

TESTIMONY OF WILLIAM SISOLAK IN IZIS CASE 21163 – OCTOBER 10, 2024

Hello. My name is Bill Sisolak. My wife, Vira, and I live at 638 A St. which is within the 200' zone for this project. We've lived in our home for nearly 50 years and are active in many local civic and community organizations. I am a former ANC 6C Commissioner for our neighborhood.

I am testifying today in opposition to this project for two reasons. First, I believe that the proposed expansion of a single story, two-car garage into a two story accessory dwelling unit will unduly compromise the privacy of the immediate neighbor at 625 A St. This is in violation of the relevant titles of the DC Zoning Regulations. Specifically, the four second-story windows that are shown in the Yard Elevation of the drawings will provide significant and unimpeded views directly into first and second floor rooms at the back of the neighbor's home.

We can all agree that fairness in granting Special Exceptions is important. Similar cases must have the similar results. Therefore, could the Board please tell us about another previous, similar case in which you denied a Special Exception because it unduly compromised the privacy of the immediate neighbors. And then compare that case with this application.

The privacy issue is important to the immediate neighbor. However, there is a broader issue that has the potential for serious negative effects on our entire neighborhood. That issue is the applicant's request to convert this traditional Capitol Hill row house from its matter-of-right two dwelling units to a three-unit apartment building.

There are many homes in our immediate neighborhood that are virtually identical to the applicant's, including my immediate neighbor's house. Just like the applicant's home, it is large, Victorian-style with a full basement unit and one-story garage. Capitol Hill has hundreds of homes that are just like 627 A St. If the BZA allows our traditional, owner-occupied row houses to become three-unit apartment buildings, that will help to destroy the character of our wonderful neighborhood. Why? Because more and more of these row houses will become rental properties owned by absentee landlords. I regularly get calls and texts from investors wanting to buy my house for exactly this purpose. It is widely reported that owner-occupied homes are being purchased by Wall Street and hedge fund investors to turn into rental properties.

I understand that neighborhoods need a mixture of rental and owner-occupied homes. But those rental units should be either the typical basement apartments with the owner living in the main house. Or, multi-story, multi-unit buildings that were built originally as apartment buildings. What our neighborhood doesn't need is the type of three-unit apartment building requested in this Special Exception.

Thank you.