

September 21, 2015

Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th street, NW
Washington, DC 2001

Re: BZA case 18991- Varnum Street

Dear Commissioners

Through this letter, I would like to strongly support the appeal of ANC 4C to revoke the permit as it was issued in error.

The developer intends to convert a one family row dwelling into a three-unit apartment building consisting of a basement, first floor and second floor by constructing a rear two story addition measuring 45.5 feet long which will span the entire width of the lot and will more than double the footprint and lot occupancy of the existing row dwelling.

The footprint of the proposed apartment building will increase the lot occupancy to 61.9 percent of the lot which will negatively and adversely affect the neighboring properties and the neighborhood. While such deviation in itself is allowable to be granted by the Zoning Administrator, this cannot be done without taking into account the other zoning regulations which are in force. Most notably, 101.1 stipulates that undue concentration of population and overcrowding of lots shall be avoided and the Zoning Regulations clearly specify that the primary purpose of the R4 zone is "the stabilization of remaining one-family dwellings".

As the Office of Planning (OP) stated in it Memorandum to the Zoning Commission (for ZC 14-11) on June 24, 2014: "OP is seeing a trend across the city in the conversions of buildings in the R-4 [zone] both by right, and through variance requests.... The conversion provision has been applied in a variety of ways.... This has had the effect of putting strong upward price pressures on single family housing stock with 3 or more bedrooms, pricing them out of the range of many families in many R-4 zoned areas."

Costs of living for families in Washington, DC is now among the highest in the US and the failure of the zoning administrator to properly apply the zoning regulations with the purpose of stabilizing remaining one-family dwellings in favor of private profits of out-of-town developers is a key reason for this trend. Deviations should be allowed only with careful analysis, justification and not at the detriment of the other regulations in force, all of which did not occur in this permit approval process. The permit should be revoked.

Yours sincerely


Katelijn van den Berg, Ward 5 (also being blighted by developers)

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.19067
EXHIBIT NO.21