

Cochran, Patricia (DCOZ)

From: Adom Cooper <cooperadom@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, January 21, 2022 1:30 PM
To: DCOZ - ZC Submissions (DCOZ)
Subject: Case 21-20 Testimony_Adom M. Cooper

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Dear Commissioners,

My name is Adom M. Cooper and I am a SWDC Ward 6 resident. I have lived in the community since 2014 and have watched the purposeful erosion of the community's soul [at the hands of development and gentrification](#). My demand is simple: **reject this development, unless/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 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."

This project proposes a mixed use building including residential units, retail space, and potentially a site for a grocery store. While it is encouraging to see the concrete plant replaced, since it has been the subject of several complaints from residents over the years based on the negative environmental impact it has had, there are concerns about the grocery store. The surrounding area is a food desert, so a grocery store is needed. However, the grocery store should be an affordable one for residents living in Syphax Gardens and James Creek (current public housing folks living the closest) can afford to be customers. I urge the ZC to use its power to mandate the developers to seek a grocery store that will provide affordable and fresh produce for all residents, not the overwhelmingly affluent its project caters to.

I implore the Zoning Commission to take action, starting with this development, to end this loophole and take substantive action. 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.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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Cordially,

Adom Malcolm Cooper

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