

Desiree Halpern
350 G St. SW Unit N413
Washington, DC 20024

October 23, 2020

Dear members of the District of Columbia Zoning Commission,

I am writing in regard to case number 20-18, the proposed development at 1319 South Capitol Street SW. As a resident of Southwest, I urge you to reject this development unless or until the project design is an example of equity and inclusion per the SW neighborhood plan, with 1/3 market, 1/3 workforce, and 1/3 deeply affordable units. I would also like to see a greater number of affordable family-sized units, as well as space for retail.

If you look at recent developments in the area, there is already too much luxury housing in Southwest that few can afford. The vast majority of it is studios and one-bedroom apartments. Meanwhile, there is a lack of affordable and family-sized units. This imbalance is driving up rent prices and forcing longtime residents out of the neighborhood. In particular, Black residents, residents of color, and families have been pushed out, replaced by younger, single, white, transient residents. It is impossible to build a community when families continuously have to leave the area for the suburbs.

The current proposal to include just 24 new affordable units out of more than 300 (only 8% of all square footage) will exacerbate those trends. This number is appalling and clearly shows the developers' self-serving goal of profiting from our neighborhood and not considering our needs.

Additionally, the Southwest Neighborhood Plan states that "Southwest will remain an exemplary model of equity and inclusion." And the Mayor has a goal of building 12,000 more affordable units across the city over the next six years. The proposed development does not align with either of these objectives. Lastly, the development is in an Opportunity Zone, which means it should benefit low-income communities. If that's the case, why aren't there more affordable units or community-serving businesses?

I welcome development and growth in Southwest, but that growth should be responsive to the needs of my diverse, inclusive community.

Thank you,

Desiree Halpern

SW resident
SW DC Action member