

21 April 2015

Henrik Weng
1520 Webster St. NW
Washington, DC 20011

BZA Case Number: 18991

Re: Appeal for 1521 Varnum Street, NW

Witness for Appellant: Henrik Weng, owner and resident of 1520 Webster St. NW

To the Zoning Board of Adjustment:

Dear Members of the Zoning Board of Adjustment:

My name is Henrik Weng and I have owned my house at 1520 Webster Street, NW since 2005. I have attended, and testified in, recent Zoning Commission meetings, against the allowance of what I call “neighborhood destroying Pop-Ups”. I have centered my arguments around the recently unveiled plans to develop a single family residential dwelling into **two buildings containing seven-units** on 1521 Varnum Street, NW.

This proposed development is directly facing my backyard, and if built, it will be an enormous deterioration of life quality for my family and all my neighbors.

To allow the construction of two buildings with seven-units (2+BR) apartment on a single family dwelling, sitting in a beautiful residential neighborhood of row-houses, is an obvious mistake and a misunderstanding/misuse of the R-4 zoning code which governs the lot in question.

In the R-4 or residential flat zone district, two dwelling units are permitted as a matter of right, although the R-4 zone is unique in that it also includes a provision that allows for the conversion, within set limits, of existing buildings into multi-family units. This is fine, I support that. If the developer wants to turn the existing structure into a 3-unit row house, I have no complaints about that.

However, the key language and intent of the R-4 zoning code clearly describes why the permit to allow the two apartment buildings (seven units!) on 1521 Varnum Street has to be revoked and annulled:

The Zoning Code states that “the R-4 District shall not be an apartment house district “.

Further, in his letter dated August 11, 2014 addressed to the real estate attorney of the developer of 1521 Varnum Street, Zoning Administrator Matthew LeGrant states, **“The primary purpose the R-4 District shall be the stabilization of remaining one-family dwellings.”**

While these are his words, **the actions he has taken run completely contrary protecting single family dwellings.**

As we look into the correspondence and permits given related to this proposed structure, it is obvious that rules have not been followed (hence all the stop-work orders).

Sloppy work from stakeholders involved must not lead to a wrongful construction benefitting only the developer but destroying a neighborhood. For example, the extraordinary exemptions given by LeGrant were never submitted to the BZA for approval.

The current investor, who plans to flip his recent investment of a quaint row-house into two huge pop-up and pop-deep apartment buildings, will basically destroy the character of all the backyards on Webster St. and Varnum St. facing these wrongly proposed apartment buildings.

I have looked at the proposed drawings of the two big buildings. The height and the general size of these monstrosities will surely block my view (including my view of The Washington Monument!) and, steal any notion of privacy. This proposed development will negatively impact practically all factors that give the character of our neighborhood with our shared alley-way and look to all the gardens on the two blocks affected by this proposed development.

I speak on behalf of myself and all my neighbors on the block, when stating that we are appalled that such a construction permit could have been given to a two-building, seven-unit apartment building in an R-4 zone. That flies in the face of the actual language and main intentions of the R-4 zoning code while taking advantage of weak oversight and poor processes allowing for crucial permits to be given that never should have seen the light of the day.

I kindly ask you to revoke any permits immediately given for this proposed development. My neighbors and I will be pleased to support a quality future development, by law-abiding developers, adhering to the current zoning codes.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,

Henrik Weng
1520 Webster Street, NW
Washington, DC 20011