

To the DC Zoning Commission
July 23rd, 2018
Re: Case 18-06

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to ask the Zoning Commission to reject the proposal to create a new zoning zone, MU-4A, and in particular to reject Alma Gates' (an ANC representative from Ward Three, so she doesn't even represent the neighborhood around Penn Branch Shopping Center) proposed modifications to this new category, and her proposal to immediately implement this new category to existing MU-4 areas. Because creating a new zone would impact the entire city (as that zone would be available – and perhaps required under Gates' proposal - city-wide), at the least your decision should be delayed until DC residents have a better chance of learning about this, forming an opinion, and providing testimony to the Zoning Commission.

It's unclear why this new zone is being proposed, as the developer of the project in question has already come to an agreement with the neighborhood about the scale and scope of the development. The developer of the Penn Branch Shopping Center chose not to go through the PUD route, but the Zoning Commission wisely sent the developer back to the community to negotiate with them anyway. The result is a development plan that was created in dialogue with the neighborhood, so it seems like a jump from that to creating a new zone that would be available across the entire city (or, again, required if Gates' proposal moves forward).

I live in Ward Three (specifically in Cleveland Park), where we've had our own battles with increased development over the years. I am a believer that my ward has to carry its fair share of development, and there are many other residents who agree. I think it's telling that some of the no-development groups in my ward are testifying in favor of this new zoning proposal, as it would strengthen their case about completely unrelated development in different corners of the city and in different neighborhoods. In fact, as of this morning two groups from Ward Three and one ANC representative, also from Ward Three, are the only groups that have submitted testimony; no groups from the neighborhood around the proposed development site have done so, as far as I know.

At the end of the day, this case should be about this specific development (the Penn Branch Shopping Center), and not about a decision that would change the zoning regulations for the entire city. If the Zoning Commission wants to seriously consider creating this new MU-4A zoning category, this should be only the start of a longer, more in-depth process that would allow more residents and groups from other parts of the city to weigh in.

Thank you for your consideration,

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