowing for replacement or in-fill construction while preserving the essential values that characterize neighborhoods in this beautiful city. We support the overlay because it will preserve both the trees as well as the relaxed and spacious character of the neighborhood.

We have been alarmed in recent years by the pattern of homes on roomy lots being torn down and replaced by virtual lot-line-to-lot-line structures that crowd in on neighboring buildings and create a vista not in keeping with the historic lot occupancy patterns of Forest Hills. In some cases, this has been done not only across the front of the lot but extending into the rear of the deeper lots.

Occupants of these homes enjoy the trees still preserved on neighboring lots and benefit from the value these trees convey on the whole neighborhood. However, these same owners of these new dwellings would be devastated if the same action was taken by each of their immediate neighbors. In our view, that is a pattern of economic exploitation, economic block busting if you like, that must be controlled. The overlay is that control mechanism. And we recommend that you approve it as it has been presented.

Thank you for considering this opinion and thank you and the Commission for your service to the people of the District of Columbia.

Sincerely,

Clare C Melmer
4727 30th St. NW
Washington DC 20008

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
Case 02-19
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CASE NO. 02-19
EXHIBIT NO. 215