

# DAG

**Design  
Advocacy  
Group**

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Councilman Curtis Jones, Jr.  
4<sup>th</sup> District Councilman  
City Hall, Room 404  
Philadelphia, PA 19107

January 25, 2023

Dear Councilman Curtis Jones, Jr.,

The Design Advocacy Group (DAG) stands in **strong opposition** to the zoning overlay proposed in Bill No. 220918, Cobbs Creek Golf Course Overlay District, which you have sponsored, for the following reasons:

1. A zoning overlay is intended for sites that have a particular, unique condition. The steep slope conditions at this site are not unique; they are common in this region. In fact, the steep slope protections were born from hard-fought battles to protect the nearby Wissahickon Valley Park;
2. A zoning overlay for steep slopes would typically be implemented to *protect* the existing landscape, not to erode it;
3. Municipal code specifically prohibits development of any steep slopes with a grade greater than 25%, with the code specifically written to disallow for a change to this provision;
4. [Case studies](#) show the risks inherent in steep slope development;
5. The existing procedure for requesting a zoning variance is appropriate for this site. In particular, we support the requirement for public hearings that are a mandated part of a variance application;
6. This overlay has all the appearances of impermissible spot zoning, and as such is subject to litigation;

Section 14-704 of the Philadelphia Code, which includes steep slope regulations, begins with the following intent:

*"The open space and natural resource standards of this section are intended to promote safe and compatible development throughout the City of Philadelphia that avoids adverse impacts and degradation of the environment through open space preservation, protection of steep slopes, erosion control, and water quality protection."*

For these reasons, DAG opposes Bill no. 220918. It sets a dangerous two-fold precedent, both chipping away at our zoning code and devastating our protected public lands, which are an essential component of our city's climate resilience. We recommend that as the developer proposes changes to our public parkland, they follow the established protocol: our zoning code allows requests for, and approval of, appropriate variances, and is subject to public input - including from downstream residents who will be most impacted by site changes. With documented erosion on the site, the developer should not be allowed to create an overlay that subverts the zoning specifically intended for those conditions.

Sincerely yours,



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