



CAPITOL HILL RESTORATION SOCIETY

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**TESTIMONY OF NANCY METZGER,
CAPITOL HILL RESTORATION SOCIETY,
BEFORE THE ZONING COMMISSION, ON
INCLUSIONARY ZONING IMPACTS ON HISTORIC
DISTRICTS – OCTOBER 19, 2006**

I am Nancy Metzger, chair of the Historic Preservation Committee of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society (CHRS) Tonight I am speaking in opposition to the present Inclusionary Zoning provisions as they would affect the historic district.

The efforts of government to ensure there was sufficient housing for the city's workers, particularly at the Navy Yard, once one of the city's largest employers, contribute greatly to the Capitol Hill Historic District These efforts are most likely why the proposed Comprehensive Plan noted that Capitol Hill was one of the densest areas of the city But a historic district is more than a collection of buildings, it is a neighborhood of people. Concerned about neighbors who could not afford restoration of the façade of their small historic house, a few years ago the Capitol Hill Restoration Society initiated a pilot project to help them. That project helped inform the present Targeted Assistance for Historic Homeowners Act, which gives owners with limited financial means access to funds for the restoration and maintenance of their homes Having neighbors of diverse economic means is one of the benefits of the Capitol Hill Historic District, however, we feel there are a number of problems with the proposed mapping and provisions of this Inclusionary Zoning effort.

- 1. Each historic district should be considered individually to assess the true impact of the Inclusionary Zoning regulations because each historic district was established for different reasons and has a different mix of housing stock.**

The examples given in the Office of Planning report about the Arts District and 14th Street do not translate to the Capitol Hill Historic District, which has lower-scale residential neighborhoods and commercial strips. Fourteenth Street, as a historic district, has an emphasis on the streetcar and automobile associated development – twentieth century development – while Capitol Hill's over-riding image is one of the 19th century, of Victorian and earlier times Although we do have the occasional, very tall building (sometimes in excess of 40'), a different scale prevails throughout the Capitol Hill Historic District including the main corridors as most of our buildings range from one to three stories, from 12' high to 32' or 35'

Furthermore, the comments concerning R-4 areas (page 61 of the September OP report) that postulated that whole blocks were often developed at a certain size and width are also not germane to Capitol Hill either. Most of Capitol Hill was built by small builders rather than large speculators so we typically have smaller groups of houses (3, 5, 7) rather than an entire block or square with identical houses.

**ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia**

CASE NO. 04-33A
EXHIBIT NO. 1
ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 04-33A
EXHIBIT NO. 61

- 2. Our analysis of potential/probable Inclusionary Zoning sites differs greatly from the Office of Planning's data shown on both Map 4 and the table on page 37.**

Map 4 (Inclusionary Zoning Target Zones and Probable IZ Development Areas) shows a large triangular portion of the historic district bordered by Constitution Avenue and lying between 4th and 11th streets NE as a "high probability IZ development site – and yet the Office of Planning identified only 3 sites on Capitol Hill as possible IZ sites. Two of those sites (the Friendship House "garden" and the Baptist Church parking lot) are nowhere near this large triangle. Our analysis of the historic district came up with over 30 potential sites (Appendix 1). While some of the school sites may never come into play, there are many others that have a far better chance of turning up on the market.

- 3. Design considerations of the Capitol Hill Historic District may well impede the ability of a development to employ IZ-related density.**

The Office of Planning report listed this point as a potential concern but then proceeded to dismiss it. However, because of the increased number of potential sites and because of the large size of some of those areas, we are concerned about the impact on the form of the Capitol Hill Historic District. The few streets that in the 19th century were developed in long rows for work-force housing, such as Duddington Place SE and Park Street NE, have a mews-like quality. They are narrow streets with identical or rhythmically coordinated houses. They present a very different feeling than would a row of 20 or more narrow houses marching along East Capitol Street where, for instance, St. Cecilia's now stands. The one-size, one-solution scenario presented on page 38 (September 2006 OP report) is not what happened historically when workforce housing was needed by the city – and consequently it doesn't really work for the present-day Capitol Hill. While the 15' width for a single house is similar to some of our houses, very long rows of such houses will be a new element in the Capitol Hill Historic District. In the 1990s, when the Ellen Wilson project was re-developed, there was a serious – and successful – effort to integrate the development visually into the neighborhood. Houses are of different widths, heights, styles, and materials. It takes a knowledgeable observer to discern the old and the new. It is this type of integration that must be sought in a historic district.

