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2013 OCT 18 PM 1:57

To: DC Board of Zoning Adjustment

From: Elizabeth and Brandon Prelogar
402 Independence Ave. SE
Washington, DC 20003

Subject: BZA Application #18641 for an Addition at 404 Independence Avenue, SE

Dear Board of Zoning Adjustment:

We hereby provide the following written statement to explain our concerns regarding BZA Application #18641, which seeks a special exception to build a two-story addition at 404 Independence Ave, SE. (which will effectively be a two-and-a-half story addition since the levels are exceptionally tall). Our family resides at 402 Independence Avenue, SE, and the proposed addition will have a dramatic negative effect on our air, light, and sense of spaciousness. Because the proposed addition will substantially adversely affect the use and enjoyment of our home, it does not satisfy the standard for a special exception and we respectfully request that the application be denied.

Our row home lies immediately to the west of 404 Independence Avenue. We were drawn to the home in large part because it has a beautiful outdoor patio. We love to spend time on our patio, enjoying our morning coffee outside while our two-year-old runs around at our feet, zooming his cars or drawing with sidewalk chalk. Our patio shares a wall with the existing structure at 404 Independence Ave. Although 404 Independence Ave. is much deeper than our home and runs the entire length of our outdoor patio, only 10 feet of the existing structure that borders our patio is currently two-and-a-half stories; the remaining 10+ feet is a single story. Thus, our patio retains an open feel because more than half of the existing structure that abuts it is the height of an ordinary fence. The limited height of the existing structure at 404 Independence Ave. ensures that we get plenty of light and air on the patio. It ensures we enjoy a sense of airiness as we look to the northeast, rather than facing an imposing wall. Finally, it helps ensure that radiant light reaches the bedrooms in the rear of our house that look over the patio.

The proposed addition at 404 Independence Ave. entails demolishing the single-story structure at the rear of the house that runs alongside our outdoor patio and replacing it with a two-story structure on a much larger footprint. The new two-level addition will directly abut and tower over our outdoor space, effectively caging us in on the east side of our patio. In two principal respects, the proposed addition will have a substantial deleterious effect on our property and its value.

First, the proposed addition will unduly affect our air and sense of space. By replacing a single-story structure with an imposing two-and-a-half story wall, the proposed addition will box in our outdoor living space and dramatically reduce its openness. It will also impact the sense of space we experience when we look to the northeast from the windows in our master bedroom by replacing the landscape of urban rooftops, blue sky, and greenery with the sense that we are being completely closed in by our neighbor's wall.

BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 18641 BOARD OF Zoning Adjustment
EXHIBIT NO. 31 District of Columbia
CASE NO. 18641
EXHIBIT NO. 31

Second, the proposed addition at 404 Independence will unduly affect our light. Our rear bedrooms currently receive strong light in the morning, but the new addition will block that light from the east. We expect those rooms to be much darker, with a particularly pronounced effect in the master bedroom, which is situated below the proposed addition. The addition will also dramatically reduce the sunlight in our outdoor patio, starving the rich vegetation growing on the back (north) wall in a built-in planting bed that serves to green and beautify our outdoor living area.

Our neighbors' application seeking a special exception for 404 Independence maintains that the proposed addition will not unduly affect our light and air with the following analysis:

"The proposed addition at 404 Independence Avenue SE will extend past the existing structure at 402 Independence Avenue by approximately 23'. However the proposed addition will only be 2'5" beyond the existing rear structure of 404 Independence Avenue that is to be demolished. As there are existing structures in the rear of the house, the additional square footage will minimally impact 402 Independence Ave. Additionally, the residence at 402 Independence is approximately 5' taller than 404 Independence. The height of 404 Independence will not increase with the proposed addition."

This analysis omits a critical detail: the existing structure planned for demolition at the rear of 404 Independence Ave is a one-story structure, whereas the proposed addition will be two-and-a-half stories. Thus, the height of 404 Independence *will* increase at the rear of the house, blocking our access to light and air and closing in our space. It is this height increase that will substantially adversely affect the use and enjoyment of our home.

