

Testimony of Kirby Vining before the Zoning Commission, May 8, 2014, concerning Parcel 1 of Case #13-14

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My name is Kirby Vining, my home is on the unit block of Franklin St. NE, just a couple hundred feet away from the fence to McMillan Park, and I'm speaking as an individual person in opposition to the proposed zoning of the Parcel 1 medical office buildings.

The medical buildings proposed by the Applicant under review tonight for Parcel 1 seem to be a speculative investment. No prospective tenant has been identified to my knowledge. As a member of the McMillan Advisory Group (MAG), working with representatives of all neighboring communities on the proposed McMillan project, we asked that the Applicant bring representatives of the prospective medical building tenants to a MAG meeting so that we could discuss such things as roads and access to the Washington Hospital Center, in addition to the new medical buildings themselves. But the Applicant informed us that would not be possible as the Applicant had no Letter of Agreement or Memorandum of Understanding with the hospitals for this building. So there is apparently no tenant. And if there is no tenant, there are no jobs, other than the temporary construction jobs.

Why, then, is this building under review by the Zoning Commission? The District government owns the land, and with its chosen consultant has proposed very large buildings for parcel 1, designed for an unknown tenant. There are no benefits or amenities to the community in fictitious medical office suites that there are no tenants for. And the traffic problems this building would cause, if there were tenants, are unacceptable. It seems premature, and speculative in another sense entirely, for the Commission to be considering C-3-C zoning for this parcel. I would strongly urge that the Commission ask for confirmation that there is indeed a tenant for this building as justification for proposing this imposing set of buildings. The traffic and height problems such buildings would entail are only magnified by the knowledge that it would have no tenant, and the jobs these buildings would produce are one of the most loudly touted benefit of the building. Why should we endure the loss of the majestic skyline, and endure possible increases to the already chaotic traffic at the two intersections adjacent to Parcel 1, at the corners of Michigan Avenue with 1st Street NW and North Capitol Street, for a speculative project, and why grant zoning to permit such buildings, given the circumstances?