

LISA ZAGAROLI
5003 Nebraska Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20008

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DC Board of Zoning Adjustment
D.C. Office of Zoning
441 4th Street, NW, Suite 200-S
Washington, DC 20001
Via IZIS and bzasubmissions@dc.gov

Subject: Case 21404; Opposition to Proposed Redevelopment; Opposition to Application of 512 Taylor, LLC for 5034 Nebraska Avenue, NW

Dear Chairperson and Members of the Board:

I am a resident and homeowner in the neighborhood and respectfully oppose the application for special exception relief at 5034 Nebraska Avenue, NW.

The proposal would convert a modest middle unit into an oversized four-level structure that extends nearly the entire depth of the lot, leaving virtually no rear yard. This project is fundamentally incompatible with the established character of our neighborhood and would have severe, lasting impacts on adjacent homeowners.

While I support thoughtful investment and appropriate improvements to our neighborhood, this proposal goes far beyond a reasonable renovation. It is a dramatic intensification of development on a lot that was never intended to accommodate a structure of this scale. By extending upward and almost entirely to the rear alley, the building would overwhelm the neighboring homes on both sides, creating a canyon-like effect between existing residences.

The impacts on neighboring property owners would be significant:

- **Loss of sunlight.** A four-story wall between two existing homes will cast extensive shadows over neighboring windows, yards, and living spaces. Natural light is essential to health, comfort, and energy efficiency, and this project would substantially diminish it.
- **Loss of air, openness, and privacy.** The proposed height and mass would eliminate the open feeling that currently exists between homes. Upper-story windows and decks would directly overlook adjacent properties, destroying privacy for longtime residents.
- **Overdevelopment of the site.** Extending construction almost to the rear alley leaves virtually no meaningful backyard or green space. Rear yards provide stormwater absorption, trees, habitat, and separation between buildings. Eliminating nearly all open space represents overbuilding that is inconsistent with responsible neighborhood planning.
- **Neighborhood incompatibility.** The surrounding area consists of owner-occupied triplexes with a consistent scale and rhythm. Introducing what is effectively the first building of this size and intensity into the middle of this block would permanently alter the character of the neighborhood. Good planning requires new construction to be compatible with existing development, not dominate it.

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- **Visual impact.** Instead of blending into the streetscape, the proposed building would become an imposing visual intrusion. Its height, bulk, and lack of setbacks would create an unattractive wall between neighboring homes, diminishing the appearance of the entire block.
- **Property value impacts.** Homes that lose sunlight, privacy, views, and open space frequently become less desirable. Existing homeowners should not bear these burdens so that a developer can maximize the size and profitability of a single project.

Further, I understand that the proposed cellar plan depicts an independent dwelling unit, while the applicant describes the property as a single-family dwelling. The applicant has not submitted an adequate seasonal, side-facing shadow study demonstrating the effect of the proposed addition on neighboring access to light and air. Given the extraordinary height and depth of the project, such analysis is essential. Without it, the applicant cannot carry its burden under Subtitle D § 5201.4(a). The applicant bears the burden of demonstrating, through substantial evidence, that the proposed addition satisfies every applicable requirement for special exception relief. The applicant has not met its burden of proof.

This proposal appears driven primarily by maximizing development potential rather than respecting the surrounding community. The city should not set a precedent allowing speculative redevelopment that sacrifices the livability of existing neighborhoods. The applicant's desire to maximize financial return should not outweigh the rights of neighboring homeowners or the public interest.

The District's planning and zoning framework exists to balance private development rights with neighborhood compatibility and protection of surrounding properties. This proposal fails that balance.

I respectfully urge the Planning Commission and City Council to deny this application or require substantial redesign, including significantly reducing the building's height, increasing setbacks, preserving meaningful rear open space, and ensuring that any redevelopment is compatible with the established scale and character of the neighborhood.

The purpose of zoning and planning is not merely to permit the largest building possible on every lot. It is to protect the health, safety, welfare, and quality of life of the entire community. This proposal does not meet those objectives.

The District should encourage development that enhances neighborhoods—not projects that overwhelm adjoining homes, reduce environmental quality, and permanently diminish the livability of existing residents.

Thank you for your careful consideration.

Lisa Zagaroli
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