

# 1926 15th Street SE Response to BZA Application 19572

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November 10, 2017

Dorcas D. Agyei  
1926 15<sup>th</sup> Street SE  
Washington, D.C. 20020

Board of Zoning Adjustment  
441 4<sup>th</sup> Street NW  
Suite 200S  
Washington, DC 20001

SUBJECT: Opposition Letter to BZA 19572 Application of SIM Development, LLC

My name is Dorcas Agyei. I am the homeowner and resident of 1926 15<sup>th</sup> Street SE. I live less than 150 feet from the proposed development site 1916 15<sup>th</sup> Street SE, Square 5766, Lot 0845, (“1916”). 1916 is an abandoned building that intersects the corner of Good Hope Road and 15th Street SE. This building had been abandoned since my tenure on 15<sup>th</sup> Street; I moved into my home on June 4, 2004.

1916 borders my block which is considered Historic Anacostia. Ketcham Elementary School is on one side of 15th Street SE and 1916 is on the other side. The block of 15<sup>th</sup> Street SE (beginning at the intersection of Good Hope Road SE & 15<sup>th</sup> Street SE and ending at the intersection of 15<sup>th</sup> Street SE & U Street SE) is a short block consisting of 1916 then 1920 (separated by an ally), 1922, 1924 and 1926 (my home)- currently the end unit; however, there is a proposed new row house in the beginning stages of development planning: its address will be 1928.

To give some background, I first learned about the BZA 19572 proposed development via a letter sent by the Board of Zoning dated August 24, 2017 that I received early September 2017. SIM Development, LLC (“SIM”) attended the October 3, 2017 ANC meeting and gave an ad hoc 10 minute speech about its proposed development. There was no PowerPoint presentation or visual graphics or descriptive material given to the community audience in attendance by SIM’s. However, a representative for SIM’s did pass around an oversized design drawing. I have attached a copy of the picture I took of that drawing.

The “presentation” created more questions than it answered. The audience and I had concerns about the scope of the SIM’s development- why were the additional two floors needed? SIM’s desire to add two additional stories and 16 additional residential-rental units; plus talks of a penthouse floor with the description of the building being 60 feet (potentially being taller than Ketcham Elementary School) sent the community audience members into an uproar. I have attached a news release from local reporter John H. Muller that describes the accounts of October 3, 2017 ANC meeting.

I still have unanswered questions about how SIM’s proposed development will affect the fabric of Historic Anacostia. SIM’s current proposed development design appears to overshadow the existing aesthetics of our neighborhood homes and makes the SIM’s building height taller than Ketcham Elementary School. The ANC Commissioners and the community members asked SIM’s to return to the ANC meeting hall the following month (November 7, 2017) to provide more feedback and information to the Community about this project. SIM’s told the ANC Commissioners and community audience members that it would commission a traffic survey and report the findings at the next ANC meeting (November 7, 2017) to ANC Commissioners and the community members **This was not done.**

Instead SIM’s agent Phinis Jones handed stapled handouts to the ANC Commissioners (I was later told that the handouts, in fact, were the findings of the traffic survey) five minutes before the ANC Chairman Troy Donté

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Prestwood gestured ANC Commissioner Travon Hawkins to introduce the SIM's BZA case up for vote. The traffic survey was never discussed with the community audience members nor were we provided with any updates re: the BZA proposal during the November 7, 2017 ANC meeting. The ANC Commissioners and Chairman never read the traffic survey prior to the vote to support SIM's building proposal and parking variance request.

Because of this corruption, an argument erupted between Commissioner Holly Muhammad and ANC Chairman Troy Donté Prestwood. Despite Commissioner Holly Muhammad protests, ANC Chairman Troy Donté Prestwood moved the BZA case matter forward and Commissioner Travon Hawkins brought the BZA proposal 19572 up for a vote of approval.

