



Sheridan-Kalorama Historical Association, Inc.  
2330 California St. NW  
Washington, D.C. 20008

January 31, 2018

Mr. Frederick L. Hill, Chairperson  
District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment  
441 4<sup>th</sup> Street NW Suite 210S  
Washington, DC 20001

**RE: BZA # 19659 Zone District R-3  
Square 2531 Lot 0049  
2118 Leroy Place NW**

Dear Chairperson Hill and Honorable Members of the Board:

My name is Sally Berk. I have a graduate degree in historic preservation and have been a preservation activist in Washington for more than three decades, testifying before many boards, but most notably in this case, the National Capital Planning Commission, the Zoning Commission, and the Board of Zoning Adjustment. Today, I'm testifying on behalf of the Sheridan-Kalorama Historical Association ("SKHA"), of which I'm secretary. With me is the executive committee: Kindy French, president; Donna Hays, vice-president, and Holly Sukenik, treasurer.

SKHA has been granted party status in opposition to this case. Founded in 1987 to survey, research, and produce a nomination to create the historic district, SKHA has been an active proponent for preserving the residential character of the district for thirty years. Research done in preparation for the historic district nomination revealed what was always obvious, that the district is significant as a residential one. This fact was certified by the National Register of Historic Sites 1989 designation, which states "Beginning with the construction of the original Kalorama estate in the middle of the 18th century, and continuing through World War II, and even to the present, the neighborhood has been a quiet residential enclave." The importance of the district's history was noted in the BZA Order for case 17446, which stated that the SKHA was granted party status separately from SKNC because it brings "a more historic-preservation orientation" analysis and argument to the case.

The SKHA is comprised of residents who work closely with the Historic Preservation Office (HPO) to maintain the residential character of the district. In addition, SKHA was granted party status in at least three previous cases before the Board of Zoning Adjustment (BZA). The SKHA has also worked with the Foreign Missions Board of Zoning Adjustment and supported the Sheridan-Kalorama Foreign Missions Task Force, which succeeded in reducing the Foreign Missions Overlay in our district, thus contributing to the attraction of our neighborhood as a residential one. In fact, the percentage of residential use has grown significantly over the years. When my family moved to S-K in 1980, there were four children residing on our street – two were ours. Now there are 30 children. This increase is representative of the entire district. With these families come volunteers willing to participate in the creation, or continuance, of more than a half-dozen community-oriented organizations. Among them are our organization SKHA, the Sheridan-Kalorama Neighborhood Council, the Call Box Project (image), Restore Mass Ave (image), the Spanish Steps Preservation Project (image), the Belmont Park Road DC Assn, and the wildly successful Friends of Mitchell Park (image). If yet another house goes to a business instead of residents, we are denied the people who would participate in these organizations.

SKHA acknowledges that the FMSB has proposed no exterior changes to the property. Additionally, they have proffered conditions and mitigations to the use of the property. But many of these conditions are contrary to, rather than supportive, of a residential district. To have a building vacant and partially dark during all but business hours, i.e. dark in the evenings and on weekends, detracts from the residential character, as well as safety, of the street. It removes a building that, if inhabited, could provide eyes on the street.

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EXHIBIT NO.127

Based on its extensive experience, SKHA's concern about the application of the Federation of State Medical Boards is that the proposed use of 2118 Leroy Place as offices would not only permanently remove a home from residential use, but would set a dangerous precedent for more conversion of residential properties into office use. Such actions are contrary to the purposes of the historic district designation, the neighborhood's R-3 zoning – as you have heard from SKNC and its expert – as well as the Comprehensive Plan for the District of Columbia. The plan designates the area of the subject property as one that should remain residential. This is accomplished by the property being identified in a "Neighborhood Conservation Area" in the Comprehensive Plan's Generalized Policy Map. The guiding philosophy in "Neighborhood Conservation Areas" is to *conserve* and enhance established residential neighborhoods.

Further, the Comprehensive Plan's Future Land Use Map designates the property as "Moderate Density Residential," a use that prohibits office uses. Finally, the Comprehensive Plan's Guiding Growth and Neighborhood Conservation Policies and Actions encourage the maintenance and enhancement of historically residential neighborhoods. Approving the Applicant's application for an office use at 2118 Leroy Place would be directly contrary to these explicit and important objectives.

The SKHA realizes that this grand residential property has not been used as a residence since the 1940's, and so the argument might be made that this property is not a loss of residential stock. However, more than a dozen large houses in our neighborhood, which had been converted to non-residential use, have been converted, once again, to residential use. (list attached). The conversion of the Textile Museum, 2320 S Street, back to residential use makes it clear that no assumptions can be made about the market for large properties.

Simply because of Sheridan-Kalorama's proximity to Connecticut Avenue's business zone, being equidistant to Metro stations, and on several bus lines, our district is perceived as a desirable while less-expensive location for businesses than is the avenue. But business operating hours, pedestrian and vehicular traffic, and deliveries are not in harmony with our neighborhood. In light of our decades of experience, SKHA adamantly believes that allowing an office use in our neighborhood will undermine the Comprehensive Plan and erode the significance of the historic district.

At a recent forum, Councilmember Anita Bonds, who is well-respected for her efforts to provide adequate housing in Washington, stated, "As much as possible, we should try to preserve our residential neighborhoods." Approval of the FMSB application would be contrary to such a goal. Therefore, SKHA respectfully requests that the Board deny this application. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

Sally Berk, Secretary  
Sheridan-Kalorama Historic District







A GRAND AVENUE REVIVAL

*Massachusetts Avenue*  
LANDSCAPE HISTORY AND DESIGN GUIDE

BY DEBORAH SHAPLEY FOR RESTORE MASS AVE





**Sheridan-Kalorama properties that have been reconverted to residential use from a prior conversion to non-residential use.**

**Note:** All of the properties below required total renovations, much less than would be needed at 2118. The Portugal property on Tracy Place had holes in the roof open to the sky. Sill it sold quickly once it got to the market after several years of vacancy.

In addition, the governments of Malaysia and Egypt have recently converted their former offices at 1900 24th St. and 2308 Tracy Place to single family residences for their diplomats.

Address	Seller	Prior Use	Current use
2310 Tracy Pl.	Govt. of Portugal	Offices	Single Family Residence
2121 R St.	Mariana Islands	Offices	Single Family Residence
1618 22nd St.	Central African Republic	Offices	Single Family Residence
2136 Bancroft Place*	Kingsbury School	Classrooms	Single Family Residence
2138 Bancroft Place*	Kingsbury School	Classrooms	Single Family Residence
2107 Wyoming Ave*	Field School	Classrooms	Single Family Residence
2126 Wyoming Ave*	Field School	Classrooms	Single Family Residence
1823 Phelps Pl.* (corner of Leroy & Phelps)	U.S. Govt	Surveillance	Single Family Residence
1809 Phelps Pl.	Kingsbury School	Classrooms	Single Family Residence
2320 S St.**	Textile Museum	Galleries	Being Renovated as Single Family Residence

**Footnotes**

\* All properties in the first block west of Connecticut, like 2118 Leroy.

\*\* Bezos Property, which makes clear that no assumptions may be made about the lack of a market for large properties.