

**Ann Lane Mladinov
2819 39th Street NW
Washington, DC 20007**

June 24, 2014

District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street, NW, Suite 210
Washington, DC 20001

RE: Case Numbers 18784 and 18765
Application for Special Exception for Proposed Development
3915 and 3919 Fulton Street NW

Dear Chairman Jordan, other voting members and staff:

Thank you for allowing interested residents to submit additional information and comments about the proposed development at 3915 and 3919 Fulton Street. My submission is enclosed.

I want to cover four points:

- 1 – my and other neighbors’ great appreciation of the additional time you have provided for further work on improving the exterior appearance of the two proposed apartment buildings (condominiums).
- 2 - my recommendation that you approve the basic design with the modifications that neighbors and the developer have worked out over the weeks since the June 24 BZA hearing on this project
- 3 – my strong recommendation that you require that the plan you approve incorporate the list of commitments the developer offered in his June 23 letter, submitted at the June 24 BZA, as well as the condition that you suggested related to parking permits and others as you find merited
- 4 – my recommendation that you direct the developer and his team, as I believe he is also requesting, to continue working with the neighbors to come to a resolution on the colors and materials to be used on the exterior of the buildings, and come back to the city with the proposed final decision and renderings to be incorporated into the record and the plan you approve

It has meant a great deal to the community that the participating members at the BZA meeting on June 24 allowed an additional 5 weeks for the developer and the residents living near those properties to work together to improve the exterior design of the two proposed buildings. The project is not as good as we might have hoped and we did not quite resolve everything but the process has provided a much better result than would have been the case without the assistance of DCRA and specifically the BZA.

Marty Sullivan, the lawyer handling zoning matters for the developer, had told everyone at the ANC3B meeting the day before the June 24 BZA hearing, “These cases have never been denied.” The week before when we met with the developer and his team about the exterior design, Mr. Sullivan said, “The BZA doesn’t care about design and compatibility.” You showed those statements were wrong.

All of the neighbors with whom I have spoken about the project have been impressed and pleased with the level of attention, knowledge, insight, and commitment the BZA and the staff there have shown to their mission of implementing the zoning codes in a way that allows flexibility for property owners to make use of their property but also provides protection for neighbors and other citizens against adverse impacts on the community, and allows the citizens’ voices to be heard and weighed in the ultimate decisions. The community awaits your decision, and we greatly appreciate your consideration and informed judgment.

Sincerely,
Ann Lane Mladinov
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Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.18784
EXHIBIT NO.51

Submission of Ann Lane Mladinov, 2819 39th Street July 22, 2014
RE: Case numbers 18765 and 18784 Square 1806, Lot 32 and Lot 804

I am making this submission to support:

A – BZA approval of the request for special exception for the proposed development and the general plans presented, including the interior and exterior design with the modifications that neighbors and the developer have worked out. The exterior color/materials remain a question mark and I am not including those in my recommendation for approval (See below).

B – BZA incorporation in the plan you approve of the commitments the developer offered at the original BZA hearing on this project on June 24, 2014, as well as the condition that you suggested related to parking permits and other conditions that you find merited.

C –direction from the BZA that the developer and his team continue working with the neighbors to come to a resolution on the colors and materials to be used on the exterior of the buildings, and come back to the BZA (or the ANC or the Office of Planning or other intermediate steps you determine would be useful), so the proposed final decision and renderings can be incorporated into the record and the plan you approve, and will become part of the official and legal plan for the project.

I believe that Guy Prudhomme, the developer and trustee for the two properties, has also written a letter to the BZA offering to allow the neighbors to work out the decision on the color of the buildings, in conjunction with his selected real estate agent(s) to ensure that the results will be appealing to buyers. I recommend that if the BZA votes to approve the overall plan for the project hat the process for arriving at the final colors/materials for the exterior should have a formal status in your decision and in the plan, a timetable, and requirements for filing the results for approval as part of the official record for the project.

I also recommend that it be stipulated that any plan by the developer to convert the building to rental apartments, before or until all the units have been sold, should have to be brought back to the BZA for approval, subject to review by the ANC and the neighborhood citizens, and not allowed to go forward until approval has been obtained. Conditions are discussed in the next section.

