

From: LorettaNeumann [lneu@rcn.com]  
Sent: Sunday, October 17, 2010 10:55 AM  
To: Gray, Vincent (COUNCIL)  
Subject: Please vote no on Comp Plan amendments relating to air rights

Dear Vince,

Attached is a letter I sent to Muriel Bowser, which I want to bring to your attention, as I understand that the Council plans to vote on the Comprehensive Plan amendments this Tuesday, Oct. 19. My letter expresses my detailed concerns about the amendments relating to air rights. Developers have been salivating for years at the idea of expanding the height limits, and it appears that OP has now agreed with them - in direct violation of the federal Height Act.

If it comes to a vote, I'm asking you to vote no on this. But even before that, it would be helpful for everyone to see what the effect of this change would be on the skyline of our city, so at a minimum OP should provide simulated views that are realistic. My colleagues who have seen the Akridge simulations say that they are very distorted.

Thanks again for all you do for us.

Loretta

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October 15, 2010

Honorable Muriel Bowser  
Councilmember, Ward 4  
1350 Pennsylvania Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Muriel,

I am writing to urge you to **vote NO on the air rights text amendments to Bill 18-867, *The Comprehensive Plan Amendment Act of 2010***.

As you know, I am a member of the Committee of 100 Board of Trustees, and we have been following this issue very closely. The Height Act, the federal law restricting the height of buildings in DC, has been one of the major reasons why our city remains so low and lovely.

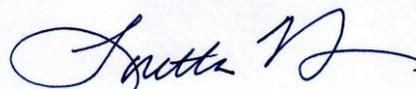
The proposed air rights amendments would lead to new zoning rules for setting the maximum height of buildings constructed over railroad tracks and freeways. The Office of Planning wants the Council to endorse rezoning these sites, such as the Amtrak rail line area north of H Street Bridge. OP proposes to **measure not from the ground as is required for every other building in the District, but from a much higher point** that OP hopes will result in more intense development. *This is a clear end run around the Height Act.*

The effect of this amendment at Union Station would be to **create a wall of tall buildings over the tracks 56 feet taller than the SEC building**, towering over the buildings on either side of the tracks. This is unnecessary. The fact is that development at can proceed today as long as it honors the measuring point from 1st or 2nd Streets. Existing buildings surrounding that area provide reasonable measuring points from grade or near grade. **Starting the height measurement from the apex of the bridge is not reasonable, and it violates the Height Act.** And, applied after these areas are up-zoned, this new measuring device will result in large areas of very tall buildings that will permanently alter the city's iconic horizontal skyline.

Seeing is believing. So before acting on this measure, at a minimum the Council should **require OP to provide accurate and impartial views on what this development would look like**. Photo simulations should be made from the edge of the Capitol Grounds across from Union Station (not from down the hill on Louisiana Ave.), from H St. looking west, from I St. looking west, from the RRE building etc. These simulations should not be done by the developer but by the city or a private firm so they can be impartial. The Council and all who care about this issue deserve to have accurate simulations.

I appreciate all you do for Ward 4, and while these amendments may or may not affect us directly, they do affect the city we live in and love. I hope you will urge the Council to move with great caution, and not just agree to the OP's misguided proposal(s).

Sincerely,



Loretta Neumann