

TO: DC Zoning Commission
FROM: Benisse Lester
Re: Southwest Waterfront Plan, PUD Phase 1, Case Number 11-03

My name is Benisse Lester, I am a resident at Harbour Square, 560 N Street SW, Unit N301, and a Washington DC taxpayer.

I am opposed to the proposed development as written, as long as it includes building structures on Pier 4, directly in front of Harbour Square. The proposed townhouses, whether 45 feet, or 35 feet, or 20 feet, will have a disastrous effect on our property. They will block our water views, completely from the lower units, views of the sunset, and passing boats. If the park in front of Harbour Square is converted into a parking lot, and if any of the trees are destroyed or cut back, this will further compromise our property value and quality of life. Especially because of the configuration of Pier 4 – a diagonal - our grounds and many of our units will face a wall – no more water views, no more sunset, no light, with the proposed development casting a long, broad shadow on our grounds where a sunset and water view now exists. The water and sunset view from our grounds to the north will be obliterated, most of the west view will be obliterated as well. No more cooling north winds – these will be blocked by the proposed construction. The adverse effect on our property cannot be overstated.

Harbour Square is a beautiful property, with over 440 units, most of which were designed by a premier mid-century architect to maximize water views from as many units as possible. Our grounds face the water, boats docked and sailing by, the sunset, and foliage including national parkland greenery and trees that are over a century old. Most of us, including myself, moved here specifically for the open views, and paid a premium for this. Our windows are large to maximize view and light. There are a great variety of exposures and views at Harbour Square, which I became familiar with during my three years on the Board of Directors of Harbour Square when we embarked on a multimillion dollar window replacement project.

Some of us, like myself, chose a lower floor, to be closer to the water, the foliage, and just from personal preference. I am an artist, and after looking at many properties, chose to buy and homestead at Harbour Square for the open north and west light, water and marine views, dynamism of boats coming and going, beautiful panoramic sunsets. This light and exposure is essential and the inspiration for my paintings. If the proposed construction on Pier 4 proceeds, I will instead be facing a wall – no more light, no more sunsets, no more water view. The situation will be even worse if the parkland and trees in front of Harbour Square are destroyed and replaced with a parking lot.

I invite anyone who wishes to see what the impact would be to contact me, and I will be glad to show this to you.

I implore the Zoning Commission to preserve our historic property, now nearly 50 years old, and soon to be eligible for historic classification. Please do not destroy my inspiration, my light, my water, marine, sunset views, my home, my property value and quality of life and that of my neighbors and fellow owners at Harbour Square. The proposed development project is mammoth in size, there will be abundant projects, please do not obliterate the vista from Harbour Square property. There is ample space, and abundant planning for a plethora of units on the north end of the waterfront, currently not populated with existing residents. Please protect our quality of life, we are taxpayers and we vote. Many of my neighbors share this request, but are not able or not comfortable speaking up, so I will speak up.

Thank you for your consideration,
Benisse Lester

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 11-03
EXHIBIT NO. 87