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DC Zoning Commission Public Hearing, October 1, 2020

My name is Jennifer Ho, and I am a concerned DC resident submitting written comments in opposition to CASE NO. 20-14 of the Zoning Commission for the District of Columbia. This new proposed development is a threat to the historic character of DC's Southwest neighborhood and takes Southwest further away from serving as a model for equity and diversity.

Washington, DC continues to be the most rapidly gentrifying city in the country, and it has not done so in an inclusive way that cares for its current residents. Southwest residents, including myself, overwhelmingly want to maintain the economic and racial diversity that make the community so strong and vibrant. Families who have been able to call Southwest their home for decades, some whom I have had the honor of meeting and saying hello to each morning, are getting pushed out because the DC government and developers prioritize potential profit more than opportunities to uplift human beings. One estimate says the Black population in Southwest has decreased from 67 to 40 percent since 2000. While politicians and companies in DC are eager now to say how much Black lives matter, they have failed to translate these free, low-risk verbal statements into financial or political investments.

The land in this case is by-right, so Inclusionary Zoning rules do not apply. The developer, JBG Smith, initially did not want to provide any affordable units because it is technically not required to. It was not until hearing from the ANC that it decided to include eight affordable units out of 600 units total (1.4 percent). How does this fit into the Mayor's goal of building 12,000 new affordable units over the next six years, and how is this plan appropriate, especially in the middle of a historic pandemic and ensuing economic and eviction crisis? DC needs to be better than this. JBG Smith needs to understand the damage it will cause to this community by refusing to do just above the bare minimum.

The Zoning Commission must reject this development unless the developer redesigns the project to be an example of equity and inclusion with one-third of the units being market rate, one-third being workforce housing units, and one-third being deeply affordable units.

There is already a glut of luxury housing in Southwest, as evidenced by luxury apartment buildings having trouble filling units. We need to use the limited land in Southwest to provide safe, affordable housing to its residence so they are empowered to focus on education, career-building, and other critical areas rather than housing issues and skyrocketing payments.

I thank the members of the DC Zoning Commission for reading and considering my written comments in opposition to this case. The Zoning Commission must look at where it can build better housing to meet the dire and growing housing need, not just where it could produce the largest profit.



ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO.20-14
EXHIBIT NO.43