

My name is Fred Feinstein and I've been a proud resident of Takoma Park for 45 years. One of the things I've valued most is our city is made up of people from all walks of life, with a wonderful mix of cultural roots.

This diversity didn't just happen. It's a result of rent stabilization policies that have made rents here more affordable than elsewhere. In the many years I've lived here, the city has successfully resisted numerous efforts to undermine the availability of affordable housing. As property values have soared, preserving affordability has become even more challenging, which is why I and many others here today are very concerned about the implications of the MMPA on retaining the character of our city.

What has been particularly mystifying is the application of the MMPA to two completely different parts of our city. It proposes the same "up zoning" apply to the former Adventist hospital site, a large vacant parcel of land, as applies to the Maple Ave corridor, the most densely populated area of our city. Up-zoning the hospital site can create the opportunity to build new affordable housing that I support. But applying the same up-zoning to the Maple Avenue corridor could have an opposite effect, creating the very real possibility of undermining the preservation of affordable housing that is so central to the character of Takoma Park. Why are these two completely different parts of our city being treated the same?

Displacement is a very different issue for developing an uninhabited hospital site than it is for the densely populated Maple Avenue corridor. There is more than a reasonable fear the current draft of the MMPA will lead to replacing existing Maple Avenue buildings with new ones that are not subject to rent controls for five years. What will become of our neighbors when their homes are replaced?

Like many efforts to undermine our affordable rental policies in the past, the MMPA doesn't propose elimination of existing rent stabilization policies, (although there is a very troubling suggestion they should be modified). But it surely opens disturbing possibilities. What problems are we solving by applying the same zoning changes needed to encourage building homes on vacant land to the most densely populated part of the city?

I believe there is real potential to reach a broad consensus on the sensible development of the former hospital grounds that would unify and excite our community. Lets focus on achieving this important accomplishment. Lets not handicap that effort by combining it with a controversial and very different undertaking of changing the rules that apply to the Maple Avenue corridor.

Thank you.

Submitted by Fred Feinstein