In the C-2-A zones, mostly along 7th SE, 8th NE, Pennsylvania and Massachusetts Avenues, the problem is somewhat different. On Capitol Hill, the C-2-A zones are basically linear strips, directly adjoining the R-4 zones. The Office of Planning report (page 39) says "increases in height are usually perceived as more objectionable than increases in lot occupancy." An example of a building with an increase in lot coverage from 60% to 75% is shown with the explanatory text that there has been "no reduction in size of the rear or side yards currently required by the Zoning Regulations." Yet clearly shown in the example is the fact that the rear yard has been perceptibly reduced, to the point where it appears that the shadow of the building extends well past the lot line. From this illustration, it seems the minimum zoning requirements for side and rear yards are basically irrelevant – and the owners of adjacent properties in the rear would definitely be asked to pay a high price in terms of loss of light and privacy for that increased lot occupancy. In real life, this would be the adjoining R-4 homes that would be severely impacted. From my ten years of experience with neighborhood infill and additions, I can testify that people object vociferously to such intrusions, despite the assurances in the OP report. They rightly expect that, in exchange for their gift to the city

of maintenance of historic homes and protection of the city's cultural resources, they will be, in turn, protected from 'unhistoric' intrusions such as large buildings looming over their back gardens

In addition, with a given height of 50', many new apartment houses and commercial projects could be twice as tall as their 19th century neighbors. This height differential can be very jarring. The Historic Preservation Review Board has indeed asked that projects be reduced in order to protect a historic neighborhood's scale and character. The attached drawings of a proposed project in the 1200 block of Pennsylvania Avenue shows the reduction required for HPRB approval – and even then, several Board members felt that the project would have been better suited to the Historic District with even greater reductions in height because the site was surrounded by two-story buildings. In this instance there was a large enough rear yard setback so the height difference probably will not be too overwhelming for the neighbors. Given the predominance of two-story buildings on C-2-A streets, these types of situations will certainly occur in the future as well.

Since the Historic Preservation Review Board is permitted "to restrict any component of the zoning envelope below what is usually permitted as a matter of right," it is our belief that this will happen often enough that, in practicality, the IZ bonus will not be available to developers and thus, the Capitol Hill Historic District should not be included in this overlay.

POTENTIAL IZ SITES IN CAPITOL HILL HISTORIC DISTRICT

R-4 Zones

1. Stuart Hobson School Playground (4th & E NE)
2. Edmonds School Playground (9th and D NE)
3. Corner grocery store at SE corner of 8th & F streets NE)
4. 'Sasha Bruce' house side lot near 11th & Maryland NE
5. St. Joseph's Catholic Church (2nd Street between C and D NE)
6. Parking lot of clinic building (8th & Constitution NE)
7. Capitol Hill Baptist Church parking lot (5th Street near A NE)
8. Heritage Foundation parking lot (square between 3rd, 4th, D & E NE)
9. Senate parking lot (3rd & A NE)
10. Old St. Cecilia's (6th & East Capitol Street)
11. Hine Junior High School and playground (7th, 8th, Pennsylvania Ave., SE)
12. Brent Elementary School and playground (3rd and North Carolina Avenue, SE)
13. Watkins School and playground (12th & E streets SE)
14. St. Peter's School playground (3rd Street near E SE)
15. Tyler Elementary School and playground (square at 10th, 11th, G and I SE)
16. Ebenezer AME Church (side lot on D Street, SE between 4th & 5th)

R - 5 - B

17. Medlink property at 7th, 8th, C streets and Constitution, Massachusetts avenues, NE)
18. Potomac Gardens (12th, 13th, G, I streets SE)
19. Hopkins Court (12th and K streets SE)

