

Testimony of Ellen M. McCarthy

BZA Case No. 19659 of The Federation of State Medical Boards of the United States, Inc.

2118 Leroy Place NW, N.W.; Square 2531, Lot 49

January 31, 2018

Good Afternoon, Chairman Hill and members of the Board. My name is Ellen McCarthy. I am testifying today as an expert in zoning and land use; as you can see from the resume submitted earlier, I have more than forty years of experience in urban planning, with thirty years in planning and zoning in Washington, DC. I currently am an adjunct professor in the Masters in Urban Planning program at Georgetown University, teaching a number of courses, including Zoning and Land Use Controls.

This case involves a complicated zoning history and a complex set of issues with respect to the special exception that is the subject of this case. My testimony will focus on three main issues:

1. The residential context of the site, including the zone plan and its zoning history, which are directly relevant to the threat posed to the character of the community by the proposed office conversion.
2. The application for the Special Exception in this case is inconsistent with the intent of the provision in the Zoning Regulations which the applicant is trying to take advantage of – it was intended to be used to prevent vacancy in large residential buildings and was deliberately limited to nonprofit offices.
3. The harm that will be caused to the integrity of the zone plan and the residential character of Sheridan-Kalorama if this conversions to a trade association office is permitted

Site Context

Sheridan-Kalorama is a stable, low-density single-family neighborhood. First, it is important to understand the site context. This site is in a low-density, single-family residential zone, in a leafy, quiet neighborhood of large, attractive and well-kept homes that is a designated historic district.

The Comprehensive Plan addressed the importance of conserving the residential character of neighborhoods like Sheridan-Kalorama:

Policies and Actions NNW-1 General Policies

NNW-1.1 Guiding Growth and Neighborhood Conservation 2108

The following general policies and actions should guide growth and neighborhood conservation decisions in Near Northwest. These policies and actions should be considered in tandem with those in the citywide elements of the Comprehensive Plan.
2108.1

Policy NNW-1.1.1: Residential Neighborhoods

Maintain and enhance the historic, architecturally distinctive mixed density character of Near Northwest residential neighborhoods, including Burleith, Georgetown, Foggy Bottom, Dupont Circle, **Sheridan-Kalorama**, Logan Circle, Mount Vernon Square, and Shaw. Ensure that infill development within these areas is architecturally compatible with its surroundings and positively contributes to the identity and quality of each neighborhood. 2108.2

Policy LU-2.1.5: Conservation of Single Family Neighborhoods

Protect and conserve the District's stable, low density neighborhoods and ensure that their zoning reflects their established low density character. [*Emphasis added*]

The Plan also embraced a policy to protect housing from conversion to offices:

Policy NNW-1.1.7: Loss of Housing

Strongly discourage the demolition of viable housing or the **conversion of occupied housing units to non-residential uses such as medical offices, hotels, and institutions. Maintain zoning regulations that limit the encroachment of non-residential uses into Near Northwest neighborhoods**, particularly around the new Convention Center, along the west side of Connecticut Avenue, and in Foggy Bottom. 2108.8 [*Emphasis added*]

The residential character of the neighborhood has long been under threat because Massachusetts Avenue, Embassy Row, borders one side, and because many foreign countries were attracted to the area for locating their new chanceries because of the desirability of the neighborhood and presence of other foreign missions. The passage of the Foreign Missions Act by Congress in 1982 put the neighborhood in the crosshairs of demand for diplomatic facilities, and the concomitant adoption of the Diplomatic Overlay Zone made it very difficult to oppose the conversion of residential properties for chancery office use.

The Comprehensive Plan in 2006 highlighted the problem. It noted, in the Near Northwest Element, on page 21-10:

b. Given the location of Near Northwest adjacent to Central Washington, the encroachment of offices, hotels, and other commercial uses has been an issue for many years. During the 1950s and 1960s, much of Downtown's expansion occurred in the area just south of Dupont Circle. Today, zoning regulations and historic districts limit commercial encroachment into Near Northwest neighborhoods. However, the conversion of housing to non-residential uses continues to be an issue. **In Sheridan-Kalorama, there continue to be concerns about homes being turned into foreign chanceries, with attendant impacts on parking, upkeep, and security.**

d. **The process of creating, administering, and enforcing zoning regulations, including the granting of variances and zoning changes, needs to be refined and consistently applied. Several meeting participants singled out the granting of large numbers of "Special Exceptions" as an objectionable practice.** [*Emphasis added*]

It is due to the extraordinary vigilance of the SKNC, with the past support of the Office of Planning, that the residential character has been preserved. As you heard earlier, several large structures have been converted back to housing from other uses. The adoption of the 2016 Zoning Regulations altered the formula to determine where chanceries could locate, which was a major step forward in stemming the threat from foreign missions; this application has the potential to undo that progress, putting the neighborhood at risk for becoming an office park for trade associations.

The Zone Plan. The subject site is zoned R-3, a low-density residential zone. The DC Zoning Regulations specifically state that the Residential House (R) zones are “**residential zones, designed to provide for stable, low- to moderate- density residential areas suitable for family life and supporting uses.**” Subtitle D § 100.1. [emphasis added] **They also state the purpose of R zones is to recognize and reinforce “the importance of neighborhood character,** walkable neighborhoods, housing affordability, aging in place, **preservation of housing stock,** improvements to the overall environment, and low and moderate-density housing to the overall housing mix and health of the city.” Subtitle D § 100.2(b) [emphasis added]. **No office space is permitted as a matter of right.** [Emphasis added]

The Subject Special Exception

As you know, the applicant is trying to take advantage of a provision in the Zoning Regulations 11-U DCMR § 203.1(n) to convert a residential building to nonprofit office space. However, a review of Zoning Commission order 83, which established this provision, shows that the requested relief is not at all “in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations.”

