

Desiree Halpern
350 G St. SW Unit N604
Washington, DC 20024

January 19, 2022

Dear members of the District of Columbia Zoning Commission,

I am writing in regard to case number 21-20, the proposed development on Half St SW. As a resident of Southwest for the past 2.5 years and DC for nearly 7 years, I urge you to reject this development unless or until the project design is an example of equity and inclusion per the Southwest 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 (3+ bedrooms) in addition to the much-needed retail space.

If you look at recent developments in the area, there is already too much luxury housing in Southwest that few can afford and live in long-term. The vast majority of it is studios and one-bedroom apartments. Meanwhile, 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.

The current proposal to include just 43 new affordable units out of more than 430 will exacerbate those trends. How does 10% affordable units promote racial equity in an area that is seeing increasing inequity? This number is appalling and clearly shows the developers' self-serving goal of profiting from our neighborhood and not considering our needs.

Additionally, the development is incompatible with the new Comprehensive Plan that went into effect last summer: it calls for racial equity, yet the average Black family will not be able to afford to live in this building as the median Black household income is \$46,201 — nearly \$100,000 less than the median white household. If Southwest is supposed to be “an exemplary model of equity and inclusion,” how can you justify such a proposal?

I love this city and I welcome development and growth in Southwest, but that growth should be responsive to the needs of my diverse, inclusive community. The grocery store included in the plan is a great start, but I urge the developers to do better in terms of housing.

Thank you,

Desiree Halpern

SW resident and SW DC Action member