BZA Formal Opposition Letter
BEFORE THE BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT
WASHINGTON, D.C.
BZA CASE NO. 21522
Property Address: 5073 Sheriff Road, NE (Square 5176, Lot 211)
Relief Requested: D-5201 Special Exception (From D-207.5 and D-206.3)
Subject: Formal Adjoining Property Owner Opposition and Request for Denial

To the Members of the Board of Zoning Adjustment,

I am writing as the record owner of the property immediately adjacent to the applicant's site at 5073 Sheriff Road, NE. I am writing to voice my opposition to the requested D-5201 Special Exception from 10 ft. Rule (D-207.5) and the Front Setback Requirements (D-206.3) to allow a front addition and rear addition to the existing, two-story + cellar, semidetached building.

Under DC Zoning Regulations, a Special Exception cannot be granted if it tends to adversely affect the use, light, air, privacy, stability, or health conditions, and decrease in value of neighboring properties.

1. Personal Desires Do Not Outweigh Zoning Protections

While the applicant cites a growing family as their narrative reason for expansion, the BZA is bound by law to evaluate the physical impact on the surrounding land. Personal circumstances are temporary, but the structural degradation, foundation risks, loss of light, and permanent architectural disruption to our block will remain permanently.

This request is extreme and is beyond the "Special Exception" requirements. The request is concerning because it disrupts the shared ground land, the foundation and structure of nearby properties, including decreasing the value of my home and other homes in the community. This proposed expansion completely fails that legal threshold and will cause immediate, long-term, and irreversible harm to my home, the homes that utilize the share square 5176, and other homes in the community for the following reasons:

2. Severe Adverse Impact on Light, Air, and Environmental Health

The applicant is proposing a 321 square foot, second-story rear addition and a 122.5 square foot front addition, plus cellar expansions. Because my property sits directly on the open side yard of 5073 Sheriff Road NE, this massive multi-story extension will create a devastating effect. A second-story vertical block will permanently obstruct natural sunlight from entering my side windows and completely choke natural airflow between our homes. This long-term loss of ventilation and light will trap dampness, increase the risk of toxic mold growth, and severely degrade the healthy, sanitary living conditions inside my home.

Because 5073 sits directly in the middle of this steep hillside slope, any environmental changes, lack of structural maintenance, or major rear footprint modifications (like the multi-story addition shown in the blueprint drawing) create intense structural and spatial vulnerabilities for both adjacent ends.

3. **Severe Structural, Digging, and Foundation Risks**

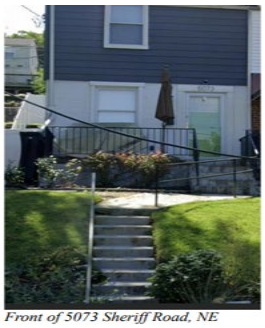
Executing a multi-story addition on an incredibly tight, 2,375 square foot interior lot introduces critical structural risks to my property. The sub-surface digging and excavation required to support a two-story addition create a high risk of soil destabilization directly adjacent to my property. The heavy machinery vibrations and structural shifting from this deep digging threatens the foundation integrity of my home, risking immediate and long-term structural cracks, settling, and shifting. Furthermore, covering a significant portion of their lot with an expanded building envelope destroys natural soil absorption, permanently altering stormwater runoff patterns and dangerously directing heavy water drainage directly toward my foundation. This can have a devasting impact on my home. The significant impact of this construction can have a negative effect on all the properties on the shared square 5176 by causing a cascading "domino" effect. The properties that share the same square are:

- **5063 Sheriff Rd NE**
- **5065 Sheriff Rd NE**
- **5067 Sheriff Rd NE**
- **5069 Sheriff Rd NE**
- **5071 Sheriff Rd NE**
- **5073 Sheriff Rd NE**
- **5075 Sheriff Rd NE**
- **5077 Sheriff Rd NE**
- **5079 Sheriff Rd NE**
- **5081 Sheriff Rd NE**
- **5083 Sheriff Rd NE**
- **5085 Sheriff Rd NE**
- **5087 Sheriff Rd NE**

The photos below in BZA case 21522 show a dramatic elevation drop from the front street line to the rear yard. Homes built on this city block face substantial risk of hydrostatic pressure build-up against the lower foundation walls, leading to potential bowing, cracking, or foundation failure if improper retaining or drainage systems are used.

The architectural line drawing illustrates a massive two-story rear addition resting heavily on column supports above a walk-out basement level. Properties adding similar high-density footprints on sloped lots risk structural settling and load-bearing stress if underlying soil stabilization is inadequate.

Because 5075 sits directly higher up the incline, its structural integrity relies heavily on the lateral soil support provided by the ground directly below it (which is 5073's lot). If 5073 undergoes deep foundation excavation, unreinforced grading, or experiences severe soil erosion along its upper property line, it can cause the soil beneath 5075 to shift downward. This triggers slope failure, resulting in foundation settling, wall cracking, and tilting at 5075. If the retaining setups or structural components on 5073 fail to hold the hillside grade over time, it will gradually drag down the slope stability of 5075.

