

***Meg Maguire's Remarks***  
***Barbara Zartman Award for Planning and Zoning Advocacy***  
**June 1, 2011**

I am deeply honored to receive the Barbara Zartman Award from the Committee of 100. Barbara loved this city, and she set a high standard of civic engagement to which I can only aspire. Thank you friends and colleagues for your tireless work, for staying the course in the face of many obstacles, and for your generous affirmation tonight.

And thank you, First Congregational UCC, for nominating me and for your incredible teamwork to sustain the vision of a new church home at 10<sup>th</sup> and G.

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Receiving this award has occasioned some reflection on three challenges and three questions that we face as civic activists:

- ***First:*** While DC residents daily experience the disturbing social realities of the gaps between rich and poor, employed and unemployed, the Committee is best known for our focus on the physical realities of the city:
  - Stewardship of the L'Enfant and McMillan Plans;
  - Advocacy for a citywide planning commission;
  - Protection of DC's horizontal form through the Height Act;
  - Zoning in conformance with the Comprehensive Plan;
  - Support for public transportation; and
  - A "living" downtown.

How do we better convey the link between social problems and appropriate physical growth and change?

- ***Second:*** The dire consequences of global climate change demand new commitments to smart growth and sustainability in DC. At the same time, smart growth plans too often fail to leaven the drive for greater density with retention of community character, historic building context, scenic values, and open space; to balance the interests of large institutions and large-scale development with the needs of local residents and businesses; to preserve existing affordable family housing; or to promote design excellence and innovation. What is our bold, balanced vision for a sustainable city? On what issues are we called, not only to defend, but also to lead?
- ***Third:*** Events move quickly and public attention is short. Few people take the time to study and debate public issues. Blogging and opinion pieces are not a substitute for balanced reporting. Cuts in Metro staff at the *Washington Post* and other papers have resulted in scant coverage of proposed planning and zoning changes that will affect relationships between neighbors, property values and the shape of the city for years to come. Our organization is challenged to accept new

**media realities by offering quick electronic opinions and sparring with unseen and often unidentified opponents. How can we take advantage of new tools to present our positions while still retaining the fact-based civility we expect of others?**

**Eleanor Roosevelt, a woman with a powerful passion for public service, offered this advice: “Do what you feel in your heart to be right - for you'll be criticized anyway. You'll be damned if you do, and damned if you don't.”**

**I am speaking to you --but mostly to myself -- when I recite the challenges of *doing what we feel in our hearts to be right*:**

- **To listen and learn from our opponents while maintaining decency and respect for their views;**
- **To stay true to the facts while demanding that others do so as well;**
- **To deal with our own negative reactions to criticism by conveying our point of view with passion, clarity and persuasive positivism;**
- **And above all, to insist that the public’s business can be achieved only through continuous and meaningful public participation, collaboration, open and transparent processes.**

**I am proud to be a member of The Committee of 100, with its strong history of public advocacy. I’m glad we are all in this together. We need each other to rekindle our stewardship of the past and our leadership for the future. Thanks to all of you – and to Barbara Zartman – for your companionship on this journey.**