

Hanousek, Donna (DCOZ)

From: Adom Cooper <cooperadom@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, May 9, 2018 9:48 PM
To: DCOZ - ZC Submissions (DCOZ)
Subject: In reference to case 02-0381_Adom M. Cooper Testimony

Hello and thank you for your time. My name is Adom M. Cooper and I am a SW resident. I have lived in River Park since 2015, but my connection to SW goes back much further. My late great Aunt Joyce Mitchell lived in Tiber Island for decades before she passed away in 2014. I can remember visiting SW when I was younger and there were certain areas that my folks explained to me could be unsafe and undesirable. This used to be the case for SW DC, but that has drastically changed. Let's be real: few folks cared about SW until the Washington Nationals opened their park in 2008. It probably gave DMV residents across all demographics their first reason to visit the area on a continual basis. It was a flash-point for the community. It has spurred a transformation that has changed the city forever. Over time, traffic of all kinds has increased, apartment buildings began to rise, restaurants opened, businesses and shops began to multiply, and construction in every faction of SW has left many residents disturbed by the noise and dust. And this summer, another sports arena is opening in July when DC United moves into Audi Field. There was a recent Washington Post article about how the construction of Audi Field has disturbed residents, especially older, of Syphax Gardens. I encourage you all to read it and learn more.

Each community has a body and a soul. In the last several years, the body of SW has gone through tremendous changes. The WHARF has brought a completely new dynamic to the area and even more individuals who do not know much about SW at all have come down to enjoy the new restaurants, bars, parks, events, and activities. The demographics of the foot traffic in SW alone have changed over the last decade. There are lower concentrations of melanin walking the streets. Coincidentally, luxury apartment buildings have been built with little to no low-income housing options available. Many of these new living spaces contain private spaces for their residents and the spaces are closed to the public. Many restaurants and shops have opened with a specific clientele in mind: new SW residents, not long-term residents who have witnessed countless changes to their communities without any thought to how it might affect them. Long-term SW residents are here because this is and always has been their home, not some new attractive change of scenery because it is suddenly desirable.

In all of the development of SW, I have not seen one single project genuinely take into consideration the folks that have lived in SW through the entire transition and watched the body of their community change. Except for the Lot at 425 M Street. Housing prices have skyrocketed and affordable housing units and spaces are akin to four-leaf clovers. During the spring, summer, and fall months, the Lot at 425 M Street is a fantastic public space used for events such as the Market on Friday evenings from 4-10PM and the Farmer's Market on Saturdays from 9AM-1PM. These events allow all members of the community to enjoy a public space, commune together, get to know one another, and all feel that the community belongs to all. The Lot is one of the only open and free spaces that allows folks to gather and enjoy their community without having to worry about the cost, especially for those with families across all socioeconomic ranges. The Lot is also home to a Capital Bikeshare rack.

Do not to take away a public space such as the Lot at 425 M Street and reserve it for private use, by individuals who only wish to settle in SW because it is where all of the activity is occurring now. The removal of the Lot at 425 M Street would be tremendously irresponsible and disrespectful to the community as it exists today. Many SW residents who have lived there long before 2008 cannot afford to enjoy the new luxuries of the WHARF and Navy Yard. Spaces such as the Lot at 425 M Street should be preserved at all costs because unlike the luxuries of the WHARF and Navy Yard, they can be enjoyed by all regardless of social class.

The events that occur at the Lot, such as the Market on Fridays, the Farmer's Market on Saturday and most importantly, the DC State Fair that occurred last September, they represent the soul of SW. Unlike the body, the soul is hard to see and much harder to understand, but that makes it all the more valuable. Do not rip out and destroy the soul of SW in favor of private spaces by individuals who do not understand the meaning of community.

Thank you.

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Cordially,

Adom Malcolm Cooper
m: 440.382.5509 | email: cooperadom@gmail.com

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