Please note that it is very important to the neighborhood that the developer NOT abandon the proposed development subject to the application for Special Exception and instead pursue a “matter of right” apartment building on each lot. He has indicated that he would build a higher and bulkier building (the same lot occupancy but one more story and boxed out to full allowable floor area) which would include more units (8 per building), would have more parking spaces in the back (8 per building), would not be subject to G.A.R., would not be accompanied by special plantings or replacement trees, would have lower sales prices and fewer amenities, ad would be an uglier building than the current proposal contains. That is something that most of the neighbors would find very disturbing and do not want to see happen. If denying approval of the Special Exception at this time would trigger construction of the “matter of right” buildings as the developer, Guy Prudhomme, has indicated at the July 12 ANC meeting and in smaller meetings with neighbors, then I want to be sure not to contribute to that result.

ESSENTIAL CONDITIONS

To meet the legal standards for addressing the potential impact of the proposed development project on the community, it is extremely important that the commitments Mr. Prudhomme made to the community in his signed letter dated June 23, 2014, and submitted to the BZA on June 24, 2014, be incorporated into the application and any plans approved by the BZA. These terms were negotiated with the neighbors at the direction of ANC3B at its June 12 meeting, to address the major concerns expressed by the neighbors about the risk of adverse effects of the development on the community (noise, traffic, strain on available parking, destruction of tree and plant cover, possible conversion of the units to student or other high-density rental apartments, and the possibility that the project might not be completed once it was started, leaving an abandoned or blighted property in the neighborhood.

Here is the list the commitments Mr. Prudhomme made in his June 23 letter (numbers 1-6), with some clarifying words I have added to remove possible ambiguities and make the provisions easier to understand, implement, and enforce:

1. The 6 units in each building will be sold as condominiums, not rented as apartments.
2. The condo units will have only 2 bedrooms each rather than 3 bedrooms.
3. Six parking spaces will be provided behind each of the two buildings for use by residents.
4. A condo regime/initial condominium agreement document written and applied to the initial buyers will include a requirement that 50% of the other owners of condo units in a building must agree before an owner can rent out his/her condo to tenants.
5. The trees that are cut down or killed on the properties will be replaced when construction is complete and replaced one for one, kind for kind, and with trees 10 to 12 feet tall.
6. The developer, Guy Prudhomme, will share his financial records with the ANC to substantiate that he has the funds to complete this project.

I would also suggest that the conditions incorporated in any plans you approve should include:

7. Parking Permits (RPPs)

That block of Fulton is part of the RPP program, for parking on that block on the north side of Fulton Street adjoining the proposed buildings. (Parking is not permitted at all on the south side of Fulton Street in that block, probably because it borders the apartment building belonging to the Russian embassy, where there is a security perimeter.) The frontage of each lot is only 60 feet, which is not sufficient to accommodate more than four vehicles at most, and parking is already in tight supply in the nearby blocks. For those reasons, I support the provision chairman Jordan recommended at the June 24 BZA hearing that the condominium owners only get one RPP per condominium unit. I propose that provision should be incorporated into the condo regime/initial condominium agreement, to the effect that the condo buyers would agree to request only one RPP per condominium unit [This refers to each two-bedroom unit, of which there are six units per building].

8. Noise

I propose a provision be incorporated into the condominium regime/initial condominium agreement recognizing the terms of the Washington, DC, Disorderly Conduct Law, as amended in January 2011, DC § 22- 1321 Section 211(d): "It is unlawful for a person to make an unreasonably loud noise between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m. that is likely to annoy or disturb one or more other persons in their residences."

This will help address the substantial concerns of adjoining property owners that the 700 square foot roof decks on the top floor of the proposed buildings could lead to large and noisy parties that would create significant disturbance for residents in the surrounding neighborhood. It is always possible for neighbors to call the police, which is usually not the first choice when neighbors are dealing with neighbors, or phone (if they know the telephone number, which may not be likely) or walk over to a property and request that the people reduce the noise level because it has become disruptive. If a party is on the third floor of a condominium building, however, it could be very difficult to reach the residents or guests and get them to answer the buzzer or come down to the entrance, because they will probably be on the roof and/or not in a place where the buzzer might be heard. It is also much preferable that the residents already know the law regarding noise, so the affected neighbors do not have to be the first to raise the point, when they may already have gone to bed and may not find it easy to walk over to the condominium building to try to explain to the parties that they are creating excessive noise in violation of the city law. It is far better that the condominium residents be informed of the noise laws at the same time they are instructed on how to handle trash and recycling and other "rules of the house."

