

September 26, 2002

Kenneth S. Katz
 Susan J. Roberts
 3411 Fessenden Street, NW
 Washington, D.C. 20008

Zoning Commission
 441 4th Street NW
 Washington, DC 20001

Re: Case Number 02-19 (Forest Hills Tree and Slope Overlay - Amended)

Honorable Zoning Commission Members:

As Forest Hills residents whose home is within the proposed Forest Hills Tree and Slope Overlay (Amended), we offer our complete support for, and strenuously urge the commission to accept, the amended overlay.

As I testified to the commission, the original overlay boundary includes our block of Fessenden Street, undoubtedly because we are adjacent to parks and streams. This block represents the lone R2- zoned area to fall within the overlay. Reiterating my testimony, we urge you to reject the Office of Planning recommendation to exclude our block from the overlay. To this date, we have heard no coherent explanation from the Office of Planning as to the basis of their recommendation. They seem to state that since our block 'only' exhibits one of the three characteristics sought for preservation, the presence of old, glorious trees, we should have no overlay protection at all. Do they likewise suggest that plats that have no trees of mature size, but exhibit many slopes that could be destroyed by development also be exempt from the overlay? Consider that if our current lot occupancy still allowed merely a 1-5% increase before reaching the 40% R2-zoned matter-of-right maximum occupancy: if the footprint of our house was extended - for example the front porch - 1 foot each west and south two 75 year-old towering (and healthy) eastern red cedar trees would be destroyed. These are now an important part of the character of Forest Hills, as each such remaining alive and mature tree must be considered. As I tried to emphasize, each tree in our block is directly shared on average by two or three home owners. The indiscriminate, and ill-considered loss of each tree yields an even greater loss of that special and unique Forest Hills character to the residents of our neighborhood.

At the first ZC hearing, one commissioner requested that he be supplied with a graphical representation of the rate of development that has stimulated the drive for the FHTS overlay. While hardly unreasonable, this request seems to characterize a great misconception. Does the Ward Three Comprehensive Plan state that only upon destroying 50% of the unique character of Forest Hills should planners then commence (seemingly futile) attempts to save it? Is the wise farmer to say to his son, don't worry about closing the barn doors until too many of the horses have run off? Planning, whatever it may be, is surely not that. Increased development can explain the motivation of individuals to work toward a comprehensive, well-considered overlay for Forest Hills: one that maintains the unique character, preserves the natural topography, and protects the adjacent streams and parks. However, an increase in development is not a requirement for the acceptance and implementation of this overlay. The only requirement for the acceptance of this overlay is the measure of this commission as to the correctness of the planning goals, and the judgement of this commission that the amended overlay is well designed to meet those goals. We urge the commission to affirm both the goals and the mechanism of attainment that is the Forest Hills Tree and Slope Overlay.

~~Zoning Commission~~

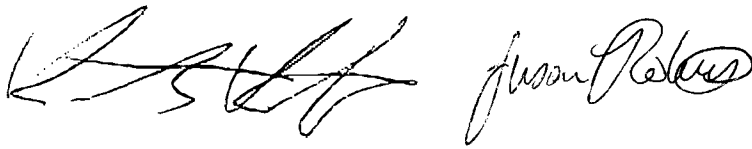
District of Columbia

Case 02-19
 Exhibit 253

ZONING COMMISSION
 District of Columbia
 CASE NO.02-19
 EXHIBIT NO.255

Or is Forest Hills meant to describe to the future what used to be here?

Sincerely,

The image shows two handwritten signatures in black ink. The signature on the left is for Kenneth S. Katz, featuring a stylized 'K' and 'S'. The signature on the right is for Susan J. Roberts, written in a cursive script.

Kenneth S. Katz and Susan J. Roberts