



Re: DC Zoning Commission Case 15-02

The Sierra Club Environmental Justice Committee strongly opposes the development of the Holy Redeemer property at 3100 7th St NE by Madison Homes LLC.

Loss of Green Space and Tree Canopy

Science has shown that green spaces are key to a sustainable future and community health, especially in urban areas where the existing green spaces are historically limited. Green spaces improve the psychological and social health of residents. Trees reduce particulate pollution and CO₂ in the air, thereby improving air quality as well as reducing stormwater runoff. Trees also reduce temperatures.

The Holy Redeemer property that is proposed for development contains more than 18 Special Trees (circumferences of more than 44 inches). According to the 2 certified arborists who visited this site, the trees on the property likely date from the building of Holy Redeemer College in the 1930s, making these magnificent mature trees more than 70 years old.

According to Casey Trees there are only 3 other wards in the District which have less tree canopy than Ward 5, in which the Edgewood community is located. From a climate change perspective, we cannot afford to eliminate the existing canopy, which will not be replaced by the developer, for 21 townhouses. The existing tree canopy is essential to move the city toward its goal of 40% tree canopy by 2032.

The city has adopted various legislation aimed at assuring that preserving green space is a centrally important consideration for the future. One example of this is the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital (<https://www.ncpc.gov/compplan/>), which specifically prioritizes converting institutional property in Edgewood into park space. The goals set forth in that plan will be unattainable if existing parcels of green space are individually picked off for development.

It is important that in all aspects of local government, the goals set out to protect green space not be overridden at the zoning level. Neighborhoods must be considered in their entirety, and

not just parcel-by-parcel. Yet unrestrained piecemeal development is threatening the very limited existing green space in Edgewood and in Ward 5 generally. All existing green spaces must be considered in their local context, or entire communities will lose access.

Penalization of the District's Poorer Residents

Making up for the loss of these existing green spaces in a manner that doesn't disproportionately affect poorer neighborhoods like Edgewood is not in consideration. Poorer neighborhoods in the District already suffer less tree canopy than richer neighborhoods (https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/environmentalists-face-challenges-trying-to-plant-in-less-green-neighborhoods/2013/04/25/21294968-ad27-11e2-a198-99893f10d6dd_story.html?utm_term=.0cd8c9149da1). Therefore, if this project proceeds, Edgewood will be placed yet further behind in efforts towards becoming a healthy sustainable community.

We urge the Zoning Commission to oppose this development of this existing green space with its numerous Special Trees. Let's continue to advance toward the District's Tree Canopy goal and support our poorer neighborhoods with nearby green spaces.

Sincerely,

Jeremiah Lowery

Board Member of the DC Sierra Club