9. Tree planting to shield neighboring properties

I understand that in some cases, the city's zoning officials also accord special relief to the residents of the adjoining properties, within 200 feet of the proposed project. For example, property owner Linda Lawson, who lives directly adjacent to the two lots subject to the application, at 2808 39th Street NW, which is across the T-intersection of two alleys from 3915 and 3919 Fulton Street NW. The view from her home, facing west toward the beautiful sunset, will be significantly blocked by the proposed new buildings. The current homes on those properties, particularly 3915, do not reach as far to the alley as the proposed condominium buildings and do not have nearly as broad an east-facing wall that will create a large new expanse of wall making up the vista from the back of her home. She has a driveway occupying much of her yard and otherwise lawn; she has not had an incentive to plant trees because she loves the sunset and at the ground level, the neighbors at 3915 and 3919 had fences obscuring the parking pads on their properties. The current plan for the proposed development is to have six parking spaces across the back of each lot, with no fencing around the parking pads or the yards. The parking spaces will take up nearly the entire frontage on the alley, leaving only a four-foot passage on the western side of 3915, so there is no place where a tree or other screening plants could be installed to conceal the sight of the parked vehicles from the back of the adjoining homes on 39th Street such as Linda's. Perhaps it would be possible for the developer to add to his plan for installing 10 foot to 12-foot trees on his properties, replacing the trees destroyed by the construction project, an additional tree to be installed across the alley in the yard(s) of adjoining neighbors whose vistas cannot otherwise be screened from the new buildings and parking pads.

I also recommend that it be stipulated that any plan by the developer to convert the building to rental apartments, before or until all the units have been sold, should have to be brought back to the BZA for approval, subject to review by the ANC and the neighborhood citizens, and not allowed to go forward until approval has been obtained.

EXTERIOR

The developer has worked with the neighbors to work out the plans for the first six conditions listed above as well interior of the proposed buildings (as recommended by the ANC3B and presented to the BZA on June 24, 2014) and the plans for a modified exterior (as presented to the BZA on July 22, 2014) with the important exception of the color/materials of the exterior.

The neighbors generally, including those of us who have been working most closely with the developer on the negotiations over these issues, are very pleased with the modifications to the interior layout of the condo units, to reduce the number of bedrooms per unit. This should reduce the number of added vehicles using the alley and the local street network or trying to find parking in the immediate area, as well as the threat of disruptive noise. The modifications also increase the size of the bedrooms, living space, kitchens, bathrooms, and closets, as the neighbors had suggested would be desirable, and add other luxury amenities which make them more attractive to the target of high-end buyers. These are major benefits for the residents and also for the neighborhood as a whole.

The architecture of the exterior has also been modified in some ways in response to recommendations from neighbors to make the building more attractive, less blocky and sterile, and more compatible with the neighborhood. Although I and most of the other neighbors involved would still prefer to see an even better looking buildings on those properties, the revisions are definitely an improvement and I am willing to recommend that the BZA approve the basic design.

The ultimate color and materials of the exterior, however, have not yet been presented to the neighbors or discussed in any detail. We received a preliminary electronic file on Monday, July 21, but have not been given any information on what the actual colors or materials are supposed to be, or had any chance to review and consider the details, the compatibility of the colors and materials with the neighborhood, or the likely impact on the surrounding community in general.

The color and materials on the exterior are a critical part of the appearance of a building, and in large part determine how compatible it is with the surroundings. For all the months that the proposed project has been under discussion in the community, the developer and his architect have presented sketches and renderings showing the two buildings would be a red color chosen to echo the color of the red brick used in both the existing homes on those two properties and also the adjoining buildings to the east and west and in the largest number of other homes in the surrounding neighborhood, as shown in the scroll presented by Rosamund Mack at the June 24 hearing and many of the other statements from neighbors. (The architect told the neighbors at our June 19 meeting that the Office of Planning suggested the brick red color for the exterior. Thank you for that!)

The colors shown in the architect's latest "final sketches" shared with neighbors for the first time at about 3 pm yesterday, are dramatically different from the red brick color that the neighbors had begun to expect and accept for the proposed buildings. The new renderings show a combination of earth tones that do not reflect the colors of any of the homes along that stretch of Fulton Street or the nature or type of color scheme on other nearby buildings, even those that have a beige siding or yellow brick. The use of three different colors plus the dark charcoal/black trim make the exterior much more "busy" than the customary single color of homes in the area, or on color with trim. As expressed to Mr. Prudhomme at the meeting on July 15, the group of neighbors most involved in negotiating these matters with the developer much preferred a maximum of two colors, not counting the trim, and urged him not to use three colors on the exterior.