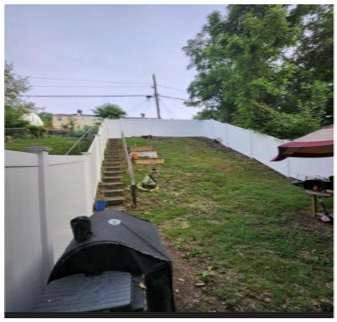


Front of 5073 Sheriff Road, NE



Rear of 5073 Sheriff Road, NE





4. **<u>Infringement on Privacy and Community Impact</u>**

The proposed front and back expansions, paired with new side windows, directly impede our right to privacy by significantly increasing visibility into the second floor of our home, which contains private bedrooms. Furthermore, pushing a second-story addition further into the rear yard drastically alters the privacy dynamics of our adjoining spaces. The windows on a new second-story rear extension will look directly down into my private backyard space, stripping away my privacy entirely.

On narrow parcels, backyards and decks serve as primary private outdoor sanctuaries. A towering extension allows upper-level occupants to look straight down into multiple adjacent yards simultaneously, destroying the ability of neighbors to enjoy their outdoor space without feeling constantly watched. Over-building past allowed rear-yard setbacks suffocates the outdoor living spaces of the immediate neighbors on either side. This drastically reduces privacy and lowers the collective neighborhood curb appeal and market valuation for the entire row within **Square 5176**.
Because these homes feature exceptionally narrow lots and are tightly stepped along a steep hillside, privacy issues do not remain isolated to one property—they cascade

across neighbors and the broader community. The immediate impacts to neighbors include a profound loss of privacy, blocked air and light, and altered views. Ultimately, the overall aesthetic harmony of the community will be permanently altered.

5. Airspace, Ventilation, and Daylight Infringement

The blueprint illustrates a deep, column-supported two-story rear extension. Building a structure of this scale creates a prominent "tunnel effect" along the property lines. This significantly blocks natural path daylight, stalls cross-ventilation, limits privacy, and violates the general airspace layout for the immediate outdoor living spaces of adjacent properties.

When properties on this row build deep, column-supported multi-story rear extensions, it completely disrupts the sightlines, natural daylight, and cross-ventilation for neighboring yards.

As shared spaces (like rear alleys or side drainage paths) become heavily congested, the psychological and physical boundaries that define a private home begin to erode for the entire row of homes from 5063 down to 5087 Sheriff Road NE.

6. Environmental & Water Management Risks

The backyard photo in BZA case 21522 shows a steep, narrow concrete stair system acting as a natural channel for surface water. During heavy rainstorms, community homes situated at the lower grade of this square face an elevated risk of severe yard flooding, soil erosion, and basement water infiltration from the higher-elevation neighbor's property.

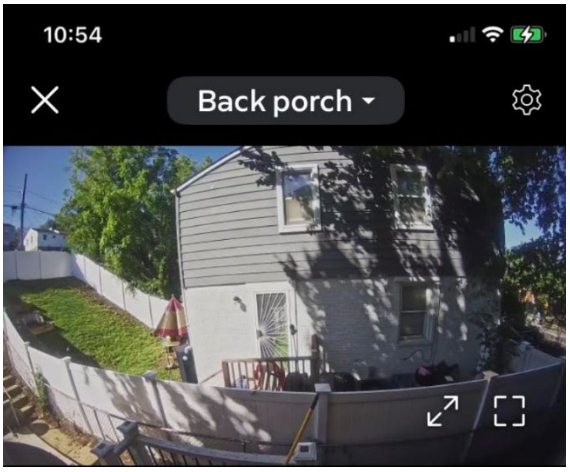
Managing the sharp slope relies heavily on localized barrier structures. Any degradation of soil retention across shared lot boundaries risks shifting earth onto downhill lots.

Heavy structural expansions at 5073 add immense downward weight to the hillside. This weight can exert lateral earth pressure (surcharge load) onto the soil layers beneath it, directly pushing against and potentially compromising any shared lot-line.

For these reasons, the applicant has failed to meet the strict burden of proof required for a D-5201 Special Exception. The applicant should be required to adhere to the DC Department of Zoning regulations to protect the shared environment of a block square. Undue stress and hardships should not be forced upon me, or any other person within this community. I respectfully urge the Board of Zoning Adjustment to protect the rights, safety, and health of the adjacent property owners and **DENY** this application in its entirety.

Below I included several photos of the front sideview and rear sideview of my property at 5075 Sheriff Road NE, that faces the property at 5073 Sheriff Road NE proposed

expansion (see below Blueprint photo). These photos captures the impacts that I will face.





Concerned Property Owner

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Cc:

7C04 ANC Commissioner