

ZONING COMMISSION FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Zoning Commission Case No. 08-06A, Subtitle D

Testimony of Harry F. Gates

February 11, 2014

Good Evening Members of the Zoning Commission. Thank you for coming out to the community tonight.

I am in complete agreement with John Parsons who advocated for a major edit, not a total rewrite of the zoning regulations. Even the title of this exercise, The Zoning Regulations Review, is a misnomer. It is not a review. The Zoning Commission should send this train wreck back to OP and tell them to thoroughly review and edit the current code.

Tonight, I want to focus on “neighborhood character” and the lack of protections offered in both the current code and the proposed zoning regulations. I also want to mention guidance offered in the Comprehensive Plan and the apparent conflict with the ZRR. The Comp Plan urges that zoning be responsive to individual neighborhood character and scale. In spite of Land Use Policy 2.1.5, which addresses the conservation of Single Family Neighborhoods, our low density neighborhoods are changing.¹ Under existing zoning, I’ve watched developers build mid-block three-story houses when the surrounding building stock is two stories. These homes, which maximize lot coverage, are perfectly legal, but they don’t respect neighborhood scale and density. I’m not opposed to new homes or change, but I am opposed to new development that obviously does not respect its surroundings. While not as dramatic as the pop-ups in Ward 1, these out of character structures often stand stories above their neighbors. I hope the Zoning Commission will give serious consideration to the following questions before taking any further action on the ZRR:

- Is zoning meant to change neighborhood character?
- Why are new regulations being proposed that do not add any protections to ensure the protection of neighborhood character?
- Will communities have to wait until the ZRR has been approved before applying for a customized zone that was promised early in the rewrite

¹ Policy LU-2.1.5. **Conservation of Single Family Neighborhoods**

Protect and conserve the District’s stable, low density neighborhoods and ensure that their zoning reflects their established low density character. Carefully manage the development of vacant land and the alteration of existing structures in and adjacent to single family neighborhoods in order to protect low density character, preserve open space, and maintain neighborhood scale. 309 10

process; is this the only way to ensure protections; and, how onerous will this process be once the ZRR has been approved?

These questions have not been addressed by OP. As a matter of fact OP hasn't been out to visit our community and you should know, Palisades did not request the proposed ZRR changes. Believe me, over the past five years I've heard a lot of concern raised about the new code. You should also know I didn't purchase a home in the District to have the Zoning Commission approve new zoning regulations that will alter neighborhood character or affect my privacy. The ZRR does not reflect the guidance in the Comp Plan and affords little in the way of protections. The past five years have not been wasted – we have had time to review the ZRR and we know it isn't what we want.