To better understand why that is the case, it is helpful to think about the context for the order. Order 83 was issued in January, 1974 for a case that was filed in 1973, Case 73-32, the year that Congress granted Home Rule to the District. One of the most salient realities of planning and land use in the District of Columbia at that time was a long-term trend of losing population. Indeed, DC went from a population of 802,000 in the 1950 Census, making it the 9th largest city in America, to a population of 572,000 in the 2000 Census, when it dropped to 21st largest city. Between 1970 and 2000, the city lost 25% of its population. However, the situation in the District now is totally different. We have reversed a fifty year population decline, with the number of residents growing almost 20% between 2006 and 2016, to a figure of 681,170 as of July 2016 – a figure not seen since the 1970s. The District grew by more than 110,000 people just since the Comp Plan was rewritten in 2006.

How does this apply to the Special Exception? The Order makes it clear that the exception was created to deal with the severe population decline. Commissioners were concerned that, once residents moved out of large, historic homes, there would be insufficient demand to live there from new families or individuals, and, because the Zoning Regulations required residential use, the buildings would sit there, derelict and vacant, having a negative effect on the neighborhood. The Order observed, “It is in the public interest to provide for the continued use and maintenance of large residential buildings within historic sites and districts . . .”, but acknowledged “There are instances where continued use as residences of such large buildings is no longer assured, leading to their delapidation (sic) and destruction.” Rather than see such significant structures crumble from lack of use and maintenance, the

Commission decided it would be better to permit nonprofit organizations to use the buildings for office space, if they could meet the tests of a special exception.

Here's what is significant to this case. The Commission placed strict limits on this conversion to office space. One, the building had to be in a historic district or deemed architecturally or historically significant. Two, it had to have a gross floor area in excess of 10,000 sf. Last, instead of simply allowing any private commercial office space, the office had to be a nonprofit organization, because that would not only preserve the building, but promote "the public health and general welfare". While the Commission did not specifically use the term 501(c)(3) organization, the fact that a 501(c)(7) organization, such as the FSMB, is a business association, organized and operated to benefit the members of the association, and not provide for the general welfare, puts it clearly outside the intent of the Zoning Regulations in this case. A complete copy of Order 83 is attached to this report as Appendix A.

We should also observe with respect to the requirement that a Special Exception needs to be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps, that, as previous witnesses have testified, not only had Sheridan-Kalorama become a highly desirable and desired neighborhood, but 2118 Leroy Place specifically was in no danger of standing vacant and deteriorating as a residence – there were two other bidders on the property, at least one of whom expressed the intention to renovate the structure and use it as the Zoning Regulations and Map intended, a single-family residential property.

Adverse Effect

Destabilizing the Residential Real Estate Market. Zoning fills many important functions; one is that, by providing a framework with respect to uses and density, it helps provide for a stable market for land. Prospective purchasers know what they may build or how they may use an existing building, and presumably that knowledge constrains what they pay when purchasing the property. The Office of Planning evoked that function of zoning when it proposed a text amendment that was adopted by the Zoning Commission to limit so-called "pop-ups", rooftop additions to rowhouses in R-4 zones. Part of the rationale was to preserve the affordability of these rowhouses for families who needed more space than was typically available in new apartment construction in DC. Research showed that developers were outbidding families, and then creating two and three luxury condominiums, pricing out middle-class single-family users.

The rationale here is similar. While there are some well-heeled nonprofits, it is safe to say that business associations like FSMB can outbid those who desire to use a large historic building as a residence. In this case, even with FSMB paying more than \$600,000 more than the asking price for the property, it is still getting a bargain compared with what it would have to pay to purchase or rent commercially-zoned property. Granting this special exception would establish a precedent which would put a quick stop to the recent trend in S-K of buildings with formerly non-residential uses being transformed back into homes. This would be directly contrary to the established Comp Plan policy to limit the encroachment of commercial uses into Near Northwest neighborhoods.

Unnecessarily Expanding the Class B Office Supply and Restricting Housing Supply. The District of Columbia has been experiencing a glut of commercial office space for the last several years. According to the DC Economic Partnership, the current vacancy rate stands at 11.7%, with several major projects,

such as the Capitol Crossing and the redevelopment of the former Washington Post headquarters set to deliver in the next 1 – 2 years. At the same time, the demand for housing has been outstripping supply, creating upward price pressures which exacerbate a serious housing affordability problem. The city is even pursuing creating an incentive package to encourage owners of Class B and C office buildings to convert them to housing. Thus it would serve no public purpose to go in the opposite direction, and add to the supply of Class B office space while missing an opportunity to provide a new residential use.

Traffic, Congestion, Parking and Loading. As you have heard from other witnesses, the narrowness of Leroy Place, and the alley at the rear of the property, make it highly likely that the intense use proposed for the site (up to 21 staff, major meetings several times a year) would have adverse impacts on the neighboring properties. This would represent a serious increase in the intensity of these effects, compared with the prior use of the building by the Colombians, who had only a skeleton crew in the building from 2007 until the recent sale. SKNC has expressed concern that, even with the conditions proposed by the applicant and the additional conditions proposed by the Office of Planning, the adverse effects would still occur, and the burden of policing the adherence to the conditions would fall upon the neighbors.

Erosion of Residential Character. FSMB has assured the neighbors that there would be no nighttime or weekend activity in the building. This is a negative, not a positive. It is not consistent with the desired character of a healthy residential area to live next to, or across the street from, a building which is lifeless during most of the time that the neighbors will be home. It also places a burden on the neighbors to keep watch for vagrants or those who would use the lack of occupancy in the building for negative purposes.

