

Testimony of Helen Schietinger
Before the Zoning Commission
Regarding Madison Homes development of land around Holy Redeemer
College (ZC Case No. 15-02)
15 December 2016

Good evening. I know it's late, so I'll try to keep my comments brief.

My name is Helen Schietinger, and I am a retired nurse. I made my home in the District 25 years ago. The street was lined with magnificent oaks that were 70 years old at the time and are the foundation of the quiet, tranquil character of the street. I am here today because I know that everything I tell you about the value of the trees on my street can be said about Brookland, where the stately trees and remarkable architecture form the foundation of that unique neighborhood.

A key contribution of shade trees is cooling. In the summer, the huge canopy covering the street and the yards absorbs the sun's heat. I know for a fact that my neighborhood is significantly cooler than downtown, where the bare asphalt streets and cement sidewalks retain heat and radiate it into the air. I also know that shady parking places are coveted wherever I go.

In the winter, the bare trees still provide an atmosphere of peacefulness — a connection with nature that makes being outdoors inviting. They allow sunshine through for warmth and brightness that we need in the cold months.

All the while, shade trees provide benefits beyond esthetics and temperature control:

- For example, they increase the property value of the homes on the street.
- And they contribute significantly to retaining stormwater.

One of the main advantages of having trees on private property like the Madison Homes development is that they tend to be healthier and fare better than street trees:

- First, there's no competition with utility wires, like trees along the street.
- There's plenty of space for the roots to find water and nourishment in the yards and other landscaping.
- Those very roots are what absorb rainwater, contributing to stormwater retention.
- And those healthy trees are an investment in the value of the property being developed. That's why architects draw landscaping with trees in their plans. In higher-end development you see large trees being planted for the esthetic value.

The citizens of Washington count on the Commission to maintain the integrity of our city. I see the tree canopy being threatened each time a new building goes up without trees. When trees are removed in the name of expediency and cost, our quality of life is degraded and our urban living space is damaged.

So I urge the Zoning Commission to take the long view. Preserve the existing character of Brookland, which is an old neighborhood with old trees. Insist that large shade trees be protected. Make sure that those that are removed are replaced with shade trees that will continue to grow, decade after decade, helping restore DC's tree canopy, which is one of our city's most precious assets.

Thank you.