
Case: 25-09

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Date Thu 11/20/2025 3:48 PM

To DCOZ - ZC Submissions (DCOZ) <DCOZ-ZCSubmissions@dc.gov>

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Dear Zoning Commissioners,

I am writing to you in response to the proposal to create the Cleveland Park Neighborhood Mixed Use Zone (Case No. 25-09).

As a resident of Cleveland Park, I believe it is essential that the neighborhood's historic buildings are protected. I also believe that there can be scale-sensitive and carefully-integrated growth in historic districts.

The current rezoning proposal for Cleveland Park, filed by the Office of Planning with the DC Zoning Commission, presents an unsustainable, imprudent, impractical, and unprecedented increase in density for the commercial area that is part of the historic district.

As proposed, building heights along the commercial area abutting Connecticut Avenue of 7 stories or more would be allowed and possible, along with penthouses added on top. This is highly imprudent for reasons including quality of life considerations due to scale. Such an allowance would permit the creation of a highly-undesirable roadway 'canyon' in an area that currently presents and scales and is lived-in as a village-in-a-city. Even the proposal of such an allowance signals an enormous quality-of-life blind spot in planning, proposing a plan that — once implemented, especially within a smaller-scale historic district — cannot be undone.

As the Zoning Commission considers the OP proposal, I urge you to consider how the extreme change could leave our historic buildings as little more than the foundation for new construction, and creating an unpleasant and unwelcoming canyon effect.

In addition to density, it is also necessary and important to consider that the OP proposal does not include requirements for deep setbacks and the judicious use of stepdowns. While adding these elements as requirements for any added-height structures would not entirely eliminate the creation of a canyon, requiring the significant use of these architectural and smart planning features could serve to

shape and soften the appearance of large new structures atop modest contributing buildings.

And lastly, consider carefully both current and future infrastructure needs: How will these buildings, and the infrastructure of Cleveland Park, deal with increased water and sewage, demand on and delivery of electricity, and the very real — and, too often underestimated — need for added parking? Based on demonstrated naïve and unrealistic beliefs about smart growth, and the importance of quality of life (including the benefits derived from historic preservation) certainly these vital and essential planning considerations should not be left to the discretion of developers and builders.

I place my trust and hope that those voting will see the failures — current and future — in this proposal, and vote accordingly in opposition to it.

Many thanks for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Nicholas Smith

Cleveland Park