Summary

Under Subtitle X § 901.2, the Board is authorized to grant a special exception where it finds the relief granted is presumed appropriate, reasonable, and compatible with other uses in the same zoning classification, provided that all of the specific requirements for the relief are met:

- (1) Will be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps;
 - (2) Will not tend to affect adversely, the use of neighboring property in accordance with the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps; and
 - (3) Subject in specific cases to special conditions specified in the Zoning Regulations.
- [11 DCMR Subtitle X § 901.2]

I find that the applicant has not met the necessary requirements to justify the relief they seek. The conversion of the subject property to trade association office space is not in harmony with the intent of the Zoning Regulations, as explained in the Commission's order, that conversion of residential to nonprofit office use is justified to prevent a large historic residentially-zoned property from falling into disuse. There is adequate evidence in the record to support the fact that such conversion would not be consistent with the Zone Plan, which calls for low-density residential use on this site, since there is market demand to purchase, renovate and use the property for its intended use.

In addition, the applicant has a burden of proof to show that it meets the other requirements for the Special Exception, that the gross floor area of the property exceeds 10,000 sf and that the applicant is a nonprofit organization as that term is defined in the Zoning Regulations, and explained in Zoning Commission Order 83.

The applicant also has the burden of proof to show that the proposed exception will not have an adverse effect on the neighboring property and the integrity of the zone plan. However, permitting business associations to purchase and convert large historic residential buildings to office use will destabilize the residential housing market, because of the general ability of these types of associations to outbid prospective residential buyers. In addition, various witnesses have testified to the inadequacy of the street and alley access to support an employer of up to 21 staff people, with numerous visitors and several meetings per year drawing participants from around the country.

For all these reasons, I conclude that the applicant has not met its burden of proof and I would urge the Board to deny this application.

Appendix A. Zoning Commission Order 83

Government of the District of Columbia

ZONING COMMISSION




ZONING COMMISSION NO. 83
CASE NO. 73-32
January 26, 1974


- WHEREAS, It is in the public interest to provide for the continued use and maintenance of large residential buildings within historic sites and districts, and it is in the public interest to maintain and preserve large residential buildings of historical and architectural significance which are not within historic sites and districts; and
- WHEREAS, There are instances where continued use as residences of such large buildings is no longer assured, leading to their delapidation and destruction; and
- WHEREAS, Application of current Zoning Regulations will not accomplish the purposes set out above; and
- WHEREAS, Buildings of such nature have gross floor areas in excess of 10,000 square feet;
- AND WHEREAS, The use of such buildings for nonprofit organizations is an appropriate means of providing for the preservation of such buildings, thereby promoting the public health and general welfare;
- NOW THEREFORE, It is hereby ORDERED that the District of Columbia Zoning Regulations be AMENDED, as follows:

3101,415 The use of existing residential buildings and the land on which they are located by a nonprofit organization for the purposes of such nonprofit organization if (1) such buildings are listed in the District of Columbia's Inventory of Historic Sites contained in the comprehensive statewide historic preservation survey and plan prepared pursuant to Sec. 101(a) of Public Law 89-665 approved October 15, 1966 (16 U.S. 470a-470m), or are located within a district, site, area, or place listed on the District of Columbia's Inventory of Historic Sites; and (2) the gross floor area of the building in question [not including other buildings on the lot] is 10,000 square feet or greater; provided further that:

- A. Such use by a nonprofit organization will not adversely affect the use of neighboring properties;
- B. The amount and arrangement of parking spaces are adequate and so located as to minimize traffic impact on the adjacent neighborhood;
- C. No goods, chattels, wares or merchandise are commercially created, exchanged, or sold therein, except for the sale of publications, materials, or other items related to the purposes of such nonprofit organization.
- D. Any additions to such building or any major modifications to the exterior of the building or to the site shall require the prior approval of the Board. The Board shall refer such proposed additions and/or modifications to the State Historic Preservation Officer, who, acting with the advice of the District of Columbia Professional Review Committee for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places shall provide the Board with a report to determine possible detrimental consequences which the proposed addition and/or modification may have on the architectural or historical significance of the building or site or district in which the building is located.



 WALTER T. WASHINGTON



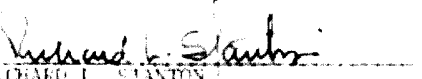
 JOHN A. MATHIS



 STERLING THURLER



 GEORGE M. WHITE



 RICHARD L. STANTON

ATTEST: 

 Martin Klauber
 Executive Secretary
 Zoning Commission

Appendix B. Additional Supporting Citations from the DC Comprehensive Plan

Land Use Element

Land Use Goal 302 The Land Use Goal is: Ensure the efficient use of land resources to meet long-term neighborhood, citywide, and regional needs; to help foster other District goals; to protect the health, safety, and welfare of District residents, institutions, and businesses; to sustain, restore, or improve the character and stability of neighborhoods in all parts of the city; and to effectively balance the competing demands for land to support the many activities that take place within District boundaries. 302.1

Carefully manage the development of vacant land and the alteration of existing structures in and adjacent to single family neighborhoods in order to protect low density character, preserve open space, and maintain neighborhood scale. 309.10

Action LU-2.1.C: Residential Rezoning Provide a better match between zoning and existing land uses in the city's residential areas, with a particular focus on: a. Blocks of well-established single family and semi-detached homes that are zoned R-3 or higher; b. Blocks that consist primarily of row houses that are zoned R-5-B or higher; and c. Historic districts where the zoning does not match the predominant contributing properties on the block face. In all three of these instances, pursue rezoning to appropriate densities to protect the predominant architectural character and scale of the neighborhood. 309.21

Policy LU-2.3.1: Managing Non-Residential Uses in Residential Areas

Maintain zoning regulations and development review procedures that: (a) prevent the encroachment of inappropriate commercial uses in residential areas; and (b) limit the scale and extent of non-residential uses that are generally compatible with residential uses, but present the potential for conflicts when they are excessively concentrated or out of scale with the neighborhood. 311.3

Policy LU-3.3.1: Chancery Encroachment in Low Density Areas

Encourage foreign missions to locate their chancery facilities in areas where adjacent existing and proposed land uses are compatible (e.g., office, commercial, and mixed use), taking special care to protecting the integrity of residential areas. Discourage the location of new chanceries in any area that is essentially a residential use area, to the extent consistent with the Foreign Missions Act. 316.7