The exterior materials planned for achieving those colors have not to my knowledge been identified. I believe Nichiha fiber cement panels would be used, but painted rather than used in the color made by the manufacturer, although the architect told the neighbor group last week that the colors provided straight from the manufacturer are truer and likely to last much longer than a color painted on the surface of the Nichiha panels. That is not encouraging information for the neighbors.

In an email yesterday, the developer said that he does not care about the color(s) on the exterior, as long as his real estate agent finds the ultimate choice appealing. I hope it will be possible for the BZA to direct the developer to get his team to continue to work with neighbors to identify a set of colors and the associated materials for the exterior that will be attractive, appealing to prospective buyers, not either undistinguished, sterile or jarring, and compatible with the neighborhood.

The goal of the developer, the architect, and the neighbors has consistently been that the buildings should be beautiful. I am confident that result can be achieved, with careful choices of exterior colors and materials.

There just has not been enough time for the developer and architect to get to that result by today's deadline for submissions. The turnaround time for producing sketches and renderings was too long, and the neighbors kept getting caught by new and unexpected changes that required a new assessment and time to react. It was not possible to come to any resolution or consensus. As happened before the June 24 BZA hearing, the developer and architect were not able to produce the plans and renderings for what they wanted to propose to the BZA until mid-afternoon the day prior to the time scheduled for BZA to receive statements from members of the public about the plans. This is an uncomfortable and unfortunate circumstance and everyone involved would prefer that all the issues could have been settled already. The BZA allowed the extra 5 weeks for the developer to work with the neighbors to deal with a small range of things: "just a new design and any conditions the applicant wants to submit." But the time has passed once again without agreement by the developer and the neighbors on the remaining issues except for an agreement to continue the process.

The neighbors will take some deep breaths and prepare to go on with further discussions, with a commitment to reach the desired end point of an attractive, successful project as compatible with the neighborhood as possible. I hope you can find a way to make that possible, within your authority, and

allow the last question on the color/materials to be resolved. The developer and neighbors have not talked yet about how long that process might take, but it appears that the developer and architect would not be in the lead, just the neighbors and the real estate agent, so if you set a target, you would be looking at people who have a record for fast turnaround and are committed to meeting deadlines.

BACKGROUND

Modification to Exterior Design

On June 24, the architect brought a series of renderings showing possible modifications to the façade of the buildings, which he was able to show to the BZA and the others in the room after he arrived at about 12 noon. Though the ANC had allowed 10 days for the developer and the architect to work with neighbors to negotiate a resolution to the concerns of the neighbors before the BZA hearing, the architect had not produced final modifications to the floor plans or finished elevations or renderings showing a revised exterior design until the last day, and there were still multiple options being offered but no agreement. There had not been sufficient time for anyone to review the alternatives or come to a choice of which, if any, would address the questions and concerns about the appearance of the building(s) and the compatibility with the neighborhood. That is why the BZA directed the developer to continue working with neighbors to work out the remaining challenges related to the exterior of the proposed buildings

Once again, this month after the neighbors had been canvassed on their preferences and a small group of neighbors concerned about the project had met multiple times, including with the developer, the architect did not produce completed renderings of alternatives he wanted to propose until the last days before the date for submissions to BZA.

The neighbors reviewed all the options prepared for the BZA hearing and shared comments with the developer, including suggestions of possible elements that would improve the appearance of the exterior (cornices, overhangs, greater texture, more variation in planes and light and shadow on the façade, more effective covering and residential quality door and entrance way on the front) and photos of other buildings/facades to provide examples of what we thought might be useful modifications. That meeting was on July 2. No one in the neighborhood received any additional designs or sketches from the development team until the architect presented one preliminary sketch to the ANC at its regular meeting on Thursday, July 10, which showed a different color and material than anything he had offered before. The next day, close to midnight on Friday, July 11, the developer sent out two additional sketches from the architect, suggesting some additional options for architectural detail. Those sketches still showed a reddish exterior, mirroring the color the architect had been using for the outside of the proposed buildings from the beginning of the project, which he noted at the June 24 BZA hearing he had chosen to be closer to the color of the brick in the other nearby buildings. See transcript p. 110, line 18: "The color has been changed to approximate as closely as possible the brick colors that we see immediately surrounding us." The neighbors had not oppose that color; it was the developer's greatest gesture toward making the buildings more compatible with the neighborhood. For the most part, we accepted that idea and were just curious about the exact material and color the architect and developer were proposing and what they intended to be the materials and colors in their most current sketches.

