

My name is Adom (A-d-o-m) Malcolm Cooper. I am a SW DC resident and have lived here since 2014. But my SW DC connection goes much deeper. My late great aunt, Joyce Mitchell Cook (1933-2014), was the first African-American woman to earn a PhD in Philosophy and called SW DC home for many years. Specifically, she lived in Tiber Island Cooperatives Homes up until the day she passed away. This neighborhood has undergone sweeping changes since my great aunt moved in and specifically more exponentially sweeping changes since she passed away. Many of these changes have not considered the entire human population of the area, have simultaneously benefitted white populations while denigrating non-white populations, and served up one of, if not the most gentrified areas in the country according many sources including the National Community Reinvestment Coalition. The development planned for 5 M Street SW is an example of such changes.

My demand is simple: reject this development project as-is, until the project design is an example of equity and inclusion, per the SW neighborhood plan with 1/3 market rate, 1/3 workforce, and 1/3 deeply affordable units. This project is the antithesis of equity and inclusion.

Per the SW Neighborhood Plan, the following tenets must be present.

“Southwest will 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.”

“They [residents] also want new housing developments to offer varied products, especially units sized for families. Development pressures and potential gentrification were specifically considered a threat to the most economically vulnerable residents.”

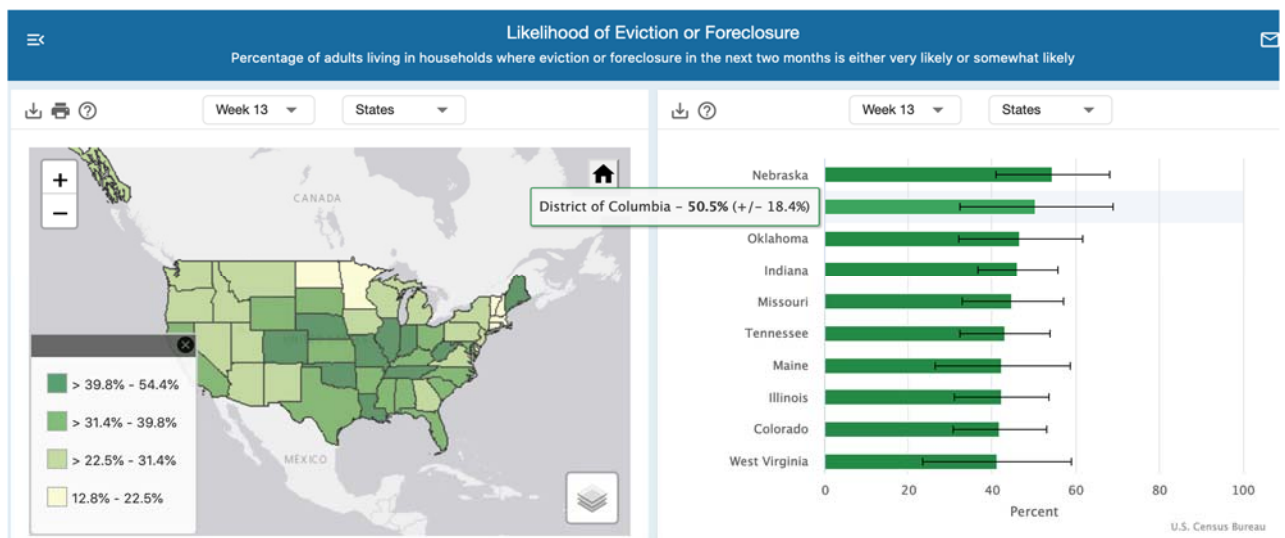
“Southwest’s most defining characteristic is its people. Residents overwhelmingly expressed their desire to maintain the economic and racial diversity that makes the community so strong and vibrant.”

These must be present and at the center of any development project in SW.

