

February 28, 2017

RE: Letter in Opposition to Variances/Special Exceptions  
Case no. 19452

Dear members of the Board of Zoning Adjustment,

I have been a resident of the ANC 5B03 community for 23 years. I oppose the zoning variances proposed for a homeless shelter at 1700 Rhode Island Ave., NE. Approval of this number of variances, and the extraordinary magnitude of the requested modifications requested in the DGS application, would undermine the purpose of a zoning scheme, destroy the character of the neighborhood, and be extremely detrimental to those who live within 2 blocks of 1700 Rhode Island Ave. Just as important, the proposed shelter would not serve the needs of its own residents - the proposed shelter lacks the facilities which the city deems necessary to help these young families to escape homelessness, such as on-site day care, adequate play facilities for children, and recreational areas for the adult residents.

The plan reflects a hasty, poorly thought out application. The residents of DC, and the homeless, deserve far better for an expenditure of at least ten million taxpayer dollars.

The proposal would increase the permissible zoned height of the building by 40 per cent. This huge exemption would create a future eyesore for generations, as it towers over the neighborhood. The bulky, massive, Soviet style design will overwhelm the surrounding community. The Commission on Fine Arts described a multitude of problems with the design, both in form and function, in its February 24, 2017, letter to the DC Department of General Services (Exhibit 106).

DC government is asking for 7 exceptions/variances for homeless people to live in a dysfunctional, ugly facility, and wants the community to cope with the fallout of this poor proposal. This is a lose-lose proposition.

There are other, more appropriate sites for a shelter in ward 5, including 326 R St, NE, which is a much larger facility. Since naming 1700 Rhode Island Ave, NE, as the proposed shelter location, DC government has stated that it would use the 326 R St, NE, location for temporary administration offices for the Martin Luther King Library. Of course, the shelter is more important and permanent than the library's temporary administrative offices, and should override any plans for a temporary office which could be placed anywhere in DC.

I urge you to deny the variances and/or special exceptions, and require the city to send this proposal back to reconfigure the proposed monstrosity or, in the alternative, find another location which is functional for both residents of the shelter and the community.

Yours,

Joanne Slaight  
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Board of Zoning Adjustment  
District of Columbia  
CASE NO.19452  
EXHIBIT NO.154