Led by the ANC three: (Chairman Troy Donté Prestwood, Commissioner Travon Hawkins, and Commissioner T'Chaka Sapp), these three ANC members gave a rubber-stamped vote approving support for SIM's 60 foot building proposal and parking variance. The ANC Commissioners and ANC Chairman chose to blindly vote on the SIM's BZA proposal without reviewing newly provided facts.

Commissioners Holly Muhammad and Greta J. Fuller were the only Commissioners that voted against the BZA project 19572 as currently proposed. Please note: the only reason Commissioner Barbara J. Clark voted for the BZA proposal was she feared that a no vote would end all development of 1916. She expressed this thought in subsequent conversations with both Commissioners Holly Muhammad and Greta J. Fuller when question about her favorable vote for the BZA proposal. Commissioner Holly Muhammad tried to address the community audience and explain to them what just happened, but there was too much confusion in the ANC proceeding for many audience members to grasp the fiduciary breach that was just committed by their elected ANC Chairman and Commissioners.

It is my belief that Commissioner Travon Hawkins was coached to bring the BZA Case No. 19572: 1916 15<sup>th</sup> Street, SE (Square 5766, Lot 0845) as listed on the ANC agenda. I have attached a copy the ANC agenda for Tuesday, November 7, 2017 for your review. You will notice that all of the other scheduled commission votes before the ANCs had summary-blurs describing the nature and reason for the vote. The BZA Case 19572 was the exception; there was no summary-blur for this vote. Neither Commissioner Travon Hawkins nor ANC Chairman Troy Donté Prestwood properly provide the audience (the Community) a summary or explained to the audience members what the ANC Commissioners were voting for in the matter of the BZA Case No. 19572 vote.

I've have potential first-hand evidence that Commissioner Travon Hawkins was coached on how to bring the BZA vote prior to the start of the ANC meeting. I arrived early to the ANC meeting and at approximately 6:47pm. I saw and heard the current ANC Chairman Troy Donté Prestwood, in conversation with Commissioner Travon Hawkins before the meeting. ANC Chairman Troy Donté Prestwood was more so instructing rather than speaking with Commissioner Travon Hawkins. ANC Chairman Troy Donté Prestwood was telling Commissioner Travon Hawkins how ANC Chairman Troy Donté Prestwood would introduce the building project and the ways that Commissioner Travon Hawkins could respond. Both Commissioner Travon Hawkins and ANC Chairman Troy Donté Prestwood saw me watching and listening to them. At one point, Commissioner Travon Hawkins put his hand over his mouth so that I could not read his lips as he spoke to Troy. **It is important for the Zoning Board to know that the ANC vote to support the current building design of BZA application 19572 with parking variance was not the will of the immediate and most impacted ward 8 residents (1920, 1922, 1924 1926 15<sup>th</sup> Street SE).**

My neighbors (1920 & 1922) and I met with SIM's agent Phinis Jones and the ANC for 8A05 who is Commissioner Travon Hawkins on October 9, 2017 starting at approximately 5pm. It was an impromptu meeting organized by Commissioner Travon Hawkins at the request of SIM's agent Mr. Phinis Jones. I only stayed for about 25-minutes but my neighbors stayed longer. Mr. Phinis Jones (agent for SIM's) and ANC Commissioner Travon Hawkins were fully aware of the concerns and objections we had to BZA application 19572 based on that

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October 9, 2017 meeting. Please note: none of the surrounding neighbors on our side of the 15<sup>th</sup> Street SE block signed the SIM's 1916 petition for development as currently proposed.

