

RE: BZA case 18759, I.S. Enterprises Inc.
1328 Montello Avenue NE

To Whom It May Concern:

Our names are Geoffrey Hatchard and Jaime Fearer, and we own the home at 1218 Oates Street NE, a few doors from the corner of Oates Street and Montello Avenue in Trinidad. We can see the corner from our front porch and front rooms of our house, and we admired the property on the corner for years. It was one of the only stand-alone, single family houses in the whole neighborhood, and it stood out and was appreciated in part because of that.

In 2012, a large oak on Montello fell down when Hurricane Sandy hit, changing the look of the corner forever. Here's what it looked like then:



Unfortunately, that was nothing compared to what the current owners did to the house at 1328 Montello Avenue NE over the course of the most recent winter. What had previously been the home and office of Dr. Louis Lowman, and a home for Gallaudet University students after that, became nothing more than a literal shell of its former self. Exterior walls were knocked down, and the house was left exposed to the elements for much of the winter.

BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT
District of Columbia

CASE NO. 18759

EXHIBIT NO. 37

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It sat like this for months, until February, when the owners finally committed the coup de grâce, removing the rest of the house - quickly - on a cold, clear day.



They did not have the permits to demolish the entire house to its foundation, but we don't believe that was ever a concern for them. Trinidad is a neighborhood where property values have skyrocketed in recent years, and there's no end in sight to the continuing rise in those housing prices. Developers know this, and they salivate at the chance to purchase a distressed property at a low price, spend a modest amount on upgrades, then turn and "flip" the house, or resell it, at a very healthy profit. And who can blame them? It's the American Dream, is it not? Own a small piece of land and use the value in it to get a better life for your family. No one would dare pretend to keep anyone from exercising that right when it comes to their property.

There is an exception, though. There are rules to be followed in a place like Washington, DC. We have rules about the demolition of property, and about the building of new construction on vacant lots. I S Enterprises Inc. knew, though, that they could break the rules because the city, specifically the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA), does not have the manpower to keep an eye on every construction project in town all the time. They also know that getting caught breaking the rules typically leads to just a small slap on the wrist, relative to the profit available in a desirable neighborhood like Trinidad.

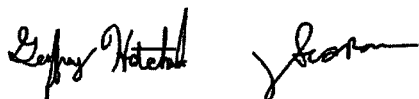
I S Enterprises Inc. is seeking to circumvent the process, and the rules, by pursuing an exemption *after the fact*. They had no intent of following the rules when they bought this property and tore it down, and we feel that past actions can be a pretty strong barometer regarding future intentions.

We have no problem with more density in the neighborhood. Anyone who knows the history of the city in general and Trinidad specifically knows that we used to have many thousands more people living in the city in the period immediately following the second World War. Over 800,000 people lived in a city that actually had fewer homes than it does today. Large parts of Wards 5, 7, and 8 that are developed now weren't developed then. We need more housing in the city in order to keep the value of every other house from rising so quickly that those on the affordability edge are driven out.

But we need that new housing to be built with integrity, and we need the rules to be followed, or else what's the point of having them in the first place? Grant this variance, and you're announcing to other unscrupulous developers that as long as you have deep pockets, you can do whatever you want in this town.

We urge you to deny the variance sought by I S Enterprises Inc. They do not deserve to profit while breaking the rules that thousands of law-abiding property owners follow regularly in the District.

Thank you,



Geoffrey Hatchard and Jaime Fearer