To: Ms. Carol Mitten, Chair, DC Zoning Commission
441 4th Street, N.W. Suite 210
Washington, D.C. 20001

Reference: Takoma Overlay Zone
Proposed Endorsement
Case # 04-016

I am not in favor of the Overlay Zone for the Takoma Central District Plan that would permit the building height to increase to a 55 foot maximum, an increase from the current maximum of 50 feet..

The Takoma Central District Plan calls for the 2 to 4 stories limitation on height which is just OK. It should be lower. We are not a tall building area and we are definitely not Silver Spring, Maryland, and we shouldn't attempt to be a small town imitator. We would probably do a disservice to small retail establishments by suggesting a great economic surge is forthcoming in Takoma which would translate into booming success at the retail level. The current retailers are not making barrels of money hand over fist (with the possible exception of the 7-11 at the corner of Cedar), and no projections support the notion that great quantities of capital will soon flow in that would support all of this higher density retail space.

It might be useful to remember that the block of Blair Road between Cedar and Chestnut Streets was at one time (in the 60's) zoned residential R-1-B. By the power of influence (read: money) an oil company persuaded the BZA that a gas station on the corner was preferable to the then-existing grand old victorian house with its two hundred year old oak tree in the front yard. From its first day the gas station has been an eye-sore and it still is. Where were the planners then? If the strip along Carroll Ave is so "hot" developers will build within the existing zoning. They will not need more height. Of course they want it, and they always want residential land rather than commercial land because it is cheaper. Their motto is "better to disregard the overall best interests of a neighborhood and make a lot of money rather than to enhance a neighborhood and make an ordinary amount of profit." It is the responsibility of the Zoning Commission, and other public agencies, to protect the overall best interests of the city's neighborhoods.

On the east side of Blair Road (that is, next to the train tracks) between Cedar and Chestnut there were detached single family homes R-1-B zoned.. Over time, major zoning changes from residential to commercial were made. So, commercial establishments have marched right up Blair Road. Now the developers want more pounds of flesh from our neighborhood in the form of new height allowances. What is the master game plan of the District's planners now? Build a very tall office building next to the last remaining detached house on the corner of Blair and Chestnut. When the owner of that house is ready to sell the developers will almost surely seek commercial zoning for that parcel too. Then the stage will be set for the developers to replace the homes on Chestnut Street from Blair Road to the railroad tracks with commercial development--all in the name of the city's planners working with developers.

I say it's spinach and I say the hell with it!

Let the Takoma Central District Plan with its 2-to4-story height limitation be the starting point for changing the zoning along Blair Road from commercial back to its original residential zoning. Give the residential builders a chance to come in with some well-planned housing with setbacks and open space. Benefit the community. The neighborhood is not a carcass to be picked at and pulled apart. I hope the Zoning Commission will understand the need to support really good innovative housing design and support that belief by not allowing commercial interests to whittle away at our neighborhood bit-by-bit with what appear to be minor zoning changes. They are not minor and they

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will undermine the Takoma Community.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my views.

Carol Rende

Carol Rende

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