Framework Element

Creating Successful Neighborhoods: Guiding Principles 218

Policies and actions to support neighborhoods cut across many Comprehensive Plan topics and appear throughout this document. Wherever they may appear, these policies are underpinned by the common goal of conserving functioning, stable neighborhoods and improving those that need redirection. 218.9

8. The residential character of neighborhoods must be protected, maintained and improved. Many District neighborhoods possess social, economic, historic, and physical qualities that make them unique and desirable places in which to live. These qualities can lead to development and

redevelopment pressures that threaten the very qualities that make the neighborhoods attractive. These pressures must be controlled through zoning and other means to ensure that neighborhood character is preserved and enhanced. 218.1

Creating Successful Neighborhoods: Guiding Principles 218

Policies and actions to support neighborhoods cut across many Comprehensive Plan topics and appear throughout this document. Wherever they may appear, these policies are underpinned by the common goal of conserving functioning, stable neighborhoods and improving those that need redirection. 218.9

Info about Sheridan-Kalorama

Business Insider

http://www.businessinsider.com/photos-washington-dc-kalorama-neighborhood-tour-kushner-trump-obamas-2017-11?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=referral&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+businessinsider+%28Business+Insider%29/#kalorama-is-located-in-northwest-washington-dc-just-above-dupont-circle-its-actually-two-neighborhoods-sheridan-kalorama-in-yellow-and-kalorama-triangle-in-purple-1

- [Harrison Jacobs](#)
-
- Nov. 26, 2017, 11:00 AM

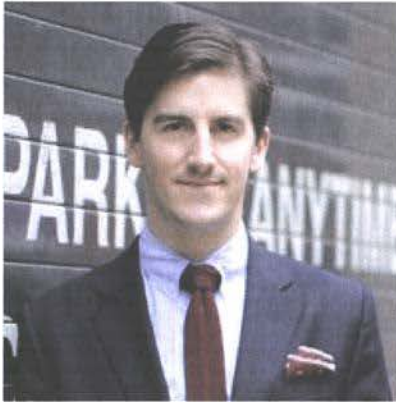
It's unclear who lives here, but this place is a lot of house. About a third of the neighborhood's residents are tech-industry or hedge-fund execs.

A lot of houses in the neighborhood have a palatial European style. The area is known for having the biggest houses in DC. The average home price in Kalorama was about \$3.5 million in April, according to Redfin.

<http://www.townandcountrymag.com/society/money-and-power/news/a9269/kalorama-neighborhood-dc/>

8 Things You Should Know About Kalorama, the Obamas' New Washington Neighborhood

[The Obamas](#), [Jeff Bezos](#), and [Jared Kushner and Ivanka Trump](#) are all moving into one of Washington's elite areas. Here's what makes it so desirable.



By [SAM DANGREMOND](#)

JAN 17, 2017



What's so special about Kalorama, the Washington, D.C. locale that in recent weeks has added [the Obama family](#), [Jeff Bezos](#), and [Jared Kushner and Ivanka Trump](#) to the ranks of its residents?

"Spectacular 'period' turn-of-the-century architecture and grand city homes," says local realtor [Mark McFadden](#), whose firm had the listing for the [Obamas' new house](#). "It's home to leaders of industry, major philanthropists, politicians, ambassadors, sports team owners, and more, and is within walking distance of restaurants and art galleries."

Here are eight things to know about the neighborhood.

1. IT'S FULL OF DISTINGUISHED OLD HOUSES.



SOTHEBY'S INTERNATIONAL REALTY

Like this 1930 Federal Revival property, [on the market](#) for \$5.75 million. Like many Kalorama homes, it has plenty of space for entertaining. Take, for example, its a tiger-maple paneled library and a wood-burning fireplace-equipped living room that opens into a conservatory with floor-to-ceiling-windows on three sides.

POLITICS **A Neighborhood Where the Obamas and the Trumps Are Just Part of the Mix**

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POLITICS

A Neighborhood Where the Obamas and the Trumps Are Just Part of the Mix

By **KATIE ROGERS**JAN. 19, 2017

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Photo



The home on Tracy Place where Ivanka Trump and her husband, Jared Kushner, are moving. Credit Hilary Swift for The New York Times.

WASHINGTON — Every morning, Meena Ahamed takes a three-mile walk around Kalorama, her northwestern Washington neighborhood. The enclave is exclusive, full of showpiece brick homes, many decorated with flying flags of distant republics.

Her stroll on Wednesday was serene save for the buzzing of saws, the thumping of hammers and the nearly constant chop-chop-chop of helicopters overhead. All were telltale signals that some well-known residents are moving in: [President Obama](#) and his family; President-elect Donald J. Trump's daughter Ivanka and her husband, Jared Kushner; and the Amazon founder and billionaire [Jeff Bezos](#), to name a few.

Another will soon join the crowd. Rex W. Tillerson, the former chief executive of Exxon Mobil and Mr. Trump's pick for secretary of state, is in the process of buying a home nearby on 24th Street Northwest, said Jack Evans, a District of Columbia City Council member whose ward includes the neighborhood. A person with knowledge of the sale, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, said that Mr. Evans was correct.

"In New York, it's what building Madonna is in," said Ms. Ahamed, a writer and United States advisory board member of Doctors Without Borders who splits her time among New York, Los Angeles and Washington. "Here, it's which politician is living next to you."

The neighborhood, a stately jumble of embassies, ambassadors' residences, and homes owned by financiers, lobbyists and other members of the upper class, has always been exclusive. But a stormy political climate has produced an unusual medley of newcomers who have generated interest in the neighborhood that extends well beyond Washington.