The new sketches incorporated some modifications, to the architectural details on the exterior, though not all we recommended and nothing that radically altered the appearance:

- black metal borders along the roof lines
- a fairly deep overhang as the group recommended over the top windows on the three-story section and at the top of the two-story section
- deeper frames to the windows to add more planes and variation of light and shadow
- a projecting vertical metal band along the side of the major band of windows rising from the main entrance, giving more definition and protection to the doorway
- a central band of black metal down the center of the side wall to provide more visual appeal and create a distinction between the front and back halves of the building (the units entering from the front door and the units entering from the back door).
- horizontal black metal bands across the center of the façade (three-story section) between the floors to

create more visual interest and definition to that section

They did not adopt any changes to the design of the doorway, which the neighbors had suggested should be made more welcoming, as would be expected of a comfortable home in a settled neighborhood as this is.*

The small group of neighbors who were working most closely with the developer reviewed those three alternatives and prepared comments and questions on the materials and other details shown in the three sketches, to share at a meeting with the developer and architect on Tuesday, July 15. At that meeting, instead of going over the previous three alternatives we received the previous week, the architect presented three brand new designs, all reflecting the identical architectural details as they had indicated they would be adopting but all of different colors than any that the neighbors had seen before. Unlike all the previous sketches and renderings shown to the neighbors, none of the three sketches the architect had on the table at the July 15 meeting were of a color similar to the red brick on the buildings to the east or west of the two properties in question, or the house across the street, or the largest number of homes in the neighborhood.

The architect indicated that the neighbors had asked if the reddish color would actually be close to the color of the bricks on the surrounding buildings. Some materials look right in the color samples but don't have the same impression when they are applied to a large surface and/or in different light. Some neighbors thought the reddish color shown in printed copies at the June 12 ANC meeting and perhaps other drawings seemed too dark compared to the other buildings nearby. But those are details that trained professional architects and artists and builders should be equipped to handle. The same questions arise with any color and material.

Many of the neighbors making statements at the ANC meetings, the BZA hearing, as well as the ANC and BZA members, had noted that red brick is the predominant building material in the neighborhood, so choosing a similar color and/or material is one of the most important elements in achieving a design for the proposed buildings that is compatible with the surrounding homes.

The commissioners of ANC3B also requested at their regular May 8 meeting—the first time the Fulton Street project was raised before the ANC—that the developer alter the color of the three-story section, which was initially proposed to be white, so that it would be reddish to be more compatible with the surrounding buildings.

The ANC as a whole felt that the design was out of character for the existing brick row-house and single family home neighborhood. The ANC was particularly concerned about the white stairwell-entrance ways that seem to overwhelm the design of adjacent buildings. After discussion with the developer and architect, the ANC by unanimous vote, 5-0, gave contingent approval of the Zoning Exception if the developer and architect would forward to the ANC a revised approach to the stairwell color and the developer's plans for tree removal and re-planting.

Source: Minutes of ANC3B Meeting on May 8, 2014, approved at June 12 regular meeting <http://anc3b.org/wp-content/uploads/ANC-3B-May-Meeting-Minutes.pdf>

(These minutes were posted on the ANC3B website just in the past few weeks. I believe it happened after I asked at the July 10 meeting if the minutes had ever been approved and the chair said he thought they had been posted. There were so few neighbors aware of and in attendance at that meeting that we were curious what the ANC had actually said at the time, because they voted to approve the proposal but we also understood that they had concerns about the design and had asked the developer to make modifications.)

BRICK/BRICK SIDING

A significant number of the neighbors, including some of those on the small group working most closely with the developer, have requested in the course of the past two months that the developer and architect consider using brick for the exterior walls, at least for some portion of the front façade. That was not just a matter of personal preference or familiarity with red brick in the immediate area but also to try to increase the compatibility of the buildings with the neighborhood from the perspective of anyone passing on the street or seeing the buildings from the sidewalk, especially the most visible street side and east wall.