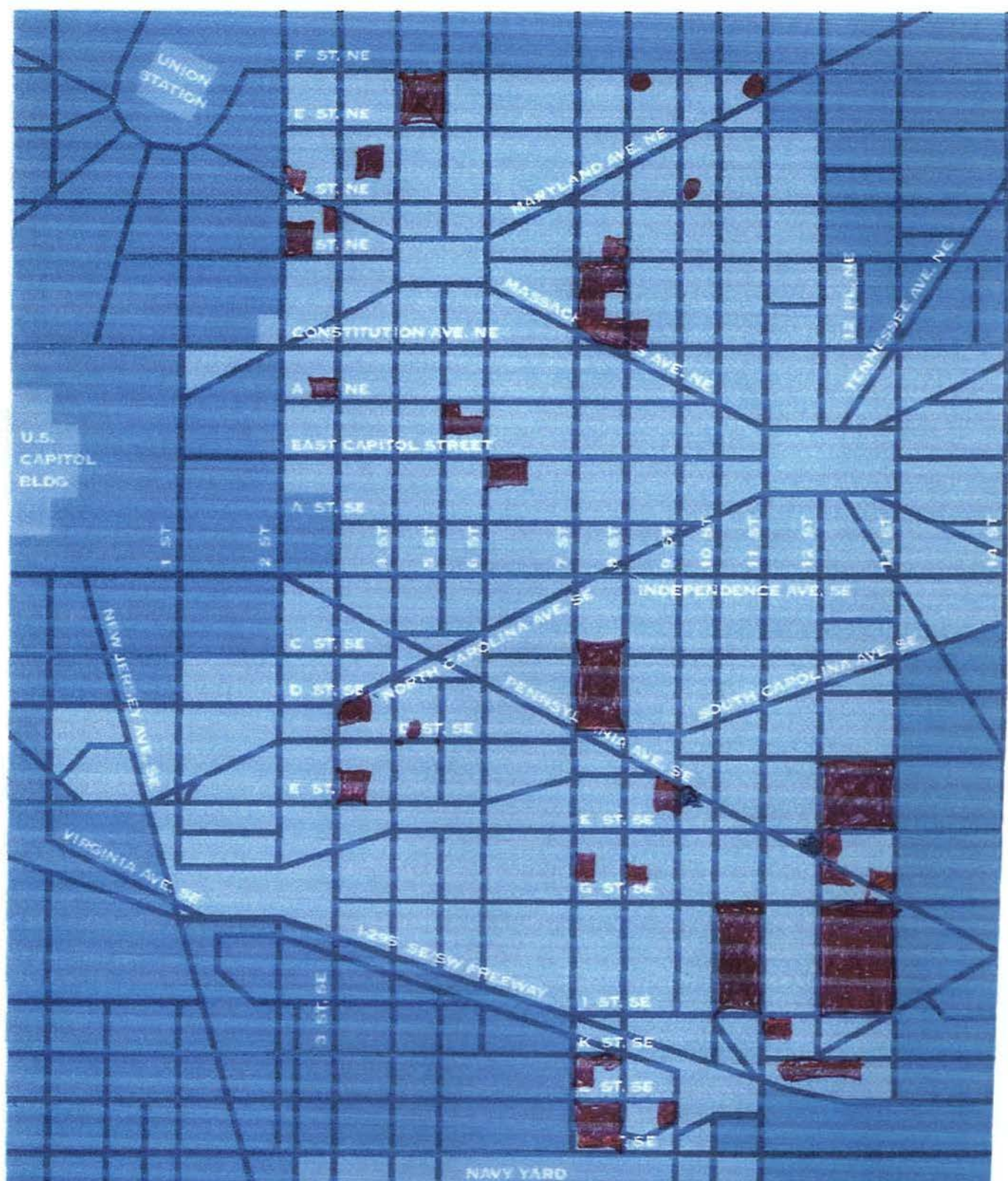
C-2-A

20. Old Safeway building – now clinic -- (8th & C streets NE)
21. Old Safeway building – now Mormon church – (7th Street between E & G SE)
22. Parking lot beside Chateau Animaux (8th Street SE near G Street)
23. Gas Station & repair shop (11th & I streets, SE)
24. Parking lot (9th & Potomac avenue, SE)
25. Gas Station (9th Street & Pennsylvania Avenue SE)
26. Gas Station (SE corner, 12th Street & Pennsylvania Avenue SE)
27. CVS store (NE corner, 12th Street & Pennsylvania Avenue SE)
28. Gas Station (13th Street & Pennsylvania Avenue SE)
29. Gas Station (2nd & Massachusetts Avenue NE)
30. Grocery Store (3rd & Massachusetts Avenue NE)