On Belmont Road, the Obamas will take up residence in a Tudor-style home around the corner from Ms. Trump and Mr. Kushner, who will live in a large white home on Tracy Place. A few streets away, on S Street, Mr. Bezos, the Amazon founder and owner of The Washington Post, is renovating a former textile museum, which sits between the former home of Woodrow Wilson, the nation's 28th president, and the embassy of Myanmar. Mr. Tillerson is said to be moving in somewhere between Mr. Bezos and Ms. Trump.

Photo



Kalorama residents are expecting a bigger security presence once the Obamas move into their Tudor-style home in the neighborhood. Credit Hilary Swift for The New York Times

To many residents here, the big-ticket real estate shuffle is normal as they insist that, really, this is a neighborhood like any other. It's no big deal, they say, to invite a high-profile neighbor over for a meal made from a backyard pizza oven, or to be on an email chain with the "Fox News Sunday" anchor Chris Wallace, another resident, gossiping over neighborhood changes or complaining about the lack of parking in the area.

Holly Sukenik, who has lived in Kalorama since 1981 and lives a few doors down from Ms. Trump and Mr. Kushner's home, rattled off a list of well-known Washington names to emphasize that residents here have seen it all before.

“Rumsfeld lived there,” Ms. Sukenik said, pointing in one direction, toward the former home of Donald H. Rumsfeld, who lived in Kalorama when he was defense secretary in the George W. Bush administration.

“Caspar Weinberger lived there,” she said, motioning in the direction of a home once occupied by President Ronald Reagan’s first defense secretary.

“And that Austrian spy,” she paused. “What was his name?”

It was Felix Bloch, who had an apartment in Kalorama. He was accused of spying for the Soviets in the late 1980s.

“Media was parked in my driveway,” Ms. Sukenik said. “I was like: ‘Excuse me, guys. I’ve got to leave.’”

Others know the drill. For the past six years, the lobbyist Tony Podesta — the owner of that backyard pizza oven and the brother of John D. Podesta, Hillary Clinton’s 2016 campaign chairman — has lived two doors down from the Obama family’s new home. He said longtime residents were used to the influx of new people, but an arrival does occasionally raise an eyebrow.

Photo



Jeff Bezos, the founder of Amazon and owner of The Washington Post, is renovating a former textile museum in the neighborhood. Credit Photographs by Hilary Swift for The New York Times

“It’s been awhile since we’ve had a president,” Mr. Podesta conceded. Of Mr. Bezos, he added, “Turning the museum into a private home was a little bit of a surprise to the neighborhood.”

Kalorama was expensive enough to be largely limited to millionaires before, but Maxwell Rabin, a broker for TTR Sotheby’s International Realty, said the sort of money that Mr. Bezos spent on his property — \$23 million, according to reports — signaled a shift from old Washington power players to a new stratosphere of wealth moving into the city.

“We have our share of wealthy people,” he said, “but that’s a different dimension.”

Even for a neighborhood full of people who say they try not to focus on the comings and goings of others, gossip has a way of spreading quickly. Residents have been on the alert for activity in front of Ms. Trump's new residence, and on Wednesday, two moving trucks and two security vans were parked near the house.

Residents are also subtly monitoring the construction going on outside the Obama residence, which on Wednesday remained approachable from the street. Once the Obamas move in, people are expecting a bigger security presence, including roadblocks near the residence and more Secret Service officers, said Mr. Evans, the City Council member.

"I think the Secret Service probably likes it, because they're used to that area," he added.

Ms. Sukenik and Ms. Ahamed say they have heard worrying talk that Belmont Road will be cut off to traffic. Residents are also concerned that protesters will march through the neighborhood on Inauguration Day on Friday to drop off messages for Ms. Trump, urging her to stand up for women's rights.

But, Ms. Ahamed said, this could be untrue. Nearby, a poster for the Women's March on Washington had been taped to a street lamp across the street from Ms. Trump's new home.

"I hope they'll be happy," Ms. Ahamed said of the couple. "It's a very nice, very quiet neighborhood."

There goes the neighborhood: Obamas, Ivanka Trump, Jeff Bezos moving in

By [Paul Schwartzman](#) [@paulschwartzman](#)

2:31

PHOTO BY AP/WIDEWORLD

In the coming days, Sally Berk will be able to say that she lives in the same Northwest Washington neighborhood as Barack and Michelle, Jared and Ivanka, and a billionaire named Jeff.

Ho-hum.

What's a nother president in the 'hood when five others have already resided in Kaloram a, Washington's very own version of Beverly Hills?

Can you blame the soon-to-be first daughter for wanting to live a 13-minute, chauffeur-driven glide path to her father at the White House? And where else can a tech magnate find a 27,000-square-foot crash pad just 1.8 miles from his new media company?

“We’re just so used to it,” said Berk, who 36 years after moving to Kalorama is accustomed to the motorcades, Secret Service retinues and hovering helicopters that come with sharing sidewalks with Washington royalty.

Yet, despite the neighborhood’s history as a turret-happy crib for the country’s elite, it is not *every* day that three of the world’s most powerful names decide, at virtually the same moment, that Kalorama is the place for them.



The former Textile Museum property was recently purchased by Amazon founder Jeffrey P. Bezos. (Ricky Carioti/The Washington Post)

Jeffrey P. Bezos, Amazon’s founder and owner of The Washington Post, became the latest A-lister known to plant a flag in the neighborhood, paying \$23 million in cash for a 10-bedroom mansion on S Street NW.



This home on Tracy Place NW was purchased by Ivanka Trump and Jared Kushner. (Ricky Carioti/The Washington Post)

A bit more than four blocks away, on Tracy Place NW, Ivanka Trump and Jared Kushner and their three children are moving into a six-bedroom, five-fireplace manse that was listed last year for a relatively reasonable \$5.5 million.

Around the corner, behind a newly constructed Secret Service guard booth on Belmont Street, President Obama and first lady Michelle Obama are set to relocate to their post-White House rental — a nine-bedroom, 8.5-bathroom house owned by Joe Lockhart, who served as press secretary to President Bill Clinton.



