

Testimony Submitted to DC Zoning Commission RE: Case No. 20-14
Submitted by SW DC resident, Barbara Gilbert on September 28, 2020

Thank you for the opportunity to address this body. My name is Barbara Gilbert. I am a 5-year resident of Southwest, and I have lived in DC and the greater Washington area for the past 25 years.

My neighborhood of Southwest is a gem; I treasure the trees and parks, the community gatherings at the Farmers' Markets and Market Nights; but most of all I treasure the people. It is the families, long-time residents, and friends here who make this neighborhood and quadrant wonderful. All the amenities in the world could not replace their value. This development, VNO South Capitol, LLC & Three Lots in Square 649, LLC, Case number 20-14, is yet another push that will price families and long-time residents out of our neighborhood.

The Southwest Neighborhood Plan declares that Southwest be an example of equity and inclusion. This development does not meet that standard and must be rejected unless and until the project is transformed into one with one-third of the units at market, one-third of the units at workforce rates, and one-third of the units be made deeply affordable.

I would like to take a minute to address the commission regarding its legacy. This body has presided over a period of unprecedented development; to the extent and speed that DC now has the ignominious distinction of "Highest Intensity of Gentrification in America." This is your legacy; pushing out Black and Brown families to make room for more "high taxpayers whose contributions will fund city programs." Yet, with all the development precedents, those funds never seem to reach their professed target.

You and your predecessor colleagues have green-lighted development plans that have transformed Navy Yard, H Street C, NoMa, Penn Quarter, Edgewood, Ivy City.... This city has no need for yet another MC Escher-box, rooftop infinity pool, bowling alley-enhanced, singletons' development. These neighborhoods are now so cookie-cutter alike, you can hardly tell what part of town you are in anymore.

I am certain you have all been following the laws governing this body's purview. However, laws are living entities. Extraordinary evidence can always be taken into account, and precedent is not just something that happened 50 years ago; it is evolving every day.

Gentlemen, you do not just occupy a seat on this commission; you serve on this commission. You serve the city, your neighbors, and your community in this role. The decisions you make today will have lasting consequences; they will be your legacy to our city. Please, choose a decision that serves all our city. Demand that equity and inclusion be integral to this development.

Thank you.
Barbara Gilbert