- Resident and homeowner of 1920 (the closest home to 1916) expressed concerns about the proposed building height of 1916, parking, and rodent abatement assurances during on the meeting of October 9, 2017. In addition, after I informed her that the ANC Commissioners were planning on voting for the parking variance, she testified before the ANC Chairman and other ANC Commissioners in attendance of the November 7, 2017 meeting. She gave passionate testimony about her life on 15<sup>th</sup> Street SE as a pioneering resident. She was the first resident to reclaim the then abandoned block of 15<sup>th</sup> Street SE. She has been on 15<sup>th</sup> Street SE since October 2003.
- Resident and homeowner of 1922 spoke to SIM's agent Phinis Jones and ANC Commissioner of 8A05 about her concerns with the proposed building height and parking limitations on our street during the October 9, 2017 meeting. In addition, she had also contacted this Commissioner prior to the November 7, 2017, ANC meeting and never got any responses to her request for feedback and information.
- Resident and homeowner of 1924 was not able to attend the October 9, 2017 meeting but her as expressed concerns about the proposed building scope and concerns about parking.
- I, resident and homeowner of 1926, have expressed my concerns about the building dimensions and parking at the ANC's October 3, 2017 meeting (when SIM's presented its 1916 development proposal to the ANC and Community). I, again, expressed my concerns to Commissioner Travon Hawkins on October 9, 2017 during the group meeting with the Commissioner Travon Hawkins, Phinis Jones and my neighbors. I presented Travon with pictures showing him the current congested parking on 15th street. I also voiced my concerns at the November 7, 2017, ANC meeting along with my neighbor at 1920 to no avail.

It was quite the House of Cards experience to watch the ANC Commissioner who is supposed to have a fiduciary duty to his constituents (the homeowners and residents of Historic Anacostia; especially those immediately impacted by the 1916 project) vote against our interests. I sat in the front-row with my neighbor in amazement as I watched our interests in get sideswiped during the ANC's meeting last Tuesday, November 7, 2017 right in front of our faces, when Travon voted to approve the parking variance for SIM despite the fact that he verbally told us he wouldn't vote for the project as is or the parking variance on October 9, 2017.

I sat in the front row during the November 7, 2017 ANC meeting watching rouge Commissioner Travon Hawkins voted against the interests of me and my neighbors on a matter that impacts us directly. Commissioners Hawkins's vote of approval was a direct contradiction to the verbal compromise he gave me and my neighbors on October 9, 2017 that he would not vote for the SIM's proposal as is.

It is not a matter of being opposed to the development of abandoned building 1916; it is the point and principle of SIM's respecting and hearing the voices and concerns of the Community, especially the residents of Historic Anacostia. SIM's has currently made *no* effort to create a harmonic integration between its current building design for 1916 and the existing historic aesthetics of the neighboring homes of Historic Anacostia on 15<sup>th</sup> Street SE. SIM's has failed to respect the individuals and families that have lived in this neighborhood before SIM's interest in building 1916. DESPITE the abandonment, blight, and violence, the residents of Historic Anacostia on 15<sup>th</sup> Street SE were here: we did not flee; we stayed and lived. Anacostia is changing, and we SHOULD have a voice in that change. **The ANC Commissioners were supposed to represent us with their votes and that did not happen specifically with Commissioner Travon Hawkins's vote.**

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Please note: the November 7, 2017 ANC vote supporting the current application of BZA 19572 did not represent the thoughts and views of me or my neighbors. The ANC vote that happened November 7<sup>th</sup> did not respect or represent the homeowners and residents of 15th Street SE; we are the closest to 1916.

Travon Hawkins is a first-term young and inexperienced (very young, early 20s) ANC. It is my belief that *already* (less than a year into his term) Commissioner Travon Hawkins has already become a compromised, puppet for the more senior leadership of the ANC. Commissioner Travon Hawkins does not represent his constituents; he did not represent his constituents with his November 7, 2017 ANC vote supporting the current application of BZA 19572. In the aftermath of November 7, 2017 voting debacle, it has come to my attention that Commissioner Travon Hawkins, in fact, may be a former employee of SIM's agent Phinis Jones. Upon learning this, I did quick Google/Yahoo searches on Phinis Jones and came across some articles that make me further question the character of SIM's agent Phinis Jones.