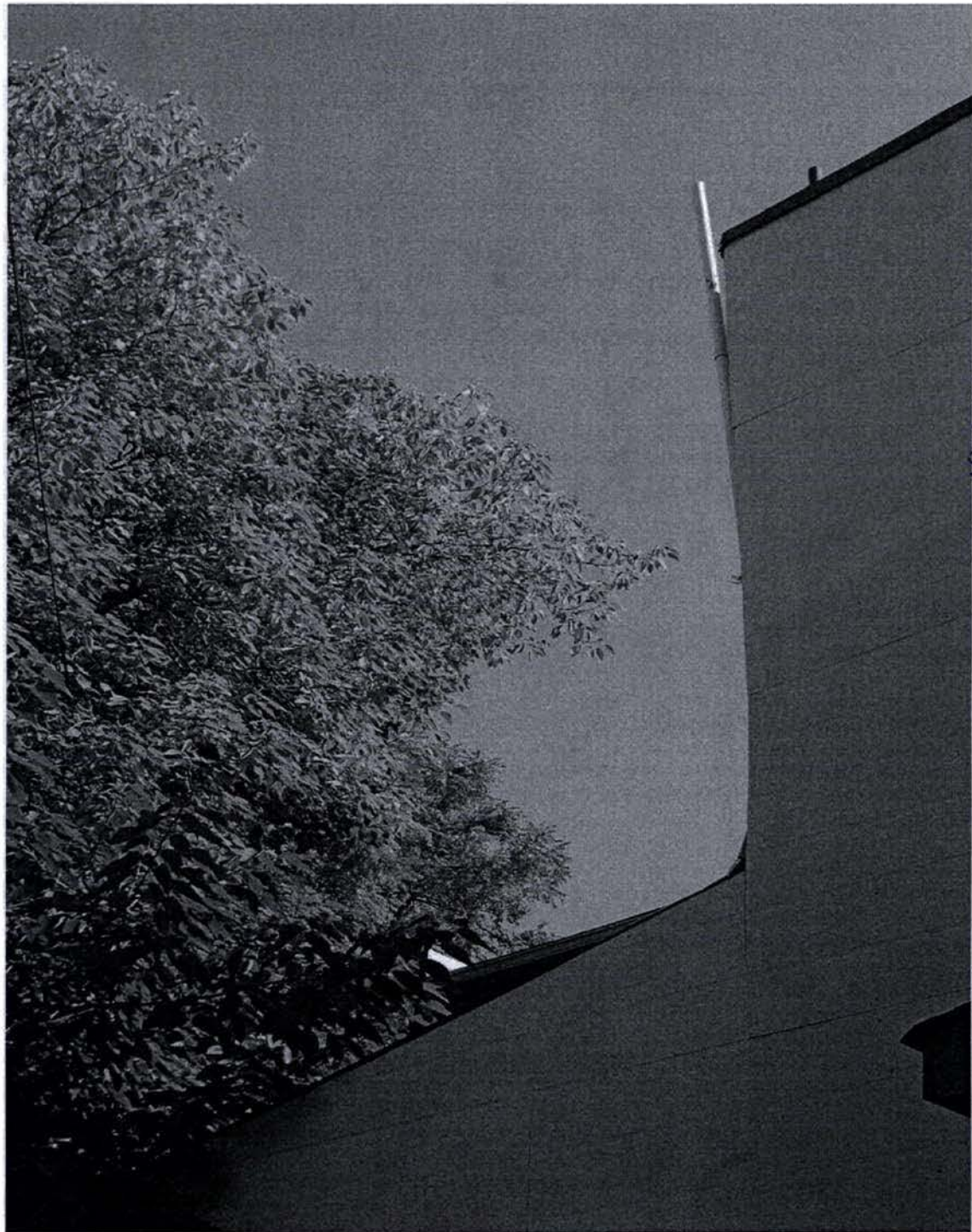
We understand our neighbors' desire to renovate their home, and we want to support them in that effort. But the renovation they have proposed—which seeks the maximum possible lot variance of 70%—is unfortunately very much at our expense. We are hopeful that our neighbors can achieve their goals with a design that will not erect a towering wall directly alongside the entire length of our eastern property line. We have offered to compromise with our neighbors by removing our objection to their application if they limit the two-level addition to the western side of their property, but not the eastern side abutting our property line. This would offer our neighbors substantial additional square footage (including approximately 248 square feet more than their current space on the second floor alone), while reducing the dramatic adverse effect on our home.

