

September 1, 2015

D.C. Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

RE: BZA CASE No. 18991 Appeal of Permit for 1521 Varnum Street, N.W.

Dear Members of the Board of Zoning Adjustment:

Thank you for the opportunity to voice my concerns. I strongly oppose the plans to convert the single-family residence at 1521 Varnum St NW, into two multi-family dwellings consisting of 7 units.

Since moving to Washington, DC in 1989, I have lived in several neighborhoods across the city. It is with deliberate purpose that my husband and I chose to buy our home in 16th Street Heights over 11 years ago. The character of the neighborhood, with its old growth trees and classic Wardman style single-family homes, is exactly what we wanted. This has been a neighborhood of single-family homes for close to 100 years, largely with the help of its R-4 zoning.

It was brought to my attention in January 2015 that the residential single-family attached row house at 1521 Varnum Street NW, would be developed into an oversized multi-family unit. The new building would rise above all existing homes on our street and almost completely fill the lot. Mr. Matthew Le Grant, DCRA Zoning Administrator (ZA), had approved a permit granting "matter of right" to construct a 3-story, 7-unit apartment building where a single-family home now resides. This proposed construction is exactly what the R-4 zoning intended to prevent. As it states "The primary purpose of the R-4 District shall be the stabilization of remaining one-family dwellings". The approval of the construction plans to not just convert an existing home, but to construct an entirely different building on the lot is a big mistake. It will pave the way for developers, whose only interest is to make as much money as possible with each property development, having no concern for the surrounding neighborhood. This will change the neighborhood for all that live here. The design of the proposed building more closely resembles a shipping container, than a Wardman style design. It will be a solid wall of construction, extending almost completely to the rear boundary of the lot, a full story above existing homes, plus a roof deck. The construction will necessitate the removal of several old growth trees and mostly likely damage the root structure of several surrounding neighbors trees, when they completely excavate the property. I do not want to sit in my backyard, in the shadow of a building approximately four times larger than the original home.

I want to thank you for taking time to examine this important matter at hand, knowing that it will set a precedent for the preservation of neighborhoods across Washington, DC in the face of massive development.

I am in full support of Mr. Stoke's Appeal to revoke the building permits for 1521 Varnum St NW and ask that you also support his appeal.

Sincerely,

Mickelle Rodriguez
1507 Varnum Street, NW
Washington, DC 20011