

I ask the Zoning Commission to use its power and authority to require more affordable housing in this development.

I first learned about “design review” designations when JBG Smith proposed a project at South Capitol and M Street that initially had 1 affordable unit. After significant pushback from the ANC, Ward 6 Councilmember, Charles Allen, and members of the community, the project ended up with 20 “affordable” units, 3% of the total project. After the case, Commissioner May said he didn’t want to have another case like that, and former Commissioner, Turnbull, called the case “painful” (November 19, 2020 hearing) Remembering that Commissioner May had called the Zoning Commission a “champion” (October 1, 2020) of affordable housing, I expected the Zoning Commission to change its rules so that “design review” projects would not be exempt from affordable housing requirements, since, after all, we are still in the midst of an affordable housing crisis.

Unfortunately, that did not happen. Instead, last year, 3000 units were built in D-5 zones and not a single one was affordable. The Attorney General, Karl Racine, recently weighed in on the matter requesting that “the Commission take emergency action to close this loophole before developers build out these areas without providing affordable housing.”

I implore the Zoning Commission to take action, starting with this development, to end this loophole and require more affordable housing in this project. The Southwest Neighborhood Plan stated that residents want the area to “remain an exemplary model of equity and inclusion.” The new comprehensive Plan includes a framework that includes new policies, actions, and narrative that explicitly address equity. How does a project where 10% of the units are affordable meet this bar? It doesn’t, thus, the zoning commission must demand more affordable housing from this project.

In addition to more affordable units, truly family-sized units must be included as well, meaning 3-bedroom units. There is a dearth of these units in the city and I have had several friends and family have to leave the Southwest neighborhood because they could not find or afford a home for their growing family. It is neither

sustainable nor conducive to building strong social bonds for a city not to provide families to grow in place. I urge the zoning commission to require 3-bedroom units in this development as well.

Thank you for your time and consideration.