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7218 Blair Road, NW
Washington DC 20012

March 3, 2005

Ref: Proposed Changes in the Takoma Overlay Zone

Carol Mitten, Chair
District of Columbia Zoning Commission
441 4th Street, NW
Suite 210-South
Washington DC, 20001

Z.C. # 04-16

Dear Ms. Mitten:

We have lived at the above address since 1965. Our sons went to the Takoma School. We use the Takoma Library. We regularly walk to the Metro Station. We walk our dog in the neighborhood daily. We are very conscious of living in an area of houses that are rarely as much as 3 stories and of a few small apartment buildings not higher than 4 stories. Takoma DC is a historic district precisely to protect its character. Two new apartment buildings adjacent to the Metro Station, one completed on Carroll Avenue and one being built on Blair Road, are not above 50 feet in height and are 4 stories. These buildings were accepted without significant resistance as a concession to the need to provide housing associated with public transportation and because they represented a good use of blighted land. The buildings required no zoning changes and conform to the Takoma Small Area Plan which says, "New residential and commercial buildings should be no more than 2-4 stories in height to match existing neighborhood scale." (Page 8)

Nevertheless, the new building under construction on Blair road is far more massive than anything in the neighborhood. We are greatly concerned that more massive construction will spread north near to Chestnut Street and to the intersections of 5th Street with Dahlia and with Blair Road and of Piney Branch and Blair roads all of which contain traditional housing of 2 to 3 stories and are part of the historic district. While some commercial uses consistent with the Takoma Small Area Plan might well be desirable, new construction within the 50 foot height restriction could still contain 4 stories if the ground floor were dug down a few feet for the commercial portion; residential portions do not require 14 feet and would not have to be dug down.. This could be attractive and we have seen examples of such an approach elsewhere.

But we are against construction more than four stories high and higher than 50 feet. It is not necessary to raise the height to 55 feet to achieve 4 stories. The neighborhood should not have the potential for more than 4 stories or heights greater than 50 feet forced on it by developers. Again, look at the new condominium apartment building under construction on Blair road: it is more than sufficiently massive and conforms to current zoning. After all, it is not as if developers do not make profits on the commercial portions on the ground (first) floors of their

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developments.

Finally, what really is the purpose of the change in set-backs and what would be the impact in appearance and usability? Would it be to provide sidewalk space for cafes? Imagine a café on Blair Road. Blair Road is a major car commuter route. Blair Road itself is unlikely to become elegant but the impact on the historic district around it of construction on Blair Road and on Carroll Street could be very lowering were construction height to be raised.

Sincerely,

Leonard Rubin and Vivien L. Rubin

cc. ANC 4B