

Board of Zoning Adjustment, Office of Administrative Hearings, 441 4th Street, NW, Washington, DC.

BZA Order No. 18991

September 1, 2015

Re: Appeal for 1521 Varnum Street, NW

Appellant: John Stokes, owner of 1519 Varnum Street NW

Proponent of and Witness to Appeal: Henrik Weng (1520 Webster St.NW – 18 feet from project)

To the Board and All Concerned:

I am writing to support Mr. Stokes's Appeal to revoke the building permits for 1521 Varnum St. NW.

There is no doubt that the honorable employees and board members of the departments handling zoning and regulation in DC often have the difficult task of **finding the right balance** among property owners' matter-of-right, zoning laws and their intent - and respecting the character of neighborhoods.

This particular case comes down to the very simple fact that the permits to build a monstrous 7-unit Apartment Building in our neighborhood should never have been issued.

1. As listed in the submitted Peer Review the **building permits were issued in error** as proper procedures were not followed (misrepresentation and missing reviews of plumbing, electrical work etc). Further, as clearly listed in the Peer Review, there are simply too many flaws and illegalities in the design of the Apartment Building to allow this project to go forward.
2. The 7-unit Apartment building is not a renovation, alteration nor a conversion of the original classic Wardman rowhouse, it is a de facto raze and **a de facto New Construction** that fall under entire different rules and regulations that have not been sought in this case.
3. 1521 Varnum is an old building with high probability for **asbestos and other severe health risks** for the neighborhood during the demolition phase. There are many children in the neighborhood, and the health issues have **not been addressed** relating to the neighborhood.
4. **The permit to allow the 7-unit apartment building flies in the face of the most important intentions of the R-4 zoning code which is to keep apartment buildings out, to maintain R-4 as a single dwelling zone – and making certain that the character of the neighborhood is upheld. The issued building permits gravely compromises these three points.**

Notably, there are multiple severe and negative impacts on my family and my property in accordance with Section 101.1 of the Zoning Code.

I am the owner of 1520 Webster St. NW where I have lived for more than 10 years. My property is no more than 18 feet from the proposed new apartment-building. The proposed apartment building will, in

effect, be absolutely devastating for the character of the neighborhood and the enjoyment of my property.

Beautiful, healthy big trees will be cut down, construction air-and noise pollution will be ongoing for probably almost a year. Light, fresh air, privacy and security will surely be compromised.

The 7-unit Apartment Building, with its many windows and balconies directly facing me, will tower over my property – and, from such a short distance and from such a height, will completely deprive us from privacy.

On a side note, what I truly appreciate about the views from my property is that for half of the year I look directly at the top of the Washington Monument from my home-office. Also this view will be completely blocked by the new construction.

All the row-houses that will be directly affected by this Apartment Building are classic Wardman-style single family homes built almost a century ago. They are classic and give the area a certain character. This container-style Apartment Building completely wrecks this character by its unbelievable size in height and depth – and style which has done zero effort to respect the current character of the neighborhood.

This proposed 7-unit Apartment Building is blatant attempt to completely undercut the intent of our most important zoning regulations. This Apartment Building will bring undue concentration of population and overcrowding of land. The infrastructure of our blocks were simply not built for this kind of population density.

Importantly, it most likely will jeopardize our security in the neighborhood for several obvious reasons, but especially because of the new open connection between Varum and Webster Streets. We have earlier succeeded keeping thugs and criminals away by securing/closing their heavily used escape ways in the fences between Varum and Webster Streets.

In conclusion, I want to thank the Board for the attention to this matter. Some cases are tough to judge because they fall into a grey zone of opposing rights and interests. Others are difficult to get a handle on because opposing parties float the system with technicalities and legalities that may seem to have some credibility, but when one steps back and look at the big picture, like in this case, the outcome should be obvious: Mr. Stoke's Appeal should be upheld.

The building permits were issued in great error, the huge Apartment Building is a New Construction that falls under other regulations, and it flies right in the face of the intent of the R-4 zoning code in general and gravely compromises Section 101.1 in particular.

Sincerely,

Henrik Weng, Owner, 1520 Webster St. NW