

Cochran, Patricia (DCOZ)

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Hello Zoning Commission,

My name is Leysha Caraballo, and I've been a SW resident for over a year now. I am submitting written testimony for Case Number 20-14 – the VNO South Capitol, LLC & Three Lots in Square 649, LLC development planned for 5 M St. SW.

I would like for the Zoning Commission to reject this planned development in its current state. The plan is not in alignment with SW's Comprehensive Plan to “remain an exemplary model of equity and inclusion – a welcoming and engaged community that celebrates and retains a mix of races, ages and income levels and enhances well-being for all amidst neighborhood growth and change.” This is clear by the plan's decision to include a mere eight affordable units out of 688. The 688 figure comes from the plan's requested flexibility to convert the office space into more units.

SW already has plenty of expensive apartments that do not promote racial or economic diversity – we do not need another one. **If this plan called for 1/3 market, 1/3 workforce, and 1/3 deeply affordable units, then it would be in accordance with what SW has said that we stand for and accept.** The plan is also not in accordance with Mayor Bowser's goal of building 12,000 new affordable units in the next six years, making it not only unfit for SW, but also unfit for DC as a whole.

The ANC recently voted 7-0-0 against/in opposition of the project which goes to show that this proposed development is not what SW needs. The development will more than likely be geared towards single, affluent, young professionals, considering that “most of the new residential buildings have primarily consisted of market rate 1BR units attracting more young professionals,” as stated by the DC Office of Planning. This plan does not take into consideration the families in this area that need housing. 1BR units promote gentrification and a lack of diversity. Residents of SW “ want new housing developments to offer varied products, especially units sized for families,” as stated in the SW Comprehensive Plan. Gentrification and development pressures are already a threat to the most economically vulnerable residents of SW, and this plan does nothing to help them.

If this plan is not heavily reworked, then it is clearly a development that will put profit over the wellbeing of our community. I care more about the people of SW having access to affordable housing than a company making money off of single professionals, who quite frankly are also in need of more affordable options in DC.

Please reject this plan and help make sure that our neighborhood is one that is inclusive and diverse.

Best,
Leysha Caraballo