

Comments in Opposition to Application #21288

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6/25/25

I'm commenting on the application as a resident of Edgewood, and Vice President of the Edgewood Alley Green nonprofit, who owns land directly adjacent to the piece of land we are talking about at this hearing. I also speak on behalf of many working-class neighbors who lack the flexibility to attend a zoning meeting in the middle of the workday. I am here to voice opposition to rezoning this parcel of land.

The area in question today is not just part of an alley – it's a shared open space surrounded by rowhouses that has long served as a gathering point. It's been a chop shop, a parking lot, and a dumping ground. In late 2019 it was also the site of a tragic death, when a neighborhood resident overdosed in their parked car due to the collective negligence of the community to ignore this space. That's when everything changed. In 2020, supported by various City Departments, neighbors got the space cleaned up of abandoned cars, bulk trash, and overgrown weeds. In the process, we wove our community together even tighter.

Fast forward to 2025 and dozens of families have pooled significant financial resources and time to form Edgewood Alley Green, a nonprofit that is turning this space into an official community park. It's been a seismic difference for Edgewood, with people using it for everything from a quiet spot to enjoy nature, to hosting community gatherings for birthdays and holidays. Our organization is now on track to own about half of the open space by this time next year, which will serve the entire neighborhood, not just one house.

While this may seem like a small zoning change and proposed development, it's important to know that this hearing is not being held in a vacuum. In addition to this property the owner purchased an adjacent property with a home on it that is unkempt and has sat empty for over a year. They also purchased an alley lot that is not adjacent, signifying a larger development plan. Building additional structures here, especially with alley-only access, would drastically alter the character of this green space and undermine years of community-led restoration.

In the end, it's about equity. Think about if this hearing were being held about a zoning change in another part of the city – say Wesley Heights, Sixteenth Street Heights, Foggy Bottom or Chain Bridge Road. In fact, it wouldn't be held because those neighborhoods already have exceptions in the City's zoning to block development, "to preserve areas planned as open backyards and alleyways that provide the only access to historic alley dwellings, and to protect the light, air, and privacy that they provide."

I can assume that these neighborhoods received this carveout because of political clout and financial resources. Those individuals don't want an alley lot turned into a residence. They don't want their access to the alley and open space blocked by construction vehicles, polluted by construction dust, or congested by additional people. They get that, without even showing up to a zoning adjustment hearing. What about the people of other neighborhoods? Who gets to request

that their families benefit from the “light, air, and privacy” of an alleyway? Edgewood didn’t have the means to get this kind of special treatment before this development was proposed, but you can help to stop it.

Inequity doesn’t happen accidentally. It also doesn’t always happen because of malicious intent. It happens because you have a system that allows individuals to use it in a selfish way that benefits themselves. In theory, that’s why stopgaps like zoning boards exist. You have the ability to perpetuate the inequity. You also have the opportunity to even the playing field. I look forward to seeing how you vote.