Based on how quickly and sloppily the ANC voted to support BZA application 19572, I question if there exists an relationship of impropriety between Mr. Phinis Jones and Commissioner Travon Hawkins or among Mr. Phinis Jones and any of the current ANC Commissioners or ANC Chairman that voted in favor of the SIM's proposal at the November 7, 2017 ANC meeting. See links to articles:

<http://www.capitalcommunitynews.com/content/ag-karl-racine-sues-politically-connected-congress-heights-developer>  
<https://www.washingtoncitypaper.com/news/loose-lips/article/20847456/the-loosies-the-worst-of-dc-politics-in-2016>  
[https://dme.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/dhcd/service\\_content/attachments/Certified%20List%20of%20CHDOs.pdf](https://dme.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/dhcd/service_content/attachments/Certified%20List%20of%20CHDOs.pdf)  
<http://www.capitalcommunitynews.com/content/ag-karl-racine-sues-politically-connected-congress-heights-developer>  
<http://www.districtdig.com/2016/05/24/evergreen-the-ward-8-fiefdom-of-laruby-may-and-friends>

**I am asking the Zoning Board to reject the current building designs proposed in SIM's BZA 19572 application for 1916.**

**I am asking the Zoning Board to reject SIM's request for a parking variance and would greatly appreciate if the Zoning Board would instruct SIM's to provide the 15<sup>th</sup> Street SE residents with copies of its traffic survey (none of the neighborhoods have received this).**

**Finally, I am asking the Zoning Board to investigate whether Mr. Phinis Jones has ever been an employer or supervisor of Commissioner Travon Hawkins.**

Sincerely,

Dorcas D. Agyei  
DC Historic Homeowner/ANC 8A05 Constituent



Board

**Advisory Neighborhood Commission 8A Monthly Meeting**  
**Tuesday, November 7, 2017 | 7PM**

Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) Housing Resource Center  
1800 Martin Luther King, Jr Ave. SE (Corner of MLK and Good Hope Road)  
Washington, DC 20020

[www.ANC8ADC.org](http://www.ANC8ADC.org)

Call to Order

Roll Call

Approval of Agenda

Reading and Accepting of Minutes

Scheduled Commission Votes:

- 2018 Meeting Dates
- Fiscal Year 2018 Budget
- Z.C. Case No. 16-29 - Columbian Quarter - Approval of a First-Stage Planned Unit Development and Zoning Map Amendment for Lots 97, 1025-1031, 1036, and 1037 in Square 5860 and Lot 91 in Square 5861
- SO Application Number I6-27269 – Columbian Quarter First-Stage PUD Application of Poplar Point RBBR, LLC for the Proposed Closing of a Public Alley in Square 5680 – Ward 8
- Bread for the City Public Space Committee Curbcut Application (Tracking number 222354) at 1710 Good Hope Road S.E.
- BZA Case No. 19572: 1916 15th Street, SE (Square 5766, Lot 0845)
- Support for PR22-455 MLK Gateway Surplus Declaration and Approval Resolution of 2017 and PR22-456 MLK Gateway Disposition Approval Resolution of 2017

**Public Safety Update:**

- MPD 7<sup>th</sup> District/6<sup>th</sup> District

**Community Presentations:**

- Legislative Update from the DC Council  
SPEAKER: **Anita Bonds, Councilmember, District of Columbia City Council**
- Agency Update from the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Greater Economic Development  
SPEAKER: **Courtney Snowden, Deputy Mayor, Greater Economic Development**

▪ **Standing Updates**

▪ **Announcements**

▪ **Adjournment**

8A01: Holly Muhammad | 8A02: Barbara Clark | 8A03: Terri Acker — **Treasurer**  
8A04: Troy Donté Prestwood — **Chair** | 8A05: Travon Hawkins | 8A06: Greta Fuller — **Secretary**  
8A07: T'Chaka Sapp — **Vice Chair**

