

Letter in Support of BZA Appeal No. 19106 to Board of Zoning Adjustment

Re: *Appeal of ANC 5E, Katelijn van den Berg, Richard A. Seutter, Jr., and Susan T. Seutter, regarding DCRA's issuance of Building Permit Nos. B1505056 and B1510351 at 67 V Street NW*

Dear Members of the Board,

I am writing to express my strong support for the BZA appeal of ANC5E and Katelijn van den Berg, Richard A. Seutter Jr., and Susan T. Seutter. I implore you to revoke the original permit in light of the numerous technical errors made by the Zoning Administrator in granting the permits, the suspect timing of the issuance of the original permit, and the negative impact this project is having and will continue to have on neighbors and the historic and aesthetic integrity of the Bloomingdale neighborhood – one of Washington DC's most iconic architectural treasures.

The original permit and ancillary permit for the conversion of 67 V street NW into a four-story, three-unit apartment building plus roof deck are flatly inconsistent with several sections of the District's Zoning Regulations. These include the provisions on the minimum square footage of the closed court, minimum coverage of the trellis to constitute a “roof,” and the chimney height and distance from a neighboring structure.

Equally concerning is the timing of the issuance of the original permit on June 19, 2015, just one week before new zoning regulations that would have prohibited the scale and scope of this project went into effect. In light of the fact that an ancillary permit was required on July 21, 2015 to correct numerous errors in the original request, the approval of the original permit on June 19 gives the unmistakable impression that the approval was rushed through to avoid review under the new zoning regulations. The Zoning Commission voted for the near-immediate implementation of the new Zoning Regulations in order to save neighborhoods from the detrimental effects of the very type of construction at issue in this case, which at that time was rapidly proliferating.

Finally, the footprint of the completed building will be double that of the original single-family home, and is an eyesore in our neighborhood, as can be seen in photos submitted by others. Pursuant to the Comprehensive Plan, neighborhood character must be protected in areas such as the R-4 zone consisting primarily of row house dwellings, which this project has utterly failed to do. This has adversely affected the value of neighboring homes and their owners' enjoyment of their property. Indeed, the only party that stands to gain by allowing the original permit to stand is the developer, who does not live in Washington DC and has admitted to having no interest in the well-being or integrity of our community.

This process has served to further undermine the reputation of DCRA. I am extremely disturbed by the lack of careful scrutiny demonstrated by DCRA – for instance, in approving plans that had already been marked “VOID” by the developer, as well as by the many contradictory and illogical arguments that have been made by DCRA over the past several months to justify the original permit. DCRA and developers must be held accountable to the law on the same terms as regular homeowners.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Natalya Scimeca', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Natalya Scimeca
53 Street NW Washington DC