The former president and first lady, the daughter of President Trump and her husband, and the founder of Amazon.com (and owner of The Washington Post) are residents of the District's historic Kalorama neighborhood.

“Famous people have always lived here,” said Penn Lupovich, 81, a retired doctor, as he stood outside his house on Tracy Place, defiantly nonchalant about living across the street from Ivanka Trump’s new address.

No, Lupovich said, Kalorama’s residents are not holding meetings to prepare for the arrival of their new neighbors. No one, he insisted, is sweating the prospect of security checkpoints and hordes of gawkers.

“It’s Washington — if you don’t like it, don’t live here,” Lupovich said of his neighborhood of 42 years. “I came here to change the world, and that’s the way it has always been. That’s what we do here. Change the world!”

A majestic mix of mansions, townhouses, apartment buildings and embassies northwest of Dupont Circle, Kalorama is like any other neighborhood, residents insist — albeit one that requires a minimum of several million dollars to buy into.

Or if you have \$20,000 a month available for rent, that'll work, too.

The neighborhood includes next to no places to buy a cup of coffee, not to mention eggs or a quart of milk, though the bare essentials can be acquired at the 7-Eleven on Wyoming Avenue NW, a bit less than a mile from the Obamas' place.

Sure, the neighborhood's residents may be a bit more prominent — a former congressman over here, Bloomberg Media's chief executive over there — but they want trash picked up and streets swept just like anyone else.

"We have potluck dinners — someone says, 'You bring the dessert, I got the dead cow on the grill,' " said Mario Castillo, a lobbyist who has lived on Belmont for 20 years. "To me, they're all just neighbors, and then they happen to be the Jeff Bezoses, the Ivankas and the Obamas.

"Are they going to be friendly?" he asked. "Are they going to be approachable? Can you have a conversation with them? Not as Jeff or Ivanka or Obama. But just as folks. That's what appeals to me. Not the titles."

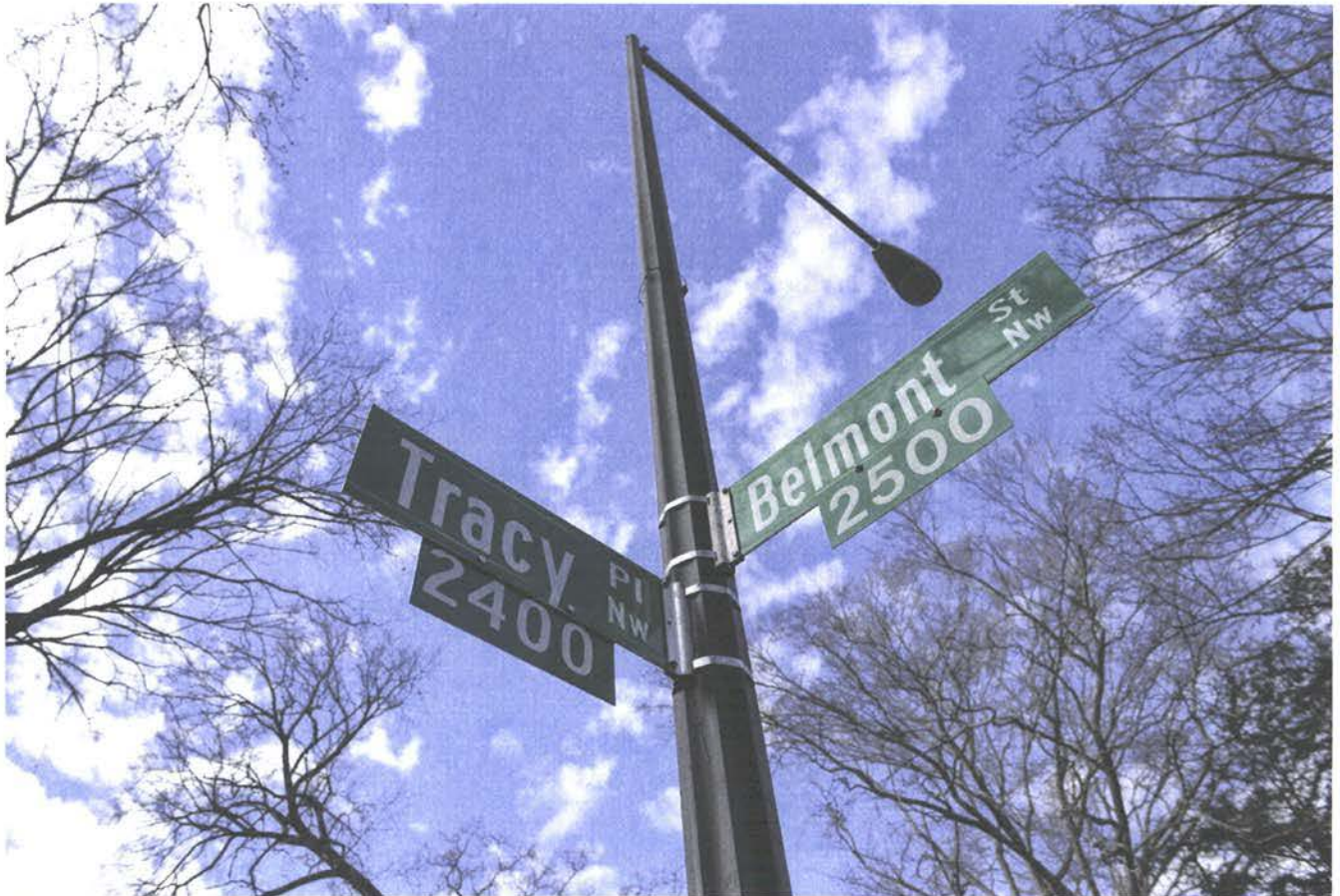
"Ted and Vicki were neighbors of mine"

Jim Bell, a Sotheby's International real estate agent who describes himself as "the king of Kalorama," predicts that the neighborhood will regain its quiet

rhythms after an inevitable spasm of excitement greets the arrival of the famous new residents.

