

Case No. 05-34 – Petition by ANC 6C of
Map Amendment to Square 895, Lot 76

Good evening Chairperson Mitten and Commissioners:

Thank you for this opportunity to express my support for the correction to the zoning of Lot 76, Square 895 to R-4.

My name is Barbara Krengel and I have lived on Capitol Hill for seventeen years, including the last eight at 24 7th Street NE, one and a half blocks south of square 895.

In our neighborhood of low-rise row houses, there is a single exception: the MedLink Hospital site, the result of the neighbors agreeing to allow the hospital to expand in 1973.

This concession made in good faith was never intended to produce what it has now become: a windfall profit to the value of the hospital's real estate, creating an incentive for the owner to cash in upon developing the site for profit.

The situation might be different were there other examples of such zoning or existing buildings in the area, but this designation is a complete anomaly, and contrary to the principles of the Comprehensive Plan.

Last December, the Commission seemed to indicate that the neighborhood lacked an understanding of possible consequences of the proposal.

From our point of view, fear of the creation of "excessive nonconformities" is moot, as we believe that significant nonconformities exist there now; and that the question is whether any potential new construction should conform to those existing aberrations or to the surrounding structures. The point of the exercise is not to name that classification which most closely matches the existing buildings, but to define the square as it ought to be. Nor do we believe that effects on financial value should play a part. Whether or not "grandfathered" existing deviations may gain value as a result of a new classification, any new construction should adhere to the characteristics of the surrounding neighborhood, rather than to the existing anomalies. It confounds logic to think that the effects of one nonconformity can be mitigated by the addition of more of them. Every schoolchild understands that two wrongs don't make a right.

We understand that the more restrictive the new zoning, the more valuable the existing nonconformities become, along with the greatly

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increased chances they will be retained for the foreseeable future. Many of us find the existing utilitarian brick buildings, with their simple, organic sincerity, more appropriate than a statement of current fashion.

The existence of a well-advanced development proposal should have no bearing whatsoever upon a determination of what the proper classification of the square should be. That many hours have been spent working on a design and compromises is regrettable but irrelevant.

The neighborhood has been seeking a correction to the erroneous zoning classification since the first news of proposed development of the square in 2000. Any plans created since that time should be considered at risk. We regret only that it has taken us so long to arrive before you as we were waylaid by naively misguided attempts to work through various other channels.

Our arrival here before you tonight is the culmination of a five-year community effort.

For these reasons I respectfully urge the Commission to approve the proposed amendment. Thank you for your consideration of my concerns.