During a presentation to ANC 6D in September 2020, JGB Smith stated that as they owned the land by-right, they are not bound by any IZ requirements. When developers are bound by IZ requirements, they tend to do the bare minimum to meet the standard and look for a pat on the back. Poorly planned and short-sighted policy created this situation and radical policy changes must happen to fix the issue moving forward. The market and altruism are mortal enemies. Developers are not going to build more affordable and sustainable housing options unless they are mandated to do so. This is the same as the lies about trickle down economics i.e. the idea that giving large companies tax breaks will encourage them to hire more workers and pay them greater wages. I’m still waiting for a concrete example of this happening, while examples of the opposite occurring are omnipresent. For example, the federal government bailed out the airline industry early in the pandemic and they have responded by laying off workers while keeping their top executives paid as if nothing happened. Savvy policies and enforcement mechanisms

are needed, not wishful thinking that folks who have always shown that profits are their only focus will suddenly act differently, forget about profits, and do what is best for the entire population.

For this development, JBG has stated there would be eight affordable units (at least two will be three bedroom) out of 600 i.e. 1.4%. That leaves 98.6% market rate units during a homelessness/housing/eviction crisis in the middle of global respiratory disease pandemic with the federal government providing a one-time stimulus payment of \$1200. We are currently in an eviction moratorium passed by the CDC, hoping that the decrease in frequency of people moving in and out of residences will stop the spread of COVID-19. This was a measure to preserve U.S. national security and it could be undone with too many market rate units without the mixture that I am calling for with **1/3 market rate, 1/3 workforce, and 1/3 deeply affordable units**. DC has second-highest numbers in the nation of adults who believe they are likely to be evicted in the next two months, according to Census data from the end of August (please see the following chart).



On September 14, 2020, ANC 6D voted 7-0-0 in opposition of the project design and this unanimous decision bears great weight on your decision. They passed a resolution on September 25, 2020 formally rejecting the project as-is. A rejection of this project from the Zoning Commission is a step in the right direction. If enough developments are rejected by the Zoning Commission for not actively addressing the housing crisis, this could spur the DC government to implement radical policy changes to ensure that every person has the right to housing.

Ratified in 1948, Article 25.1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights declares that all humans have the right to housing. The U.S. did not pass legislation to address this in even the most miniscule ways until the Fair Housing Act of 1968. Twenty years of international standards

without any domestic enforcement mechanisms. Housing is a right, not a commodity. For too long, housing in Washington DC has been viewed as a commodity versus a right.

The Mayor has stated a goal of 12,000 affordable units by 2025. What is the response from the Mayor's office about the fact that this development started with one affordable? How is that appropriate in the middle of an evictions crisis? This development is a perfect opportunity to attack the Mayor's stated goal, not contribute to the need for its existence. [According to a project conducted by the University of California using Google Street View to examine gentrification](#), Navy Yard is the most gentrified area in the country. They found that "the Black population of this tract decreased from 95% in 2000 to 24% in 2018. And the White population increased from 3% to 68%." If there is one thing that this area needs, it is not more market rate housing. Many buildings with current market-rate apartments that have come online within the last few years are offering two months free to try and move the units as many corporate clients (who have provided corporate housing to their employees or contractors) have left DC. These living spaces are currently empty. If the economics of the buildings were mandated in a different manner and not left to the free market, it would be easier to improve the collective livelihood of DC residents. Not just the transient population that many of these buildings and this current project have in mind and cater to.

Longtime residents continually pay the cost, tangibly and intangibly, for the focus on the transient population. My aunt Joyce paid the cost as her neighborhood drastically changed up until the day she passed away. As an African-American, she did not have a local hair salon within walking distance and currently there is not a local barbershop in SW or Navy Yard. My barber has a shop in NW. Too many decisions are made with future/potential residents in mind versus current residents who breathe SW air every day. Many of these new buildings feature a host of private amenities such as community spaces, culture and art classes, dog parks, gyms, and even food stores. Residents have their basic needs met within the building and never see the need to explore and engage with their surrounding community. This established a firm disconnect between different populations in a defined area. This is how food and transportation deserts become established. If everyone lives in a building like this, there is seemingly no need to establish and maintain community amenities such as community centers, gyms, public parks, etc. The spaces in these buildings are designed for young professionals who will stay for an average of five years and move away when they wish to expand their families, as it is too expensive to stay and the options are scarce. This would not occur with a mixture of **1/3 market rate, 1/3 workforce, and 1/3 deeply affordable units.**

This is about housing, but it is also about the economy, public safety, and national security. The decision is in your hands and do not take it lightly. The entire District is watching.

Thank you for your time.