



PEN ARTS BUILDING

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March 5, 2010

Board of Zoning Adjustment
4th Street NW
Washington DC

Gentlemen:

RE: BZA Case 17337 N Street Follies

By authorization of the National Board, Anne Sellin is delegated to represent the National League of American Pen Women, Inc. to testify in opposition to the N Street Follies Case.

Sincerely,

N Taylor Collins

N. Taylor Collins
National President

BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT
District of Columbia

CASE NO.

17337-A

EXHIBIT NO.

115

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 17337
EXHIBIT NO. 115

Testimony of Anne R. Sellin
for the League of American Pen Women, March 16, 2010
Case 17337 N St. Follies

My name is Anne Sellin representing the League of American Pen Women. Our headquarters is at 1300 17th St. NW, an end row house built in 1884 by architect William Poindester. The building's narrow south face on N St. with an entrance there is its side, the facade and main entrance being on 17th St. Our organization is made up of writers, artists and composers from around the country and has been located here for over 50 years.

This hotel proposal is contrary to the Comprehensive Plan, Policy H 221, crafted to "discourage the conversion of viable quality housing units to non residential uses such as offices and hotels. Ensure that zoning regulations provide sufficient protection to avoid the loss of housing in this manner."

There are six historic houses that had tenants when Mr. Bender bought the property some 20 years ago. He systematically evicted them amidst much protest. He need housing reestablished on this block to achieve the balance required by the Comprehensive Plan. These six buildings are ideal for supplying house near downtown.

The underlying zone is SP 1, the one being crafted by planner Harold Bucher to protect the character and open spaces in this historic part of Dupont Circle. Open space behind row

2.

houses is essential for the preservation of light, air, trees and green space. I remember when the beautifully landscaped garden behind two of the Bender owned houses were used for civic events, such as banquets and outdoors concerts. These were paved over by Mr. Bender, all the gardens behind the six now houses: they are now used as a parking lot, whether it's licensed as such by the city I don't know.

The proposal is for a huge structure creating 100% lot occupancy. Such a building addition is unwarranted and will serve only to diminish the character and safety of the block.

The intent of the hotel regulations ~~is~~ is defied by this proposal. The regs state that "the height, bulk, and design shall be in harmony with existing uses and structures (512.3)". There are no structures in the 1700 block of N St. with such density. Almost all the original backs of buildings survive with their backyards in this historic district.

The regulations also state that the approval of a hotel "shall ^{be a} balance of residential, office and hotel or inn uses in the SP in the vicinity of a hotel or inn." Three hotels together is not balance. Two are sufficient.

Very germane to our situation is the regulation "the design of driveways, access roads and other circulation elements of the hotel or inn shall be to avoid dangerous or other objectionable traffic conditions." Our building

is located immediately adjacent to the only alley entrance at 17th St., an alley only 10 feet wide at this point, or rather 9½ feet. From our north windows we have a view of the alley which is barely wide enough for trucks to squeeze through and sometimes isn't. With the number of trucks and car traffic this dead end alley is already dangerously overburdened. In 1986 our original brick wall was knocked down by a truck and had to be completely rebuilt. The truck didn't even stop. Our national president, Taylor Collins' car when parked in our space behind the building has its bumper hit, necessitating costly repairs, and also the dents her car has received there.

Being a dead end alley, the passage forces vehicles to turn completely around to get out again to 17th St. There are many wide garbage and service trucks that make frequent trips. The service trucks provide the two hotels all well as offices on Massachusetts Ave. and N St. A huge new building with a loading dock would make conditions far more dangerous, particularly with over 50 cars coming and going from the proposed hotel's underground garage. The conflict in the alley with vehicles facing each other in deadlock, each trying to move in a different direction would be horrendously exacerbated. The 100% lot occupancy would permit far less turn around space for vehicles.

The application clearly does not meet the zoning requirements. It is in flagrant variance with the hotel regulations which disallow imbalances in an area. Crucially important is the increased dangerous and objectionable traffic conditions that would result.