

Testimony for the Public Hearing of CASE NO. 16-11

**Park View Community Partners & District of Columbia –
Consolidated PUD & Related Map Amendment @ Square 2890, Part of Lot 849**

**Before the Zoning Commission
Chairman Anthony Hood**

December 5, 2016
By Anna Applebaum

Hello and thank you very much for hearing my testimony today. My name is Anna Applebaum, I am a resident of ward 1, and I am a community leader with Jews United for Justice.

I moved to Washington DC around two and a half years ago. Before I moved here, I heard all kinds of warnings about DC from people I knew, about what it would be like as a community. That “it doesn’t have a local character” or “it’s all about national politics.”

And in fact, for people on the outside looking in, this vision of DC might make some sense. National politics often dominates local news. A city that’s a hub of domestic and foreign policy is expected to turn its gaze outwards, not inwards.

Once I moved here, though, once I started looking from the inside out, I realized how fundamentally wrong that perspective is. DC has such a wonderful, unique local government through its ANCs that people I know, actually *know* who represents them at the most local level. DC has community institutions, such as the Florida Avenue Grill just blocks from my apartment, that are so full of local character and vibe. And DC is full of committed, passionate residents who love their city and who care deeply about what happens here. You’re looking at a room full of them right now. And many of these people, unlike me, have lived here for a long time. They have a true stake in what happens here.

But there was another warning I received, and this one still rings true - which is that housing is so, so expensive. Given the rapid increase in housing costs and the fact that half of DC’s affordable housing has disappeared in the last 10 years, how can anyone afford to stay long-term? Most importantly, how can the people who have lived here for years, who have built up the neighborhoods, who have created and sustained DC institutions - people such as Park Morton residents - how can they afford to stay? And will they - as in the case of Park Morton residents - be forced to live in substandard conditions, just so they don’t have to leave their neighborhood? Or will we commit to ensuring that DC residents deserve housing that is both affordable *and* safe and dignified?

Now, as I just said, I am a newcomer to DC. I obviously am a lucky beneficiary of housing that was recently made available to a new resident. But that’s one of the great things about the proposed Park Morton redevelopment -- it creates room for all of us. Newcomers can bring energy to a neighborhood; in a fundamental way, they are part of an endless cycle of incoming

and outgoing residents that a city always experiences. But new residents are new. They don't know community traditions. They're not going to organize the annual block party. A healthy community is one that has newer and older residents, but remains welcoming to all. That's why a mix of market rate and affordable housing makes sense - that's why the Park Morton redevelopment makes sense.

Communities are strong when **all** people who live within them get a chance to thrive. And we need safe and affordable housing to thrive.

Thank you.