----- Forwarded Message -----

**From:** sewadee <sewadee@gmail.com>

**To:** dee\_agyei@yahoo.com

**Sent:** Friday, November 10, 2017 5:10 PM

**Subject:** Fwd: Fwd: ANC 8A Street Reporter's Notebook (Tuesday, Oct. 3, 2017)

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** Marcia Parkes <[anacostiamarci@verizon.net](mailto:anacostiamarci@verizon.net)>

**Date:** Wed, Oct 4, 2017 at 7:37 PM

**Subject:** RE: Fwd: ANC 8A Street Reporter's Notebook (Tuesday, Oct. 3, 2017)

**To:** [tashanicole80@gmail.com](mailto:tashanicole80@gmail.com), [historic-anacostia@googlegroups.com](mailto:historic-anacostia@googlegroups.com)

So they are scheduled to go before Zoning next Wednesday, and they are only just coming before the ANC????

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On Wednesday, October 4, 2017 Tasha G <[tashanicole80@gmail.com](mailto:tashanicole80@gmail.com)> wrote:

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** "John H. Muller" <[jmuller.washingtonsyndicate@gmail.com](mailto:jmuller.washingtonsyndicate@gmail.com)>

**Date:** October 4, 2017 at 2:12:53 PM EDT

**To:** Tasha G <[TashaNicole80@gmail.com](mailto:TashaNicole80@gmail.com)>

**Subject:** ANC 8A Street Reporter's Notebook (Tuesday, Oct. 3, 2017)

ANC 8A Street Reporter's Notebook.

At last night's ANC 8A meeting a presentation was made by a group applying to BZA for the old laundromat at 15th & Good Hope Road.

The group had no PowerPoint, no handouts, no easel and placards. Nothing to show anyone.

ANC Commissioners acted as though they had never heard of the group before and for a number of minutes the presenting group and ANCs spoke before a filled meeting room of 60 - 70 people.

Audience opposition was near uniform which was as much a result of what little was communicated as with how it was communicated.

Eventually an over-sized book with the architectural designs for the two-story addition and a penthouse was passed around. The plans have been available online for months.

In my hand was the BZA schedule for Oct. 11. This group was schedule for second. I passed the paperwork to [Commissioner Troy Donté Prestwood](#) and told him, "This is what is important."

The information was not shared by the group or ANCs at any time of the presentation.

I posed a question, asking the group were they on the BZA schedule for Oct. 11. They said they asked for a continuance to Oct. 18. I asked again, saying the paperwork printed that day indicated they were on for Oct. 11. They insisted Oct. 18.

At the end of the meeting a number of people approached me and asked to share the information about the upcoming hearing.

I've been reporting on community meetings in Ana since 2009. Very little has changed. In other areas of the city, across the bridge, I do not think this would be accepted.

Mrs. Dickerson of W Street asked a question towards the end of the meeting, asking what are the ANCs for if they can't communicate information to residents?

This is what happened at the meeting as I saw, heard and understand it.

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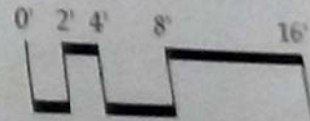
John Muller

202.236.3413

Capital Community News | Greater Greater Washington | Washington Syndicate

[Frederick Douglass in Washington, D.C.: The Lion of Anacostia](#) [The History Press, 2012] Winner of 2013 DC READS

[Mark Twain in Washington, D.C.: The Adventures of a Capital Correspondent](#) [The History Press, 2013]



ELEVATION.



