16924

HUGO ROELL & LISA LANDMEIER
2312 ONTARIO ROAD, NW
WASHINGTON, DC 20009
(202) 332-8723

RECEIVED
D.C. OFFICE OF ZONING
2002 DEC -5 AM 8:09

Date: December 4, 2002

Fax: Zoning Adjustment Board
Government of the District of Columbia
(202) 727-6072

Re: Zoning variance application of 1701 Kalorama Road NW

Pages: 2 pages

To whom it may concern:

We live a block away from the proposed project at 1701 Kalorama Road NW and are both opposed to the granting of an exception to the height restrictions for this project. We have noticed the effect of the height of the Lofts condominium development on our area and regret that a zoning variance was granted in that case. This five story building now completely overwhelms the mostly two story residential corner of Champlain Street and Kalorama Road.

For this reason we also opposed (with at least 20 other immediate neighbors) the application for a height variance for the proposed property at 2363 Champlain Street NW and requested that it be kept within the 40 feet limit at the Kalorama Road end of the project by simply stepping the building down. (I believe that this variance has since been granted by the BZA without regard to our objections.) Now we are faced with another project at 1701 Kalorama Road that also wants to exceed the 40 feet height restriction. We do not understand what the point of the Reed-Cooke Overlay District is, if every developer who wants a height variance from the BZA can get one.

The local community went through great trouble and time to set up the Reed-Cooke Overlay District to protect our neighborhood. When we bought property in this neighborhood ten years ago, we were well aware of the Overlay. We felt it safeguarded what attracted us to this neighborhood. We liked the low scale density and height of the mostly two story houses and the abundance of sunlight in the streets and the gardens this allowed.

BZA
Case No. 16924
Exhibit No. 51

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16924
EXHIBIT NO.51

We were also aware of the mixed uses in our neighborhood along Kalorama Road. We support the continued use of these buildings and the Overlay clearly encourages this as well. The section of Kalorama Road between Ontario Road and 17th Street NW has some of the greatest density of mixed use buildings. Currently the tallest buildings are three story (the Overlay even allows for four story buildings). If you walk down this section of Kalorama Road you will notice that the scale of these buildings does not appear out of place in our neighborhood. They also add an important mix of uses to our neighborhood with a child day care center, office buildings, pottery class center etc. that make our neighborhood more vibrant. We would like more of the types of services that can be used by the residents to move in. Sadly a few of the more useful establishments (e.g. the dry cleaner) in our area have disappeared due to higher rents. The Overlay was also meant to encourage more development of these types of establishments. To date this has not happened. For example, the Loft condominium replaced a hardware store with a dreary facade of parking garage windows at the sidewalk level. The proposed building at 2363 Champlain Street NW will get rid of a convenience store on Kalorama Road and offer only more parking garage views at the sidewalk level.

The development at 1701 Kalorama Road should fit into our neighborhood and the Reed Cook Overlay District. The developers are correct in their statement that the Overlay encourages residential development, but the Overlay does not require the property to become residential, and expressly disallows high rise buildings even if they are residential. The property can remain a commercial building. The current owners bought it and have operated it as a commercial building for more than ten years. If they now want to change it to a residential building they should follow the Overlay zoning rules. By granting a height variance to 1701 Kalorama Road, the two story houses by the corner of 17th Street and Kalorama Road will be overwhelmed in scale in the same way the Lofts development now overwhelms the corner of Champlain Street and Kalorama Road. We do not understand why the BZA would allow the Reed-Cooke Overlay zoning rules to become a set of minimum zoning requirements for future development in our neighborhood, when the local community wanted and continues to want them to be the maximum allowable zoning rules for all future development in our neighborhood.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Hugo A. Roell

Hugo A. Roell

Lisa M. Landmeier