

Cochran, Patricia (DCOZ)

From: Matthew Wheelock <wheelockdc@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, July 2, 2024 2:33 PM
To: DCOZ - BZA Submissions (DCOZ)
Subject: 633 E Rear - Case No. 21098 (Alta Laquearia LLC) Comments in Opposition

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Good day,

We write to strongly oppose the renovation plans proposed by Alta Laquearia LLC for 633 Rear E Street, SE (BZA Case No. 21098).

We have lived on the 600 block of E Street SE for close to 15 years and chose to live here - and have loved living here - largely for two reasons:

- 1) **The sense of openness and privacy of the alley.** From the rear of our house we see Christ Church and its spires and grounds. And that's it. No neighbors' windows. That sense of openness was a key factor in our choice to buy this house and to raise our children here.
- 2) **The historical character of the block and its unique alley homes.** We have also always loved the historical character of our block and the unique and wonderful homes - compact and elegant - that are nestled peacefully throughout the alley. Their intimate scale contributes to a valuable sense of community and serves as an important reminder of our city's rich but complicated past. Located just a handful of blocks from the US Capitol, this type of historical character is so important to preserve.

We purchased our home (which dates to 1865) comforted by the fact that our neighborhood lies in an historic district and that zoning regulations would preserve its character. For the past 15 years this has held true.

The proposed renovations to 633 E Rear threaten to change that by directly undermining each of the two qualities described above. They would irrevocably alter both the neighborhood's tremendous sense of openness and privacy (by creating a second story with windows and veranda that would be visible from all angles) and its historical character and scale (by creating a palatial home amidst compact historical ones). And they would deviate from the building codes that have been created precisely to preserve the character of historical districts such as this.

Does 633 E Rear qualify for a variance? We recognize that variances need to be granted from time to time, and we think it appropriate to look to the applicable rules as to when those should be granted.

As our neighbors have shown (see the letter from Kidwell and Lamb), the applicants in this case have not met any of the prongs of the area variance test. Given that failure - and the broad opposition of neighbors such as ourselves - we strongly encourage the Board to enforce the existing codes and deny the proposed plans for 633 E Rear.

Please contact us with any questions.
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