But as their plans stand now, our neighbors' proposed addition will negatively impact the use and enjoyment of our home by substantially reducing our light, air, and sense of openness. We have appended a number of photos to illustrate these impacts and a to-scale drawing our architect drafted that demonstrates how the two-story addition will dramatically close off our line of sight and cut off access to air and light and openness. We have also attached an architectural drawing reflecting our compromise plan. Because the application for a proposed addition at 404 Independence does not satisfy the necessary requirements for a special exception, we respectfully request that the BZA deny the application.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth and Brandon Prelogar

Image 1 - Northeastern view from outdoor patio at 402 Independence. Our light, air, and sense of spaciousness will be dramatically impacted by the proposed new addition at 404 Independence, which will demolish the existing one-story structure and replace it with what is effectively a two-and-a-half-story structure running alongside the entire eastern edge of our property line. The wall of that structure will tower over our outdoor living space.



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Image 2 - Eastern view from outdoor patio at 402 Independence. Because the proposed addition at 404 Independence will extend the depth of the second level of the home to beyond the end of our property line, it will completely box in our outdoor living space.



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Image 3- View from master bedroom at 402 Independence. The wall of the proposed addition at 404 Independence will extend the second story at the rear of the home the entire length of our property line-and even several feet beyond it.



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Image 4 -Additional view from master bedroom at 402 Independence. The proposed addition at 404 Independence will erect another story over the existing one-story structure, dramatically reducing the sense of openness captured in this photo.



Image 5- Although 404 Independence is a two-story structure, the stories are exceptionally tall, making the structure only approximately 5' shorter than our three-story home at 402 Independence.



