

June 13, 2002

D.C. Planning Commission
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Mr. Alberto P. Bastida, AICP
Secretary of the Zoning Commission
Office of Zoning
441 4th Street NW, Suite 210
Washington DC 20001

Open letter re: Case No. 02-19 Text Amendment, Forest Hills Tree and Slope Overlay

Dear Mr. Bastida:

I am writing as a 27 year D.C. resident, a ten year Forest Hills homeowner of a 1949 house on a 6,000 square foot lot, and a registered architect active in neighborhood and environmental planning.

The proposed overlay, a fairly bald attempt to restrict residential development, uses the "motherhood" issue of saving trees to lull unwary neighbors—successfully, it seems, until now. While D.C.'s green areas deserve serious study, here they are being employed merely as a garnish to make downzoning more palatable.

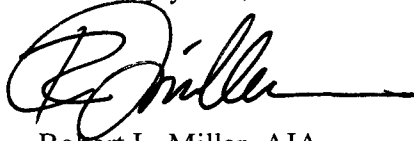
This measure apparently originated with a minority of Forest Hills property owners—an estimated 20%—hoping to block a few large parcels from being used for new, relatively affordable homes as allowed under existing zoning. These owners' one real objection to development seems to be that they would rather not live next to it.

In a city seeking to attract middle class taxpayers, build affordable infill housing, and foster diversity, this is NIMBYism more typical of a sprawl suburb. Meanwhile the remaining 80% of Forest Hills is being asked not only to endorse this elitist social agenda, but to bear its practical burden—from inconvenience in getting approvals for simple additions and site work, to (assurances notwithstanding) whole properties rendered unbuildable or unmarketable by new lot coverage, setback, slope and tree rules.

Surely there are better ways to achieve responsible development on the very few parcels in dispute. For example, PUD (planned unit development) treatment of multi-lot subdivisions could let developers build more economical house clusters while preserving trees and perimeter open space near neighbors.

Allowing political pressure to override established environmental, planning and zoning controls is not only wrong for one neighborhood today, but sets a bad precedent for all D.C. neighborhoods. Along with every family on southern Linnean Avenue I urge the Commission to reverse this restrictive, dishonest rezoning.

Sincerely yours,



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ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
Case 02-19
Exhibit 88

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO.02-19
EXHIBIT NO.88