



COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
THE JOHN A. WILSON BUILDING
1350 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, NW
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20004

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TOMMY WELLS
Councilmember - Ward 6
Chairperson
Committee on Human Services

Committee Member
Health
Government Operations & Environment
Public Works & Transportation

December 15, 2010

Zoning Commission
One Judiciary Square
441 4th Street NW, Suite 210S
Washington, DC 20001

RE: Zoning Commission Case No. 09-21
Union Station North

Dear Commissioners:

During the past year, I have tracked the progress of the Office of Planning's (OP) proposed new zoning for the air rights parcels next to Union Station. I have received input from a number of constituents and interested parties, as well as ANC 6C. After careful consideration, I write today to express my support for the proposed zoning text and map amendments, as presented in OP's hearing report dated December 6, 2010.

The area included in the Union Station North (USN) zone is of critical significance to Ward 6. Currently, it is a gaping void separating the Capitol Hill and Near Northeast community from neighborhoods to the west, and it straddles an uninviting and pedestrian-unfriendly stretch of H Street NE. The revitalization of the H Street corridor is ongoing and USN is a pivotal component of this effort. In addition to creating a welcoming streetscape that bridges the gap between east and west, the area also will serve as a southern anchor for the burgeoning NoMa neighborhood. It also will provide an opportunity to expand and enhance Union Station, the District's greatest transportation asset. The USN area is one of the most important long-term projects in our Ward and I am committed to ensuring the best possible development in this space.

Nearly everyone agrees that the future buildings, open spaces and streets will benefit thousands of residents, workers and visitors alike, in addition to delivering substantial economic development. The primary disagreement is what level of building heights (and from where such buildings shall be measured) should be permissible for this area.

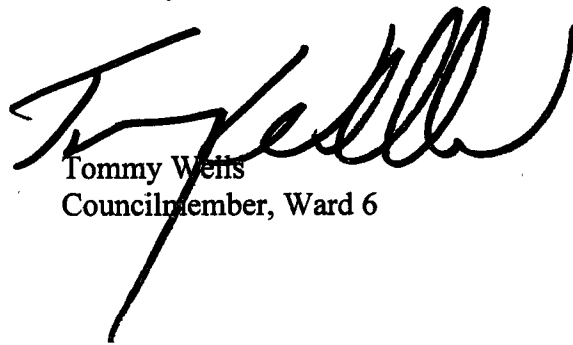
ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 09-21
EXHIBIT NO. 19
ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 09-21
EXHIBIT NO. 19

After examining view studies and other drawings presented by OP, I am comfortable with the potential heights proposed for this zone. With the FAR limited to 6.5, I believe the proposed heights provide the flexibility needed to achieve the best possible development in this area. I am further persuaded by the inclusion of a comprehensive review process that all proposed buildings must follow. Multiple rounds of input and approval (including ANC, Zoning Commission and State Historic Preservation Office) will provide ample opportunity for careful consideration of the appropriateness of each structure for its context. These reviews will examine each structure's relationship to historic resources, such as Union Station, as well as its relationship to the surrounding residential community. The review process will determine if only certain areas are appropriate for the zone's tallest allowable heights.

I worked with OP during its development of this zone, and the proposal now addresses several concerns I had with earlier drafts. The zone encourages retail activation along H Street, a mix of uses (specifically including residential), and requirements for community outreach during design review. In addition, the zone now includes a step-down in building height in the northeast corner of the zone, recognizing the importance of protecting the existing character of the lower scale residential neighborhood in close proximity.

For all these reasons, I write in support of the proposal before you and urge you to vote in its favor. Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tommy Wells', with a long, sweeping underline that extends below the printed name.

Tommy Wells
Councilmember, Ward 6