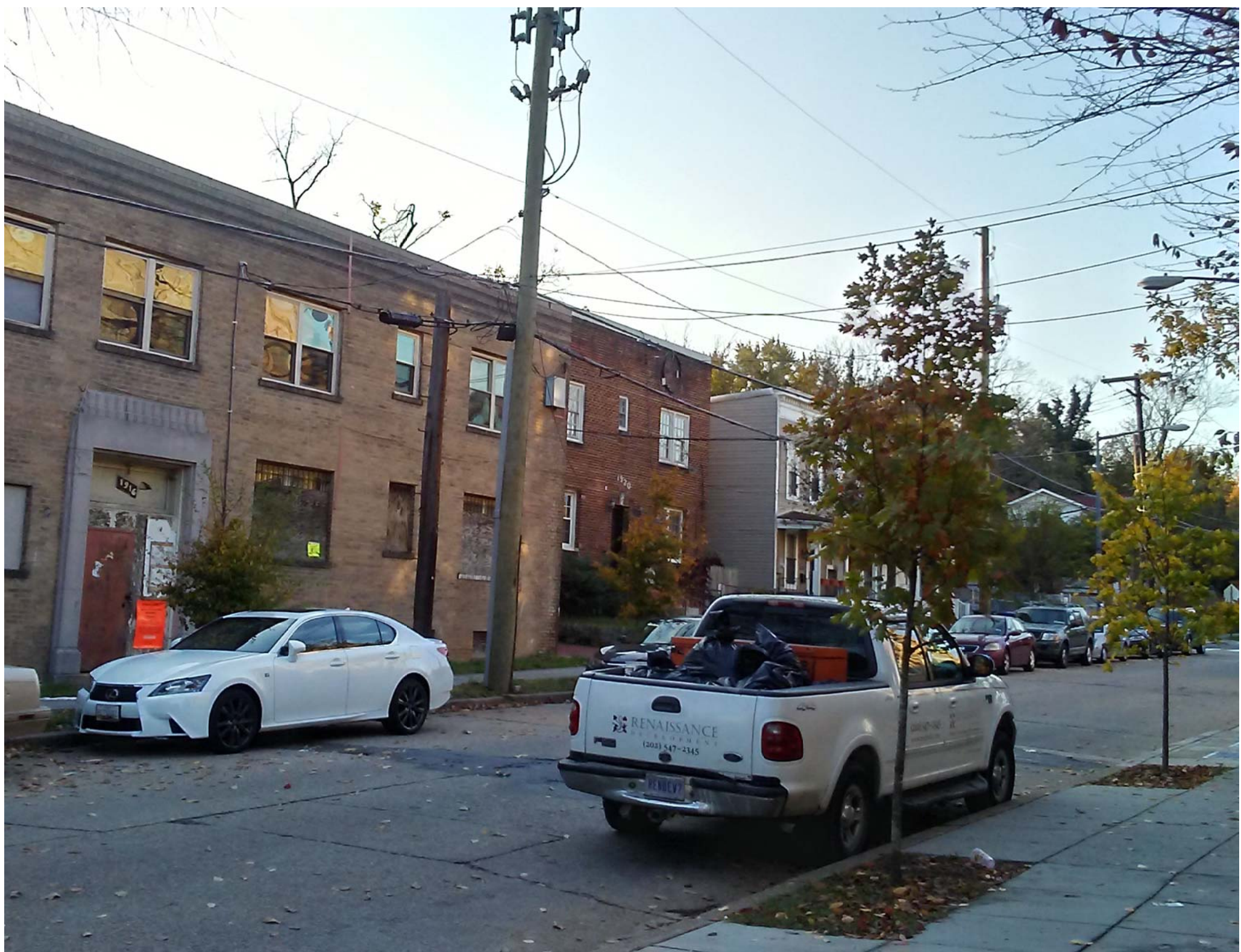


Historic District



1920









926











FD-8

GT



48006MO

ML 320



NO TRESPASSING  
OR RAMPING

EXPERIMENTAL  
SCIENCE





STOP

EK-4941











Historic District



GOD'S DELIVERANCE CENTER  
Pastors: H. Ashby  
S. McDowell

DC LAW  
STOP  
FOR  
PEDESTRIANS

2  
NO PARKING  
EXCEPT FOR  
LOADING AND UNLOADING  
PASSENGERS

Lamp post

Street sign



Good Hope Rd  
1500

Good Hope Rd  
1500

15th St  
1900





1976

1979

RENAISSANCE  
MANAGEMENT  
(202) 547-2345



Providence Historic District



