

Board of Zoning Adjustment

Re: Application No. 19452; 1700 Rhode Island Avenue

Dear Chairman Hill and BZA,

Greetings, and thank you for your time. I am a resident of 5B03, and I live within approximately 300 feet of the proposed 1700 Rhode Island Avenue site. My address is 1620 Hamlin Street, NE. Standing in my front yard, I can see the Girard Street building (about 300 feet) that presently hosts 10 or so long-term beds for chronically homeless, I see the group home directly across the street, and if I glance to my left, then I can see another group home. Our SMD is covered by facilities and services similar to the proposed shelter. Without doubt, my neighborhood is diverse, generous, and kind. **Having said that, I oppose the application and any variances, special exceptions, or exemptions, and I find the process to date abhorrent and remarkably disrespectful of my neighbors - in particular, the elderly both nearby and across the street from the proposed site.**

I am absolutely offended by the apparent effort to deprive some of our most vulnerable residents of their voice under the auspices of providing a voice to yet another group of vulnerable residents. The City's employees, representatives, and surrogates have turned what should have been an engaging and community-oriented process into an unnecessarily contentious one where my elderly neighbors are insulted and demonized - including demonizing and insulting Pastor Wilkes, who lives directly across from the proposed site. I have read emails (forwarded to the public) between City employees and elected officials communicating as part of what recent events suggest is an effort to undermine residents' concerns. I learned in disbelief that an elected official was handed a petition in opposition and instead of advancing those concerns, posts an article to the entire City demonizing his constituents and seeking outside support. I have read and heard of social media posts by the City's apparent housing advocates invoking race as if the basis of my neighbors' concerns are somehow racist, which requires you to first ignore those most affected by this proposed site, including neighbors who have lived here their entire lives. Most recently, I have witnessed what appears to be a concerted effort to deprive the residents of a chance to present a meaningful ANC resolution. Please consider why you do not have an ANC resolution, when the residents voted 18-1 to oppose the variances and exemptions and where 4 of the 5 Commissioners recognized the residents were being deprived of their voice — and their rights. These reasons alone, it would seem, are sufficient to take a step back and re-examine how we were led to this site. The process that has led to this site and the manner in which the residents have been treated does not strike me as remotely democratic. The citizens have clearly been intimidated and their voices suppressed. The notion that the residents were engaged in this process is a myth.

As to the proposed structure design, it is hideous. It stands in contradiction to the historic nature of the existing building. It is inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Small Area Plan for the neighborhood. Stated differently, it requires the City to break its promises to the residents — which begs the question to what extent the City could reasonably be trusted to adhere to any promise anywhere in the City, much less a Good Neighbor Agreement. The Committee on Fine Arts appropriately noted that the site is too small for the suggested site goals, and the goals will need to be aligned to the site - not the other way around. The CFA has

asked for and not received an adjusted plan, and the City seems intent on ignoring even an independent critic of the design. Accordingly, I strongly oppose any and all variances, special exceptions, and exemptions.

In the meantime, I am hopeful that the City will re-examine the processes and goals of the program. I would note, moreover, that the project at hand is ending homelessness in the City - not building the proposed design at the proposed site. You will find much support in our neighborhood for the goals underlying the effort to end homeless, but **we expect the City to also honor its promises** to our neighborhood. We expect the City to approach site selection and building design with integrity. I am afraid that the current process and proposal have become task-focused and wholly ignore that there are people on both sides of this issue. There's no need to exploit one group of vulnerable residents in achieving the goal of helping another group.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eric Lee". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Eric Lee