“Ted and Vicki were neighbors of mine,” Bell said, referring (of course) to the late Sen. Edward M. Kennedy and his wife. “Donald Rumsfeld lived here. It’s a whole bunch of mostly quiet rock stars, and then once in awhile you’ve got someone who gets more press. And then it dies down. Everyone says, ‘Enough is enough.’ At the end of the day, they’re just people. They have dogs and kids and they go to sleep at night.”

A sloping landscape of rolling knolls, the neighborhood in the late 1700s was defined by a single estate, known as Belair, which was built by a local commissioner before it was taken over by a diplomat who renamed it Kalorama, the Greek word for “fine view,” according to the D.C. Office of Historic Preservation. Thomas Jefferson was a regular visitor.



The intersection of Tracy Place and Belmont Street in the Kalorama neighborhood of Northwest. (Ricky Carioti/The Washington Post)

After the Civil War, as Washington's population grew, developers began dividing Kalorama's land and constructing massive homes that evoked a variety of architectural styles, from Victorian-style villas to Beaux-Arts apartment houses and Colonial and Federal mansions.

Before Obama, Woodrow Wilson was the only president to move to Kalorama immediately after leaving the White House. At varying points, William Howard Taft, Warren G. Harding, Franklin D. Roosevelt and Herbert Hoover also resided in the neighborhood.

Wilson's house, now a museum, is on S Street, next door to the mansion purchased by Bezos, a sale that was cheered by residents who feared that the property — the former Textile Museum — would be turned into condos.

“Bravo!” someone shouted at a neighborhood meeting last week after Bezos's architect announced that the property was bought by a family who intended to restore it as a home, according to the Current newspaper.

But the architect, Anthony “Ankie” Barnes, declined to identify the buyer, said David Bender, chair of the Advisory Neighborhood Commission, who is not unaccustomed to such secrecy.

No one from the president's orbit, for example, notified the ANC that several guard booths would be built outside the house on Belmont — the kind of exterior construction that the commission typically approves.

“ We heard nothing,” Bender said.

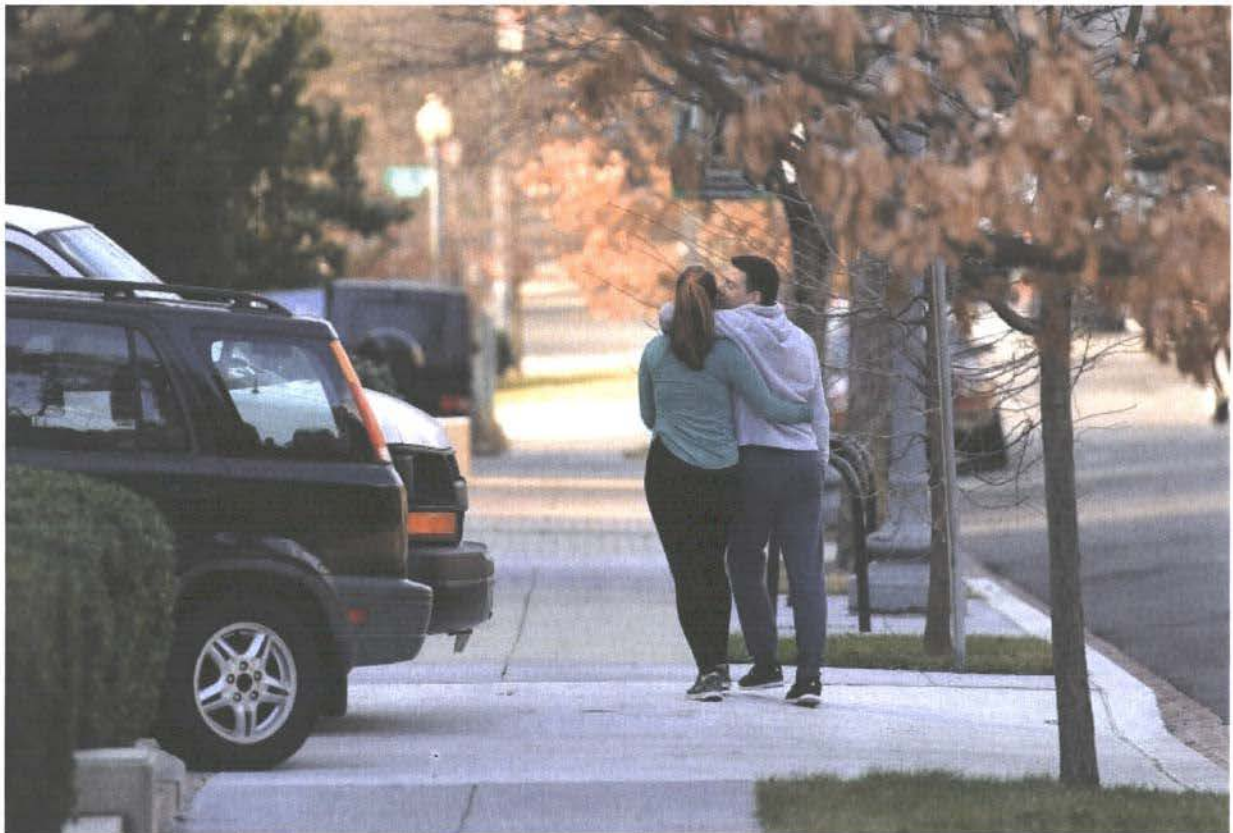
Nor has he received many complaints, though parking is a concern, as is a recent uptick in the presence of reporters and photographers in the neighborhood (“Absolutely not! We don't talk about our neighbors!” a woman walking her dog near the Kushner-Trump house said when asked about their impending arrival).

Councilman Jack Evans (D-Ward 2), whose district includes Kalorama, said the Secret Service is planning to install gates on both ends of the portion of Belmont that encompasses the Obama residence.