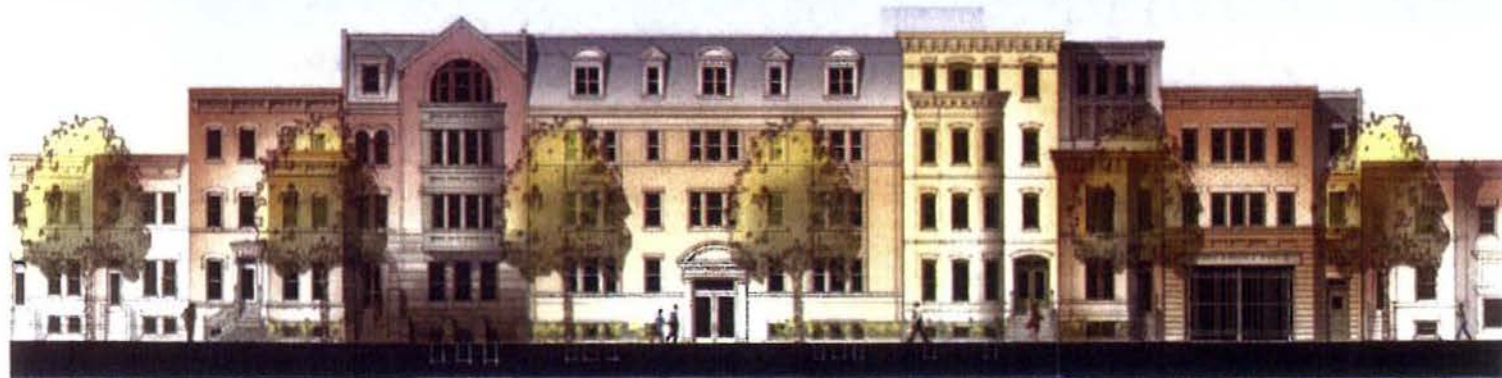
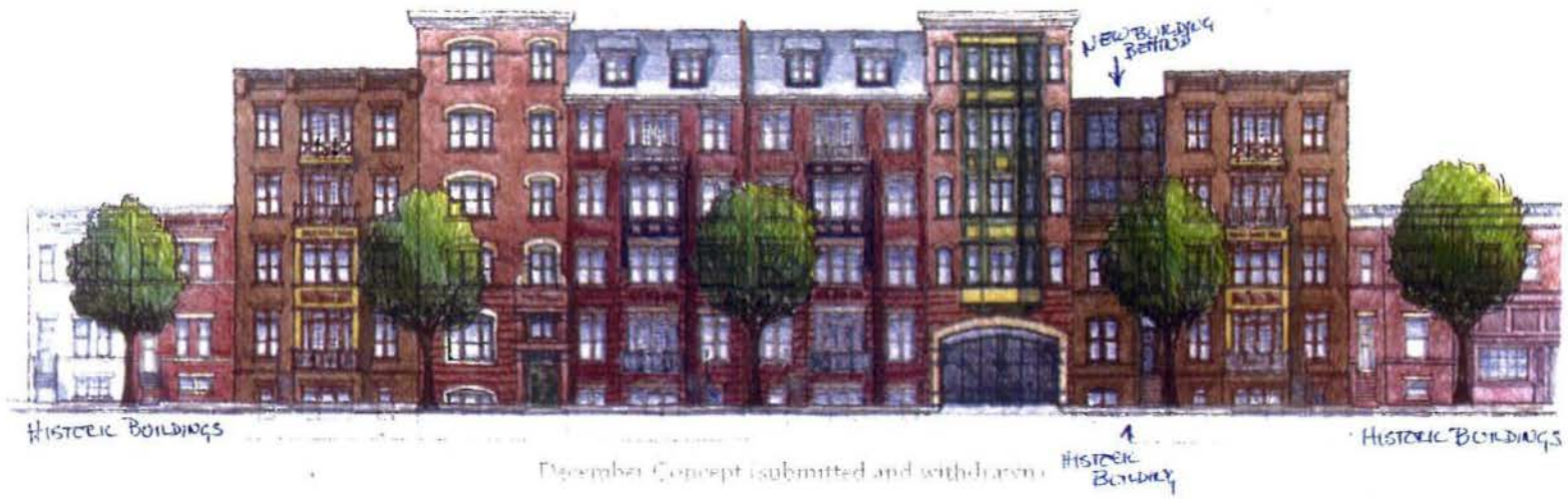
C-3-A

31. Miles Glass and adjacent Virginia Avenue, 7th Street properties (8th & Virginia SE)
32. Salvage Yard (8th & L streets SE)
33. Car Barn (8th and M streets SE)

(Other – The Friendship House garden unlikely to be developed as it is at the front of the house; Providence Park at 2nd and E SE is Congressional property.)



CAPITOL HILL HISTORIC DISTRICT



CONCEPTUAL PROGRAMS FOR EACH SCHEME:
(approximate square footage and heights)

PROPOSED.

F A R ~ 2.90
Square Feet ~ 58,000
Building Height ~ 60 ft

PROPOSED:

REDUCTIONS
from original concept.

F A R ~ 2.80
Square Feet ~ 56,850
Building Height ~ 50 ft

F.A.R. ~ 0.10
Square Feet ~ 1150
Building Height ~ 10 ft

PROPOSED:

TOTAL REDUCTIONS
from original concept:

F.A.R. ~ 2.60
Square Feet ~ 53,000
Building Height ~ 40-50 ft

F.A.R. ~ 0.30
Square Feet ~ 5000
Building Height ~ 10-20 ft

April 14, 2005

BOARD SUBMISSION, REVISED - DRAFT

PENNSYLVANIA AVE., S.E.