



ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION 4C

Taalib-Din A. Uqdah, ANC Commissioner

SMD 4C01

1373 Jefferson Street, NW; Washington, DC 20011

www.anc4c.org

E-mail: 4C01@anc.dc.gov

202-421-8945 (Mobile/Text)

202-726-3465 (Home)

202-291-1185 (Fax)

OPPOSITION TO BZA #19088

3701-14TH STREET, NW

February 23, 2016

I am reviewing this proposal as a density issue, effecting both Ward 1 and Ward 4, as it sits on the border between the 3500-3900 blocks of 14th St., NW – for this summation – between Parkwood Pl., on the South, up to Shepherd St. to the North.

I find the area to already be densely populated, along 14th, with many existing, new and/or under construction mix-use projects in the works.

3701-14th, is the only one of these mix-use projects that will not offer any parking alternative – the rest do – more specifically, 3517-3519-3619 in Ward 1; and 3707 (7-11 connected to 1380 Quincy, which offers above-grade / below-grade parking), as well as 3815 and 3821.

With the exception of the above properties listed, most of the mix-use retail, in either Ward, are 3-story buildings – street-level with walk-ups. Some have commercial on 2 levels, with residents above or commercial on the street-level and 2 residential units above. This is consistent in both Wards, between Parkwood Place and Shepherd St., especially on the Eastside of 14th.

Which brings me too the request for variance and lot occupancy, none of which would be necessary if the property were to be torn down and reconstructed as a 3-level mix-use property as the others already are; it could pretty much be done as a matter of right.

So, it's not that the developer can't build, they just can't build what they want without the BZA's approval; but they can build something, as a matter of right, with retail and residential, just not 6-units and whatever else they're applying for.

The immediate existing neighborhood, around 3701, would suffer greatly with respect to quality of life issues, should the project be built as requested. While parking has been presented as a factor that could be mitigated, it is still unclear how many residents and visitors we're talking about in a 6-unit building and both the North/South-sides of Spring Rd., from 14th St. to the alley offers 2-hour metered parking, significantly cutting into neighborhood public parking. The same applies along Ward 1's Parkwood Pl. – metered parking on both sides of the street, from 14th to the first alley.

There has been significant improvement in the facades of the commercial buildings on the Eastside of 14th, in the 3900-block – Shepherd to Randolph – but nothing of the magnitude of what is being proposed at 3701. That may change, should 3933-14th St. (Mark's Market) sell. That block is seeing or has seen additions of businesses, and facade improvements to others that are trying to be leased.

The 3800 block is a different story, with the addition of 2 multi-level units, with at least 15 new residences and one with a street-level office – Globe Electric. And the 3700 block, on the Southeast-side @ Quincy, which offers 7-11 as its front, is actually 1380 Quincy St., a multi-level, multi-unit apartment complex that does offer rear parking; 3701 would not.

As offered earlier, I am concerned about the nature of any business operation at 3701, as the Westside of that hundred block is filling-up fast with ABRA-licensed establishments. 7 out of the 10 commercial properties have some type of alcoholic beverage license, with 3 of the first 4, and 6 of the first 7, all between Spring Rd. and Quincy St., having ABRA licenses, save one instance 3714 (the old Quick Cash business) being placarded as a new CT application for Washington Heights Bar and Lounge. They came before ANC 4C in late Spring 2015, and is still undergoing renovation under a Class B "alteration" permit, due to expire in September of 2016; it is renewable.

Finally, this authority needs to recognize, in addition to all of the above, coming before you in the not to distant future, is the mix-use development at 3700-14th St. – BZA #19237 – also seeking relief from off-street parking for a 4-unit building, as well, and then there is 1433-1435 Spring Rd., NW, a multi-unit apartment building that will accommodate 36 families, (not people, families).

What is not being talked about, is how all this development in such a concentrated area, is going to affect the parking – you can't "no RPP" for everyone else infinitely – nor has there been any discussion of all of this new development on the immediate area's infrastructure.

These added developments, including 3701-14th, will be weighing heavily on an aging infrastructure. So, low water pressure for your morning shower or trouble flushing – or worse, backups – when you come from your own bathroom, will be commonplace, because the system itself will be overwhelmed.

In conclusion, it is my understanding that as an ANC, we have a great deal of latitude in our arguments to either approve or deny a request to support a variance.

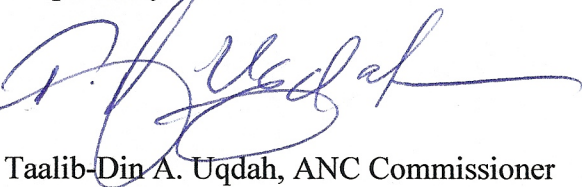
We are allowed to rely on information – impact on the neighbors, neighborhood and community; to also include the number of conversions that have been done in the neighborhood, (as I have outlined above), the effect on public transportation, light and privacy or any other issues neighbors or the neighborhood may have – that the BZA may not use when they are deliberating any of their decisions.

If we were to use the 3-part test that the developer must meet to receive the variance – exceptional, strict application and substantial detriment – at least 2 of the 3 are questionable; the "unusual shape" of the property is "exceptional."

"Strict application" doesn't necessarily fly, as the property is currently being used and could be greatly improved upon as a matter of right. And finally, I believe, from my own review and investigation, the granting of this variance will have a "substantial detriment to the public good."

Thank you for your time and attention to this issue and my concerns; I stand ready to answer any questions you may have.

Respectfully submitted,



Taalib-Din A. Uqdah, ANC Commissioner
4C01