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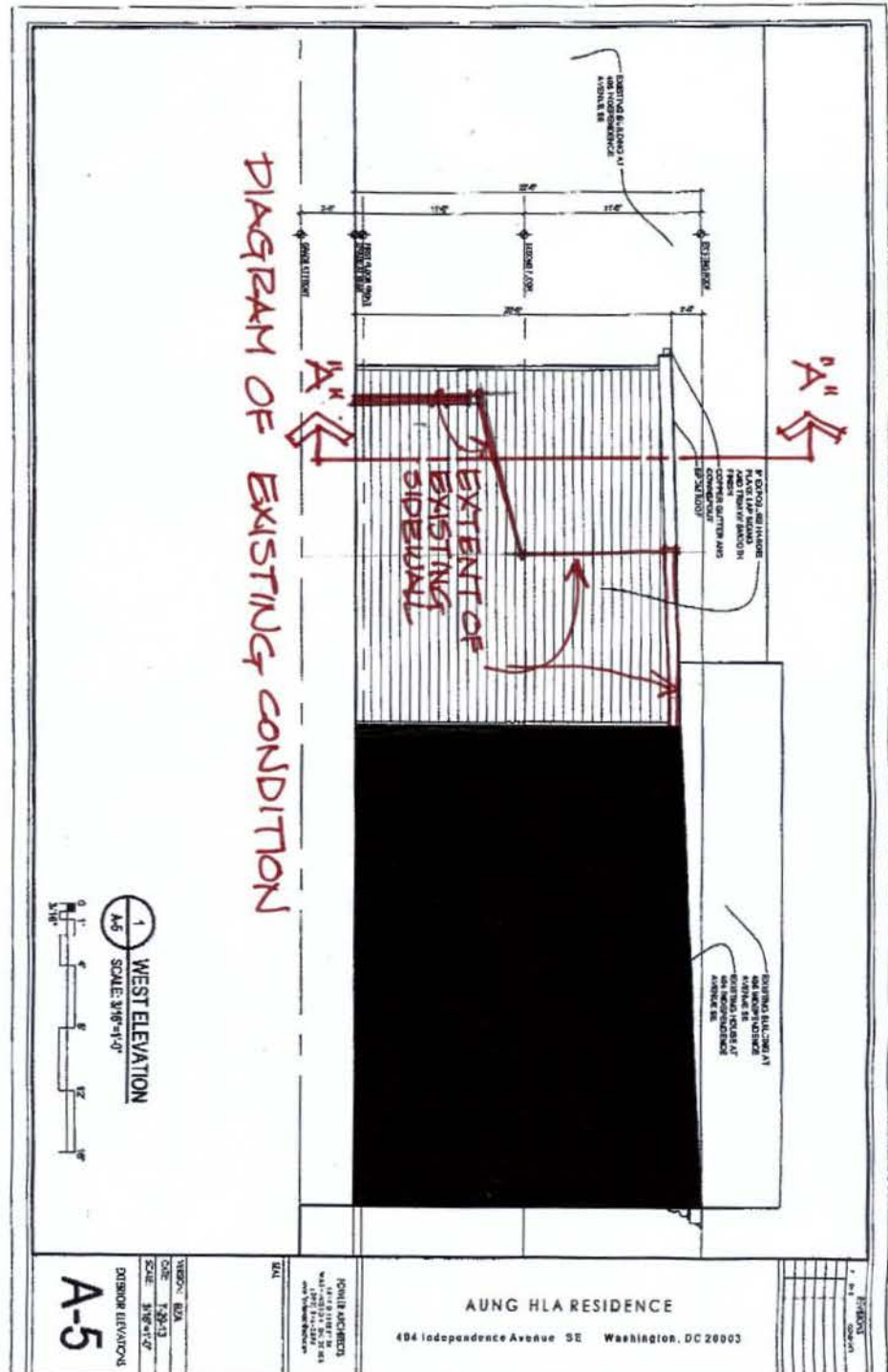
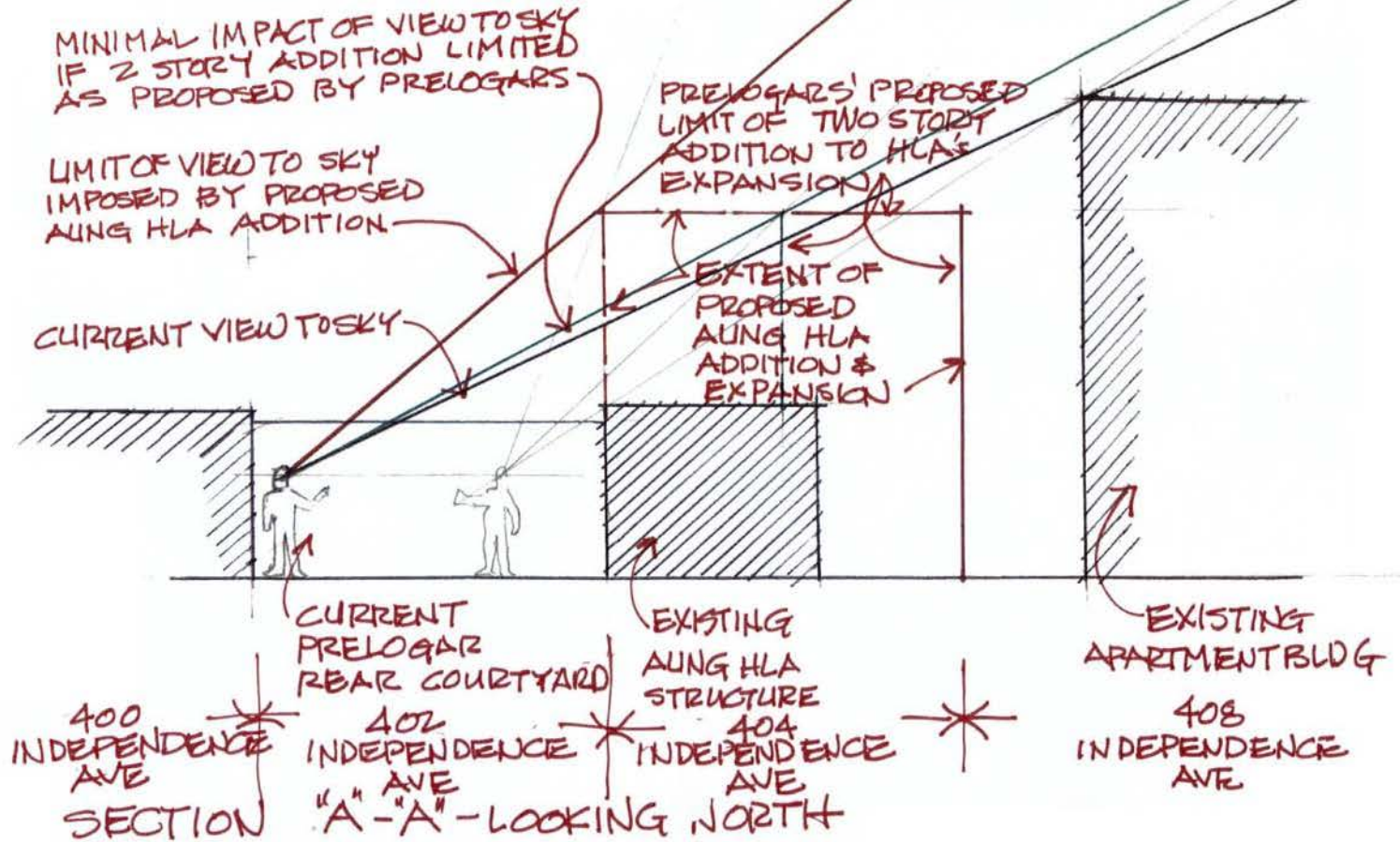
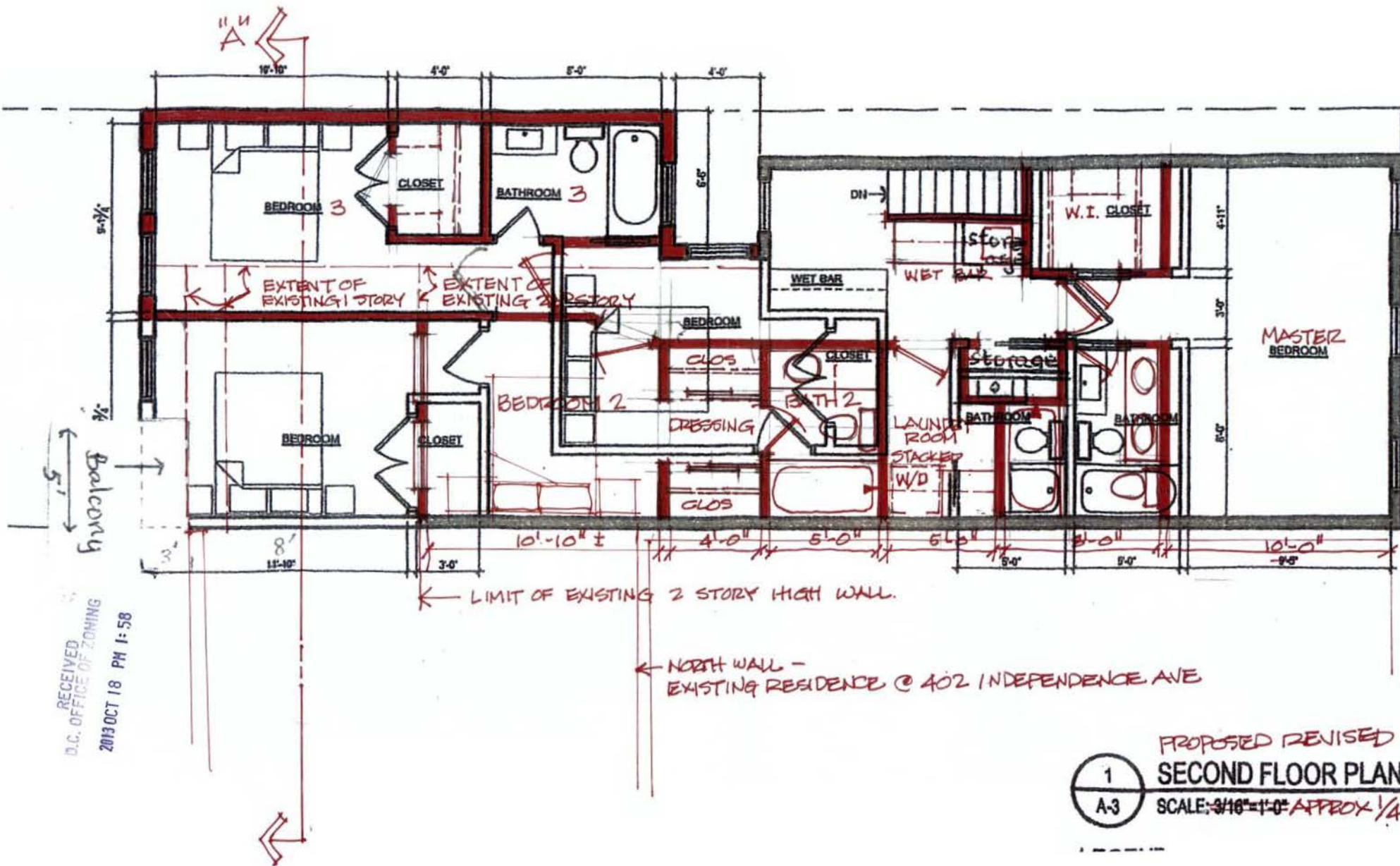

$$\frac{45}{1.63}$$

DIAGRAM OF IMPACT ON LIGHT & AIR

SCALE $\frac{1}{8}" = 1'-0"$



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PROPOSED REVISED
1 SECOND FLOOR PLAN
A-3 SCALE: 3/16" = 1'-0" APPROX 1/4" = 1'-0"