

Desiree Halpern  
350 G St. SW Unit N413  
Washington, DC 20024

March 16, 2021

Dear members of the District of Columbia Zoning Commission,

I am writing in regard to case number 20-34, the proposed development known as the “Cotton Annex” at 300 12th Street SW. As a resident of Southwest, I urge you to reject this development unless or until the project design is an example of equity and inclusion per the SW neighborhood plan, with 1/3 market, 1/3 workforce, and 1/3 deeply affordable units. I would also like to see a greater number of affordable family-sized units, as well as space for retail.

If you look at recent developments in the area, there is already too much luxury housing in Southwest that few can afford and there is a lack of affordable and family-sized units. This imbalance is driving up rent prices and forcing longtime residents out of the neighborhood. In particular, Black residents, residents of color, and families have been pushed out, replaced by younger, single, white, transient residents. It is impossible to build a community when families continuously have to leave the area for the suburbs.

The current proposal to include just 8% affordable units will exacerbate those trends. This number is appalling and clearly shows the developers’ self-serving goal of profiting from our neighborhood and not considering our needs. The purposes of the D-8 zone are to permit high-density development, to foster the transition of a federally-owned area south of the National Mall into a mixed-use area with both public and private ownership, and to promote greater pedestrian and vehicular connectivity with an emphasis on re-establishing connections that have been continuously compromised by closures other obstacles.

Additionally, the Southwest Neighborhood Plan states that “Southwest will remain an exemplary model of equity and inclusion.” The Mayor has a goal of building 12,000 more affordable units across the city over the next six years. The proposed development does not align with either of these objectives. Lastly, I am concerned about the \$100,000 donation to the Southwest Community Foundation, which has a very limited scope. Can you please outline what the donation will go towards?

I welcome development and growth in Southwest, but that growth should be responsive to the needs of my diverse, inclusive community.

Thank you,

*Desiree Halpern*

SW resident and SW DC Action member