

Cochran, Patricia (DCOZ)

From: armandcuevas <armandcuevas@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 25, 2024 10:39 PM
To: DCOZ - BZA Submissions (DCOZ)
Cc: DCOZ - ZC Submissions (DCOZ)
Subject: Written testimony for BZA Case No. 20974 (Opposition)

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the DC Government. Do not click on links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know that the content is safe. If you believe that this email is suspicious, please forward to phishing@dc.gov for additional analysis by OCTO Security Operations Center (SOC).

Some people who received this message don't often get email from armandcuevas@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

March 25, 2024

Dear Zoning Board,

My name is Armand Cuevas. I've been living in DC for 7 years, am currently a public HS teacher, and plan on living here forever. I love DC and this community but as an Asian American who grew up in vibrant Asian American communities in California, I was horrified to see what DC called "Chinatown" when I first moved here and I'm further horrified to hear what further changes may occur. I am submitting this testimony to express my opposition to, and affirm community concerns related to the proposed development in BZA Case 20974 (507-517 H Street NW). I am compelled to take action on this matter for the following reasons:

Firstly, the proposed displacement of retail space on this block would accelerate the erasure of the Chinese American community, and with it, Chinatown's unique cultural character and economy. With less than 300 Chinese Americans and fewer than a dozen Chinese American small businesses remaining, it is the very existence of Chinatown that is at stake. If a hotel is built, long-term businesses must be protected. They offer an authentic sense of place and connection that is invaluable to our local economy and community, and are simply irreplaceable.

Further, retail displacement will impose deep loss onto the long-term Chinese American residents that serve as the backbone of Chinatown. Residents who work at the businesses will lose their livelihoods. Residents will lose access to essential goods, services, and important community spaces that are central to their cultural identity, happiness and sense of belonging.

It is unacceptable that businesses continue to be pushed out through projects like these. As the city refocuses attention on further developing Gallery Place/Chinatown as an "iconic cultural destination", we ask you: What will Chinatown be without Chinese residents and Chinese businesses? We urge the zoning board and the applicant to take action: if a hotel is built, we believe that long-term businesses and residents must be protected. We support the Wah Luck House Tenants Association's asks for the developer to support small business preservation, and the establishment of an Asian grocery store in Chinatown.

Thank you,

Armand Cuevas Ward 1 626-674-7413

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.20974
EXHIBIT NO.87