

Alison Van Horn
619 A St NE
Washington, DC 20002

September 10, 2024

*Re: Opposition to Application for Special Exceptions at 627 A St NE,
Case No. 21163*

Dear BZA,

I have owned and lived at 619 A St NE since 2006. As a neighbor of 627 A St NE, I oppose the application in Case No. 21163 for four special exceptions to construct a multi-story, 3-bedroom house in the back of the lot. The proposed house where the garage now sits will not only negatively and substantially impact the immediate neighbors' air, light, and privacy, but will block the air, light, and open space on the north side of the alley and overcrowd an already congested area.

All the structures on the north side of the alley are one-story garages, mostly of similar height to take advantage of the southern exposure in our gardens and kitchens. That light and air in the back are a most valued asset of our houses and allows the alley's north side to preserve its green space. Our back gardens thrive, and trees and other vegetation are visible, on the north side of the alley because the single-story garages allow for sunlight and air to circulate. Those spaces uniquely function to cool the alley and our gardens in the summer, to provide much needed habitat for birds and other pollinators, and to create openness.

The proposed development at 627 A St NE will drastically increase the height and volume of the present structure, blocking the light and air for the immediate neighbors and the north side alley neighbors. I treasure my garden and the gardens of my neighbors, all of which require the southern sunlight, the circulation of air, and the pest control and pollination provided by birds and pollinators. By blocking the sunlight and circulation of air, the proposed structure will add to the heat island effect, increase the temperature in the alley and on the block, and contribute to stormwater runoff pollution by covering nearly the entire lot with either houses or parking.

It will also result in further crowding of an already congested area. The current house on the lot is huge, at 2400+ square feet and 5 bedrooms, including a basement rental unit. Eight trash cans, which sit in the alley, belong to this house alone. Adding another 3-bedroom house will add more people and more cars, and increase the light pollution, particularly in the back gardens and bedrooms of the immediate neighbors, but also in my back garden and bedroom.

The proposed parking lot between the two houses will add traffic and block easy access to the street. The alley from which 627 A St NE proposes to access its proposed parking lot is a side, through-alley from which currently there is no parking access to any property; all access is from the wider back alley. Attempting to park cars by turning off the narrow side, through-alley will inevitably contribute to frequent blockage by delaying garbage trucks, contractors, service

providers, and residents. It also has the potential to breach the neighbor's fence, threatening the ease and enjoyment of her back garden. The proposed parking lot may also pose a danger to pedestrians and vehicles as they try to navigate a car coming through the narrow alley while steering clear of a car backing out of the proposed parking lot at a 90-degree angle.

I live and work in the back of my house because of the openness, light, and circulation of air afforded over the one-story garages up the alley's north side. The proposed development will damage that light, the air, the openness, and degrade the tree canopy and natural environment, while increasing light pollution, traffic, and congestion, destroying my favorite part of this community and my house. It would also set a devastating precedent for further large-scale development of multi-story and multi-bedroom houses on the north side of the alley where currently *none* exist and from which we all know there is no going back.

I strongly oppose this application for four special exceptions. I respectfully request that you consider the rationale animating the various zoning laws, which serve to promote the health, safety, convenience, and general welfare of this community and neighborhood, and deny this application.

Sincerely yours,



Alison Van Horn
619 A St NE