The front façade is the most important “face” of the building as far as its appearance to the larger neighborhood. That is one reason why the neighbors have been so tolerant of the condominium conversions of the apartment buildings at 3921 and 3925 Fulton Street (“matter of right” projects retaining but adding to the existing buildings). The developers maintained the red brick exteriors on the street side; they also chose a relatively traditional design for the exterior of the additions, in scale and window placement and type, though they chose a different color and type of siding for the buildings at the back.

The photos included with other initial materials submitted to the BZA by the applicant on April 15, 2011 (third and fifth photo in that set) and also cited by the architect in his statement and exhibits at the June 24 BZA hearing note the look and materials used on the rear (alley side) of the buildings at 3921 and 3925 Fulton. The point may not have been stated explicitly at the June 24 BZA hearing but I would say it is generally accepted, certainly in the neighborhood I know and every other place I have ever lived, that I would no matter whether people use the alley/rear of the building to access their parking spaces or their residences, the alley is not the street and the rear/alley side is not the face of the building that most neighbors or most passersby see or consider when they think about what a building looks like. The relevant side is the side that people see when they use the public road that is commonly used by drivers and pedestrians to get to the building or drive by it.)

The developer has never said he would absolutely not consider using brick; his only absolute statement was that he would not consider building a traditional style building. Over a series of meetings with neighbors, when the idea of brick or fiber panels that look like brick, he had a variety of responses that could be considered positive or encouraging:

At one point, when we were trying to get him to make modifications to make the exterior architecture more attractive and more compatible with the neighborhood, we asked Mr. Prudhomme if the building could be brick and he said, “We could do brick. It’s not going to look as nice.” [June 19, 2014, meeting with neighbors at 3919 Fulton Street]. The next day, when the discussion continued, he asked, “If I built this design in brick, it would be OK?” [June 20, 2014, meeting with neighbor group at 3919 Fulton Street. At that point, the architecture was so sterile, blocky, and incompatible with the residential neighborhood that we did not accept the offer.]

At another point, he listened to all the neighbors’ suggestions (overhangs, cornices, bays, variation in color, texture, and planes, more welcoming porch and doorway) and said, “All this is possible.” [July 2, 2014 meeting with neighbors at 3919 Fulton Street.] He also suggested that a vertical element of the façade could be done in brick.

But the architect never provided any sketches or drawings to show what a brick building or some brick elements would look like, in spite of repeated questions from the group of neighbors about brick.

We told the developer and architect that we had checked the website of Nichiha, the manufacturer whose products he proposed to use, and they manufacture fiber cement panels made to look like brick. The developer said those are nothing more than photos of brick and look “fake.” We checked further and showed him a series of photos using Nichiha Vintage Brick pattern that showed significant texture, variations in color, and realistic looking appearance, for almost the same cost as the Nichiha panels they were proposing to use, even for the highest thickness and quality of the Nichiha Vintage Brick.** Neither

the developer not the architect commented except to say they had never seen Nichiha brick panels. In early July, they offered to bring samples of Nichiha panels to the next meeting with the neighbors so we could all see what they looked like, but that never happened. The local supplier provided a short list of buildings nearby that have used Nichiha panels but none of them were brick pattern and none were individual residences or small-scale apartments.

On July 15 when we gathered, we looked at the latest sketches and I asked if brick could be used on any of the vertical elements of the façade. The developer said it would be possible, but not on a corner, because Nichiha brick panels don't make a good corner. They are two-dimensional and create a seam at every corner. I had already read the installation instructions on the Nichiha website and seen the directions for mitering corner sections using Nichiha brick so I checked that again and found that a) Nichiha provides detailed instructions on how to miter cut Nichiha brick panels to create a convincing corner onsite and b) Nichiha also actually manufactures corner sections to ensure that the corners look like real brick. http://nichiha.com/images/uploads/BSB_Installation_Guidelines.pdf

When we tried to pursue the idea of real brick, the developer said that would be impossible because using real brick would require the walls to be 9 inches thicker and there is neither space under the percentage lot occupancy limit nor space in the interior of the units to provide that much space for brick. When I checked that, I found that standard bricks (3 5/8" x 2 1/4" x 8") require 9 inches to install, but almost nobody today in this country is using that kind of brick for constructing homes or commercial structures; for the past 30 years or more, builders have been using "brick veneer," which is "real brick" in material and appearance but is only 1/4" to 1/2" thick, which is very close to the same thickness as Nichiha panels (1/4" to 3/4" thick), and requires much the same base as Nichiha panels (studs with rain shield). Apparently that is an option for current construction without the cost or space requirements of traditional "real brick." The developer and architect did not mention that.