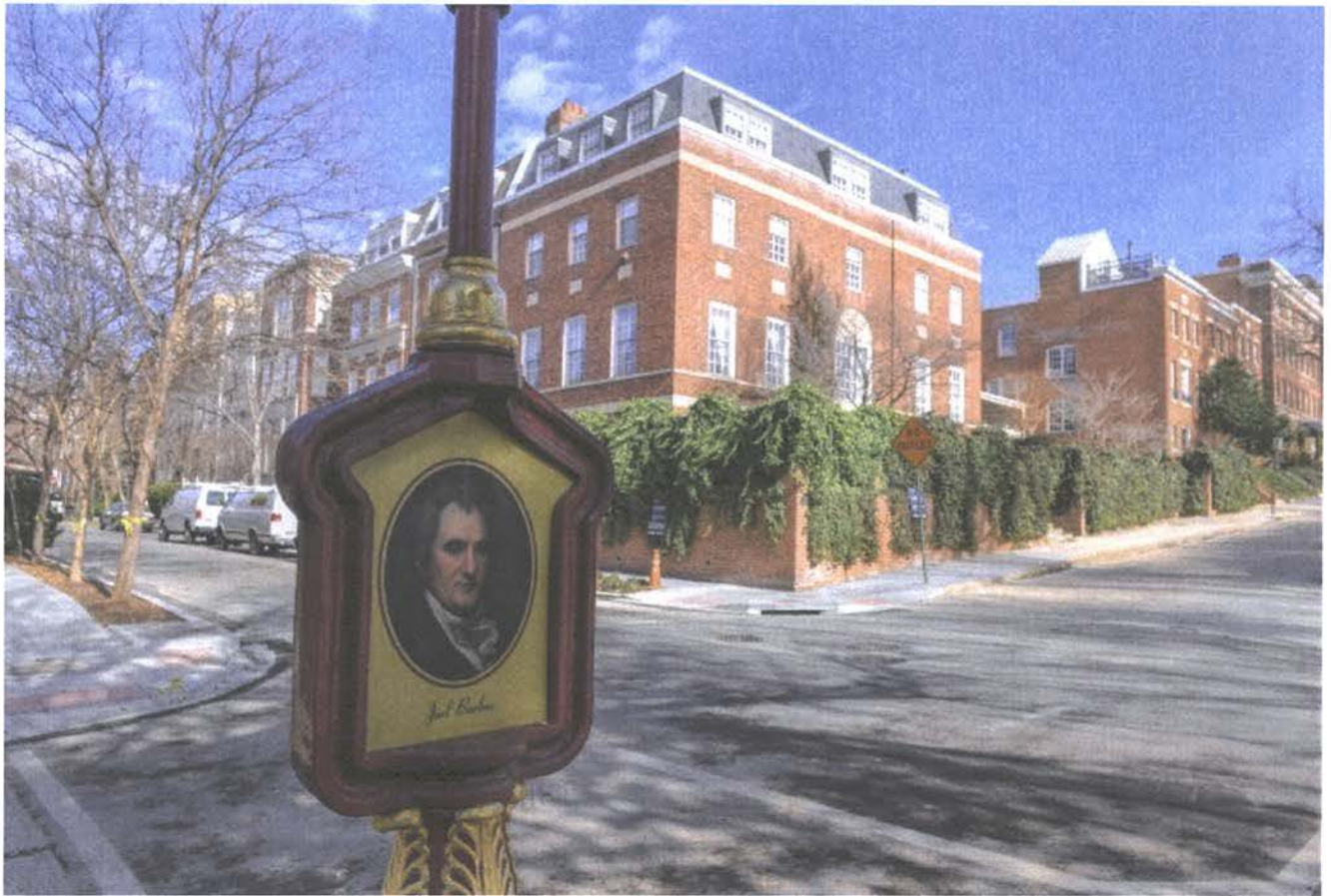
“ It will certainly be safe over there,” he said.

Castillo said a representative from the White House and Secret Service recently visited him to explain where the roadblocks would be set up and how residents would receive visitors.

“I have gardeners, and what about the paperboy? How do we make arrangements to get him in and out?” he said. “They were very professional. It’s not going to be as draconian as you might think.”



A couple takes a walk down S Street in the Kalorama neighborhood. (Ricky Carioti/The Washington Post)



A historical marker for Joel Barlow in the Kalorama neighborhood. (Ricky Carioti/The Washington Post)

When he arrived in Kalorama in 1996, Castillo recalled, his neighbor sent over a housekeeper with a note on a silver tray that read, “Welcome to the neighborhood.” Castillo plans no such greeting for the Obamas, preferring to allow them a respite after “eight years of a hectic life. I have the sense that they are a little exhausted.”

Lupovich said Kalorama is more transient than it was when he first moved in, and that he doesn’t know too many of his neighbors anymore. He’s not expecting to interact with Kushner or Ivanka Trump, though he has already benefited by their presence, wandering across the street to hire their house

painter to put a new coat on his living room (Ivanka ordered the rooms in her house to be painted “simply white,” the painter said).

As for Obama, the retired doctor said he plans to extend an invitation to both the outgoing president and the new president to join him in his living room for what he hopes would be consequential policy discussion.

“I want the president and Don Trump to come over and talk health care,” he said. “That’s the way we did it in the old Washington.”

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Comments



Paul Schwartzman specializes in political profiles and narratives about life, death and everything in between.

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The Board of Zoning Adjustment can grant special exceptions to the Zoning Regulations under specific circumstances and on a case-by-case, site-by-site basis.

In granting a special exception, the Board must review the case based on the following criteria:

- Will be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps;
- Will not tend to affect adversely, the use of neighboring property in accordance with the
- Subject in specific cases to the special conditions specified in this title.

The applicant for a special exception shall have the full burden to prove no undue adverse impact and shall demonstrate such through evidence in the public record. If no evidence is presented in opposition to the case, the applicant shall not be relieved of this responsibility.