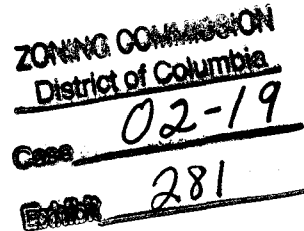


October 5, 2002

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



Re: Case No. 02-19 (Text Amendment – Forest Hills Tree and Slope Overlay District).

Dear Mr. Bastida and Members of the Zoning Commission:

We are writing in continued support of the overlay as amended and wish to provide comments on two of the issues that were raised by opponents to the overlay in the September 30, 2002 hearing.

Mr. Mark Baughman, in his presentation and comments, highlighted our home at 4629 30th St. NW twice in his slide show. His comment was that our home, and most of those on our street, have outlived their usefulness and should be torn down and replaced. He characterized our home as a "Sears" house, not, I assume, a complementary characterization.

In fact, our house is one of the oldest in the neighborhood, dating from 1890. When we bought our home in 1979, a long standing resident of the neighborhood had recently died and the home was placed in a closed bid estate sale. We were aware that the home had been slated for demolition by a builder who thought he had the inside track on the sale through his relationship with the executor of the estate.

We won the bid and we saved the house. We restored the house over the next 5 years with work that we mostly did ourselves. We now have a 5 ½ bedroom, 2 ½ bath home in which we have raised two children and are complemented frequently on the charm and character of the age that we have preserved. We continue to modernize the interior to keep pace with the times. And we are considering transforming the outside wrap around porch area (which was rebuilt in the 1940's, we think) to the original style which was a very elegant, turned column framed Victorian porched home.

We are deeply offended by the comments of Mr. Baughman and are not only suspicious of his personal business motives but are surprised that he shows such disregard for the values those of us who vote and pay taxes in the Forest Hills neighborhood hold for the place we love and have raised our families. I would fear for the historic loss and the shallow, modernist massive floor plan architectural replacement that would be built under his guidance. It is our fondest hope that the purchaser of our home will find the same values in neighbors and property that we have enjoyed for the last 23 years. The character of our neighborhood attracts non-pretentious people, concerned about family values and looking for neighborhood relationships based on these fundamental values. To permit, at the same time, the destruction of this neighborhood character and lose the trees to any Forest Hills property owner who would choose to sell their personal stake in the neighborhood as well as the neighborhood birth rights we speak of here on their way out of the

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neighborhood or to capture a economic windfall on a vacant lot at the expense of these values iks what we petition the Commission to avoid.

Some of these homes, at some time in the future, will probably need to be rebuilt. But the character of this neighborhood is what we are trying to preserve. The tree preservation, lot size and impervious coverage provisions are the key elements of our petition. In our view if there are procedural issues that can be modified while preserving these three key provisions, we would not object.

In my testimony on September 5, 2002, I emphasized, among other things, that the diversity of homes and property in the Forest Hills is a strength of the community and one for which proponents of the overlay have evidenced strong agreement. But what we have seen from the opponents has not been constructive. Their objections have only a vaporous structure – send it back to the neighborhood to construct a consensus. If they have not yet seen fit to present alternatives, they will not in the future.

That is the decision before the Commission, as we see it. In our view, and on 30t St., we see overwhelming support for the overlay as amended. There is only one opponent that we know of and he has succeeded in covering his lot with add-ons to his home to what looks like more than 70% of the property.

Let us make one additional point. What we believe is that neither Mr. Maudlin nor Mr. Kogan represent the views of the residents of Forest Hills who live north of Soapstone Valley on this issue. They, admittedly, are the elected representatives of their single member ANC districts. Mr. Maudlin is our single member district representative. But each of them has decided to support a position which we believe to be supported by a distinct minority in Forest Hills and one which we believe does not hold the basic values of the neighborhood as important.

We would point, in conclusion, that the challenge to the overlay as amended comes principally from some residents south of the Soapstone valley. Soapstone is a natural area that separates Forest Hills into, for the overlay purposes, two neighborhoods. The residents north of Soapstone should not be put in a position where the character and values of their neighborhood is expropriated by a localized, vocal group who live south of that park.

And, it is definitely not in the interest of those of us who live north of Soapstone to be judged by a self-appointed architectural judge and executioner (with an economic interest sustained by his views) of which houses get his "thumbs up" so they are not torn down.

Thank you once again for your consideration of our views.

Sincerely,


David and Linda Swanson

4629 39th St. NW
Washington, DC 20008