Last week when the three new sketches were presented in brand new colors, I proposed to the neighbors that I could do a quick survey of the sentiments of the larger group of neighbors who had expressed concerns about the project and interest in being kept up to date by George Brenkert through the course of meetings with the ANC and the developer. This is not a good time to find people at home reading email, but I got a handful of responses. A few said they would choose one of the new colors suggested by the developer but more said they would prefer brick as much more compatible with the neighborhood (about 70% in the quick survey). It would be wonderful if some additional time for reviewing the exterior color and materials would allow that question to be taken to more of the neighbors to have the chance to share their perspectives on this critical part of the compatibility question.

NOTES

* The only other modification the architect made between the June 23 sketches and the July 15 sketches, which may not have been intentional, was that the July 15 sketches appear to show two flat rectangular areas at the center of the side walls on the first floor, probably designed for "accent panels" of a different color material. Those were sketched into the most recent set of renderings, under the line of windows that open into the kitchens of the first floor units. That seems like a very unfortunate change because those windows added a lot to the appeal of the kitchens and also to the visual interest and modulation of the very long side walls (62 feet 5 inches long from front to back on each side wall of both buildings). There is still a horizontal row of windows (about 8 feet long x 18 inches high) at the top of those walls along the first floor kitchens, but the windows over the sinks (54" high x 18" wide) shown in the June 23 elevations don't seem to show up in the latest drawings.

With the new two-bedroom layouts submitted with the new plans provided to the BZA at the June 24 hearing, the kitchens of four of the six units in the proposed condominium buildings for the first time had an exterior wall, allowing them to have windows to the outside. In line with the architect's interest in creating light, bright rooms and "bringing the outside inside," I was particularly glad to see that the architect was proposing a window over the kitchen sink in the first floor units, which is a feature that

many prospective buyers are looking for in a new home (something for the people stuck washing the dishes to look at while they are working). I would recommend that those windows be restored to the design, if they have been eliminated. The neighbors reviewing the sketches were not interested in seeing a different color "accent panel" in those areas of the side walls and it seems like an important reduction in the appeal of the units to remove those windows. The patterns of the windows will be a major part of the quality of the look of the buildings, and in particular the intriguing pattern of light coming from the windows at night will make a much more exciting light look to the buildings. The developer has proposed to provide mini-blinds in the new buildings for privacy, if that is a concern to residents. Therefore, my recommendation would be to clarify that the kitchen windows shown on the elevations dated June 23 will be retained.

**** The Nichiha website includes information on pricing of its products:**

Nichiha Illumination Panels (satin-finish high-end product the developer originally proposed)
\$135 per pack (two 18" x 6' panels)

Nichiha SandStone II (textured panels the developer said last week he is talking about using, painted)
\$86.53 per pack (two 18" x 6' panels)

Nichiha Vintage Brick (3/4" thick in Alexandria red brick or a mottled effect as if painted in white)
\$90.72 per pack (two 18" x 6' panels)

Source: Nichiha commercial pricing brochure
<http://www.nichiha.com/resources/literature-detail-price>

The developer seems no longer to be contemplating using Illumination Panels which he had originally proposed. Other architects have told me that they can be gorgeous and make a very striking building, because of the intense colors and satin finish.

For a project of this size, using Nichiha brick or Nichiha SandStoneII could save considerably on construction materials compared to Illumination Panels (estimated \$25,000 savings for the two buildings).

Please note that the developer has not proposed that the ongoing discussions with the neighbors get into the specific materials. I am including references to the materials used on the exterior for several reasons:

- The type of Nichiha materials intended to be used in the current sketches (dated July 18, 2014) have not been identified in any materials which I or the other neighbors have received to date
- The choice of colors could affect the type of panels that would work the best for the project,
- Many neighbors continue to see a red brick look and/or red brick siding of some type as the exterior finish that would be most compatible with the surrounding neighborhood, which suggests to me that if the costs are comparable, those options should not be dismissed without some chance to see what they would look like on renderings or mock-ups and how they would compare to the other choices offered, before that critical matter is put to rest.

I am trained as a planner and have worked for the government for many years and I believe in the importance of paying attention to citizens' input when the issues are as important as community impact, so I have not wanted to neglect neighbors' requests to have brick, brick color, or brick-look siding be considered for the exterior of these buildings until the options have been given fair consideration.

Thank you again for your consideration.

ALM 7/22/14