

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE D.C. ZONING COMMISSION

On Case #ZC 02-17 STONEBRIDGE ASSOCIATES

December 12, 2002

AFTER GREETINGS TO COMMISSION, BRIEF INTRODUCTION: Name: Nathaniel P. (Tad) Baldwin

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Urban Planner, most of career spent developing new and rehabilitated low, moderate, & largely mixed income housing in Montgomery County. Mention my testimony before the Zoning Commission on Inclusionary Zoning in October if appropriate.

I'm here tonight because I strongly feel this is a very good plan for housing in Ward 3, adjacent to a Metro Station, and well designed to respect the nearby single family and town homes as well as mixed commercial uses.

Secondly, I'll be helping launch a Ward 3 Smart Growth Advocates group to help provide a citizen viewpoint of the positive attributes of quality development that is often unheard in this setting but, we believe, widely held.

A few quick points in support:

1. A PRIME GOAL OF SMART GROWTH is to bring employment, housing, and commercial space in proximity to good transportation access. Overall regional traffic is reduced to the extent a growing portion of the population in urban nodes such as Friendship Heights also work there or use transit to commute.
2. ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND to use existing infrastructure rather than expanding the urban fringe. Example: If 100 fewer units at this location (perhaps even more units would be lost if a townhouse option were built), could well end up serving our region's growing population by being shifted to 100 half acre lots, eating 50 acres of Frederick County farmland. The Chesapeake Bay Foundation is a major supporter of the new regional Smart Growth Alliance that advocates for these kinds of uses, good company for local environmentalists.
3. IMPROVE TAX BASE OF CITY by bringing in more upper income families with few children. Both income and real estate taxes. The \$1.8 million in annual taxes is far about the \$100 K now, & I feel far more than a realistically sized TH development can generate.
4. AFFORDABLE HOUSING UNITS FOR 4 TO 6 MODERATE INCOME HOUSEHOLDS.. 4 to 6 units at prices well below the average \$480K price tag serving households under 80% of the median (my quick estimate not knowing the prices is for a household of two a maximum of \$59K, perhaps minimum of \$50K, not exactly your poor but a start in the right direction).
5. UPPER CONNECTICUT AVENUE HAS A GRAND AND LONG HISTORY of quality multi-family buildings being adjacent to single family homes without negative effects. This incompatibility is more the product of traditionally trained urban planners (and embraced still by some citizens) who always liked to segregate uses. Newer thinking advocates mixed uses as more interesting, healthy, and wise in many ways.
6. SOME OF US LONG TERM RESIDENTS would like the future option of remaining in the neighborhood in quality rental and condo structures. We've had very little new multi-family housing in the city over the past three decades.
7. TRAFFIC. While the proposal generates less traffic than the existing clinic, traffic is heavy in Friendship Heights and will only get heavier because of other job and residential development in both DC and Maryland. The only long-term remediation will be a combination of functioning higher density multi-use nodes here and elsewhere (many of them transit oriented), telecommuting, non-rush hour auto trips, and the use of mass transit. These require major changes of driving habits and even lifestyles and are not easy but there is no magic answer.

In conclusion, I'd like to get a lot more quality multi-family rental and sale housing built throughout the city. THANK YOU....