

## Cochran, Patricia (DCOZ)

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**From:** Tara Roslin <tararoslin@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, October 18, 2021 5:56 PM  
**To:** DCOZ - ZC Submissions (DCOZ)  
**Subject:** I oppose replacing Bruce Monroe Community Park with a 9-story-plus-penthouse tower. (Case 16-11)

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DC Zoning Commission:

*[I ask for an accommodation from your in your 24-hour pre-meeting comment submission deadline as I tended to an unexpected personal health emergency, thank you in advance for your understanding, I am willing to testify as to the circumstances of the delay at tomorrow's meeting if the Board deems it necessary].*

I oppose replacing Bruce Monroe Community Park with a 9-story-plus-penthouse tower. (Case 16-11).

The city's new Comprehensive Plan requires a thorough impact assessment -- ensuring that negative impacts on neighborhoods, transportation, environmental quality, and other issues are assessed and adequately mitigated. The DC appeals court made clear this was not thoroughly done— yet the council presses on with a project that will benefit developers, while subverting the values, viewpoints, and communities ties hard fought for and built by area residents and their allies.

Our community is notably undergoing gentrification, that much is undeniable, but the word “gentrification” is thrown around so often that the true weight of the harm it carries is apparently lost on the council who is imploring this body to go forward with a project that with propel gentrification in a community that has already lost so much in such a short period of time. Rather than giving the community a space to grieve, reconnect, and strengthen their bonds, the council is imposing a housing project that will inhibit healing and stifle community access to one and other and to green spaces. The irony of the Council's long fought battle against the community, is that building will disparately harm the persons the Council is purportedly supporting— persons in need of low income housing and current Park Monroe residents.

To approve the “development” of Bruce Monroe park is to green light the erosion of a community that outsiders may flippantly refer to as a “poor urban area.” To approve the “development” is to choke off access to a park area that serves as an invaluable resource which enhances, elongates and enriches lives. To approve the “development” is to deny disabled persons, who already exist in a city with rapidly declining green space, their right to exist outside—and not just on a side walk that is already littered with scooters and now outdoor dining areas that have all but become permanent fixtures. I am disabled—and Bruce Monroe Park is one of the few options I have available to me within walking distance that I can access so as not to be pushed out of the way on the sidewalk for not walking fast enough. It is spacious enough that I don’t have to worry about getting in anyone’s way. If it is built upon the density of the surrounding parks will naturally increase.

I moved to DC in the middle of the pandemic, as an immunocompromised person, and even after vaccination (prior to the very recent approval of a booster), I was for nearly 2 years forced to severely limit my exposure to indoor spaces and other people—I couldn’t go to the office, the grocery store, the hair salon, or go inside to grab a cup of coffee. I was 28 years old and home bound in a city that felt extremely isolating. There was not really much to do but sit in my room and work and when I was well enough, walk to the park. That’s where I was finally greeted with smiles, friendly waves, enriching, supportive, and at times challenging conversations (at a safe and masked distance). Bruce Monroe Park was the haven that made me realize I wasn’t alone—that I could, and had, joined a very precious community that cared for this space.

It is disingenuous for the Council to advance the viewpoint that this project is merely an upgrade and replacement for the Park Morton residential building. In reality, this is mixed development housing, whereas the Park Morton building was not. This means that the building will indeed have affordable housing units (as **mandated** by the Council as a condition of “developing” the park) but it will also have market rate units as well. In projects similar to this one, a notably widespread issue, is the discrimination affordable unit residents face from their neighbors in market rate units, and building management. Proponents of mandated mixed use housing harbor an illusion that mixed unit housing spurs integration and tolerance. That is not the reality borne out of other cities, like New York, who have also implemented mixed unit housing mandates for new development. To recoup losses wrought by having to rent units at a lower than market rate, developers in turn build luxury amenities that only market rate tenants have access to, and in some cases, only permit rent controlled and affordable housing tenants to enter through certain doors. (Article attached).

Mixed rental housing also spurs gentrification. Market units will be bought up quickly by persons who can see that the surrounding are market prices continue to steadily rise. The persons living in the market rate housing will be able to spend more for a bite to eat prompting the attention of chains that can easily buy out mom and pop shops. This is cultural erosion. This is forced evacuation, perhaps slowly, but make no mistake surely, from a neighborhood that people love, from a neighborhood that is in every sense of the word home, from a neighborhood that extends that love to persons in need—like myself. Should the Zoning Board green light this project, it would also greenlight the following choices: some affordable housing (for now) or green space; some affordable housing (for now) or community haven;

some affordable housing (for now) or access to a rich historical neighborhood that hasn't yet been completely warped by corporatization.

The Bruce Monroe park is a main stay “watering hole” for people like myself and my neighbors who care about the future of this community. After the last two years of a worldwide pandemic that has wreaked havoc on our ability to commune with our neighbors, to even see another person's face, or hear another person's voice— it shouldn't take a special zoning board meeting to impress upon the city that green space and community gathering points are nothing short of precious. To disturb them is to relentlessly shred the fabric of a people, a community, a chosen family.

The reality is that the building being discussed at this meeting will serve as an overpriced, ineffective, and ill-fitted band-aid that will fail to mend the damage wrought from classist divisionism. Rather, it will expose and deepen a long festering wound wrought upon marginalized communities who are torn from their roots to make way for other people. So let us stay, let us build, let us heal— together.

Sincerely,  
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