

CAPITOL HILL RESTORATION SOCIETY



October 24, 2013

Ms. Harriet Tregoning, Director
Office of Planning
1100 4th Street, SW
Suite E650
Washington, DC 20024

Subject: Office of Planning's Height Master Plan Draft Report dated September 24, 2013

Dear Ms. Tregoning:

Washington DC is a thriving, competitive city with an enviable quality of life and a highly desirable real estate market. It enjoys budget surpluses year after year. CHRS believes it owes this success and distinctive character to the Height of Buildings Act of 1910, along with the L'Enfant and McMillan Plans and other guiding policies outlined in our June 23, 2013 letter on this subject.

CHRS commends the Office of Planning for its detailed research and persistent public outreach regarding height limits, but disagrees with the conclusions. The subject report recommends height increases for reasons which OP's own economic study does not support. Taller buildings cost more to build. Rents will continue to rise. Developers will continue to build boxy buildings to maximize profit. A change would do nothing to increase affordable housing. In short, height increases do not deliver improvements.

We applaud the Office of Planning's commitment to preserve viewsheds and would urge that views throughout the city, as well as views approaching the city, be equally protected. It is unfortunate that the costs of increased infrastructure demands resulting from any changes were not included in the studies. Had they been, the result would likely have shown a net drain on revenues rather than a 1-2% increase. It is essential that the city make a more comprehensive study of viewsheds and infrastructure, as well as security, transportation and communications, before contemplating a change of this magnitude.

CHRS fully supports retaining the Height of Buildings Act in its present form because it benefits the city, its institutions and its residents. We urge the Office of Planning to consider those benefits as well.

Sincerely,

Janet Quigley

Janet Quigley
President, CHRS