

CITIZENS PLANNING COALITION, INC.
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July 7, 1988

D.C. Zoning Commission
The District Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

Re: Case No. 86-26
Cleveland Park Overlay Zone
PUD Guidelines

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The Citizens Planning Coalition is appearing a second time in support of the Cleveland Park Overlay Zone, which is intended to protect the Cleveland Park Historic District. First, we wish to thank and congratulate this Commission for its action in granting preliminary approval for a maximum building height of 40 feet within the zone (reduced from 50 feet), which was a key element of the overlay zone proposal. We urge the Commission to complete the process so well begun by (i) reducing the maximum FAR from 2.5 to 2.0, and (ii) applying these height and FAR limits to any future PUDs located in the overlay zone.

We are most concerned with the PUDs. As the applicant has documented, and as this Commission is aware from long experience, the majority of new development in the District is effected through the PUD process. If the 40-foot height and 2.0 FAR limits are not made applicable to PUDs, the overlay zone will exist in name only. The Commission will have taken away with the left hand what it giveth with the right.

As the applicant has shown, the requested limits will allow for substantial new development of buildings larger than virtually all existing structures in the historic district. Thus, the limits neither stifle economic a healthy level of economic activity nor freeze the historic district in sterile, architectural aspic. Balance has been achieved between change and preservation. If the Commission did more, by allowing additional height and bulk through the PUD process, it would ultimately do less.

As we indicated when we addressed this issue in January, the Coalition is interested in the Cleveland Park Historic overlay zone as a model and a precedent for other historic districts and prospective historic districts that live under the ever-present threats of inappropriate zoning and encroaching development. The residents of the Congress Heights area in Ward 8 in Far Southeast have begun mapping their neighborhood for historic district status.

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
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Exhibit 533

They are now in the process of documenting their heritage at the National Archives and the Library of Congress. This is a low-scale, low-density neighborhood targeted for aggressive development in legislation now pending before the D.C. City Council. The benefits of an overlay zone--one whose limits apply to PUDs--are obvious.

We also recall to your attention Anacostia, an established historic district with incompatible zoning. Even as various neighborhood groups have agreed on the desirability of requesting an overlay zone from this Commission, a local landlord has proposed erecting a 5-story building on a street of one-and-two story structures.

In light of the great desirability of historic overlay zones generally, in addition to supporting this proposal, we ask that you include language in your final order to the effect that in all historic zones, there is a presumption that the zoning ought to be compatible with the architecture that creates the historic character. We realize that this will not substitute for case-by-case consideration of individual zones, but we think it would be a useful statement at this time.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Laura M. Richards".

Laura M. Richards,
President