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Zoning Commission
Carol J Mitten, Chair
John A Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

Ms Mitten,

I am writing in support of small schools in residential neighborhoods

I have lived in the Capitol Hill neighborhood since 1979 as a property owner, raising two children here, and working in a small architectural practice, of which I am co-owner and co-founder, also in the neighborhood

One of the things I love and have loved about raising children, living, and working here is the village-like quality of the Historic District. My family can and does walk and bicycle to our regular destinations: school, library, post office, work, ice cream, restaurants, friends, activities. But this wouldn't be possible without richness and diversity of commercial and institutional uses within blocks of each other.

As long as I've lived here I have regretted the single use zoning that was overlaid on so much of Capitol Hill, in direct contradiction to the historic patterns of commercial uses on virtually every corner in the neighborhood. Some of my family's favorite sites are present only because they are grandfathered. Likewise, the broad-brush zoning that was applied to my neighborhood completely overlooked the already existing and historic nature of the neighborhood with the result that most of our Capitol Hill houses are in violation of side and rear yard, lot area, and set back requirements. Some of the zoning requirements currently in effect actually act significantly to the detriment of the historic environment, such as that that resulted in so many houses with curb cuts and garages: a suburban model completely out of step with Capitol Hill. Prohibiting small schools or saddling them with large lot area requirements or parking requirements would be another step in the direction of the suburban sprawl model.

Another regret I have is when my neighbors, wonderful people who have put their money where their mouths are, living in an urban setting in limited square feet, largely without driveways and garages, think like suburbanites, complaining about parking and congestion. We live in a neighborhood where we can walk where we need to go. Where snow only means putting on boots. Where we don't really need cars and all their associated acres of paving for parking. The people fighting traffic on I-270 and seven days a week in the Virginia suburbs would laugh at our 'congestion'. But if we exclude the schools that our small children might attend, to which we could walk, we negate the pedestrian advantages of our neighborhood.

In closing, I am in favor of land usage more like that of the nineteenth century when the neighborhood was built. We now know that our Capitol Hill streets with cars on both sides result in 'traffic calming' that suburban jurisdictions have now had to invent. Our pedestrian-friendly environment with its density of development is, by definition, the U.S. Green Building Council, both green and sustainable. We are and have an environment that architects in the suburbs are striving for.

I hope that we can continue to foster mixes in use and the small size schools, integrated into neighborhoods, that we know foster the best learning.

Judith M. Capen, AIA

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia

CASE NO. 06-06
EXHIBIT NO. 50

Judith M. Capen, Principal
Robert A. Weinstein, Principal

EXHIBIT NO. 50