

January 9, 2006
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Washington, DC 20002
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Carol J. Mitten
Chairman, DC Zoning Commission
441 4th St NW
Suite 210 South
Washington, DC 20001

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Dear Ms. Mitten:

We are writing as residents of ANC-6C in reference to the proposed redevelopment of the Capitol Hill Hospital site located at 7th Street and Massachusetts Avenue Northeast. We wish to express our support for the current design of the project submitted by the architects (Shalom Baranes Associates), and to ask that the commission retain the current R-5-D zoning applicable to the site. We are confident that the proposed redevelopment of this site will add to the vibrancy of our neighborhood in a manner consistent with Capitol Hill's history and current function, and contribute to the broader health of our city.

As you are aware, the Historical Preservation Review Board has endorsed the basic concept of the project, and the architects have worked diligently with the Board and local residents over the past year to modify initial designs to respond to concerns. We were personally impressed by the architect's designs. In light of the fact that a considerable portion of the redevelopment site has existed in its current form since 1928, the larger-scale buildings envisioned by the design are very much in keeping with this neighborhood's historical character. Moreover, they would represent a vast improvement over the lifeless nature of the current site.

Retaining the site's R-5-D zoning is critical for achieving redevelopment of this site in the near future, and the proposal to "down-zone" the site to R-5-B does not afford a workable compromise. The Office of Planning's recommendation would render the existing buildings on the site non-compliant, effectively requiring that a developer purchase the existing structure, tear it down, and re-build at lower density. Such a re-zoning would thus make the return of this site to residential use prohibitively expensive for most developers, or render the resulting residences affordable to only the very wealthiest Washingtonians. We feel that neither outcome is in the best interests of the neighborhood and the city.

Preserving the ability to build at higher densities throughout D.C. serves the city's economic and social interest. Because the city is in the unfortunate position of being unable to tax its commuters, and because so much of its land is owned by non-taxable government entities, increasing the city's residential population remains the primary strategy by which D.C. can achieve long-term fiscal stability. Attracting more residents

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to the city, and indeed to the Capitol Hill neighborhood, would also bring social benefits in the form of increased retail (especially to an area as large as the Hill that is served by only one major grocery store) and more vibrant public schools.

We believe that most D.C. residents share the goal of increasing the city's population, but when faced with the prospect that those new residents will live close by, are far too willing to oppose development in favor of the status quo. While we do not live immediately adjacent to the MedLink site, it is difficult for us to imagine that D.C. will ever be competitive with its suburbs on jobs, public services, tax rates, and general quality-of-life factors if the city does not embrace quality redevelopment opportunities that exist in its all of its neighborhoods, especially those so close to its commercial core. Down-zoning the MedLink site would threaten the continued revitalization of an important area, and send a message that residents of Capitol Hill—and the Zoning Commission itself—feel that the challenges facing D.C. can best be solved elsewhere. We do not share that view.

We urge the commission to retain the R-5-D zoning currently applicable to the Capitol Hill Hospital site, thereby facilitating the ongoing residential rebirth of our neighborhood in a style consistent with its rich history and its relevance to the broader health of our city. Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Alan Berube
Cristina Boccuti



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