



COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20001

March 9, 2000

Mr. Lloyd Jordan, Director  
Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs  
941 North Capitol Street, N.E.  
Washington, DC 20001

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
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Re: Building and Land Administration -- Yale Steam Laundry

Dear Mr. Jordan:

I am concerned that a recent decision by the Zoning Administrator regarding a proposed hotel at the Yale Steam Laundry site on New York Avenue may demonstrate inappropriate action. The action highlights a potential pattern of continued problems in the Zoning Administrator's office: a pattern that is potentially very destructive to the integrity of zoning and land use in the District and destabilizing to neighborhoods.

The Zoning Administrator issued an opinion on September 25, 1998 effectively waiving housing requirements articulated in the Zoning Code of the District of Columbia (DCMR Section 1707.3) at the request of a private developer. This opinion, if followed, would amount to an impermissible zoning change. Zoning changes are the purview of the Zoning Commission; the Zoning Administrator went beyond the statute to grant the exemption. This is not acceptable and should be reversed by you as the Director of the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs.

In a memo dated September 25, 1998, attorneys representing the owner of the Yale Steam Laundry asserted that certain historic landmarks like the Yale Laundry should be exempt from housing requirements. The Zoning Administrator signed this memo, stating "CONCUR." The opinion, if followed, would amount to a change in the zoning regulations of the District of Columbia.

DCMR Section 1707.3 states that "landmark sites within in the DD District are governed by the underlying zones and the special use requirements and incentives provided in Sections 1703 through 1706 of this chapter." The Yale Laundry site sits in a Housing Priority Area of the Downtown Development District (DDD) as defined in Title 11, Section 1706.8 of the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations. One of the stated objectives of the DDD is "to create the greatest concentration of housing in the Mt. Vernon Square area." (DCMR Title 11, Section 1706.1) As such, the C-2-C/DD zoning includes a residential requirement, defined as "no less

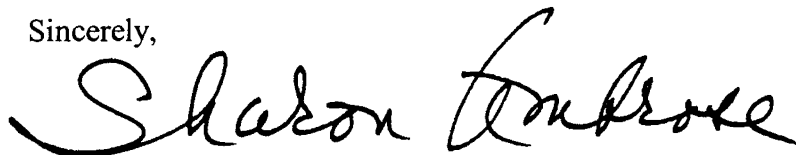
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than 4.5 FAR of residential use." (Section 1706.4 (b)) In other words, development on the Yale Laundry historic site should include at least 4.5 FAR of housing - a potential of hundreds of units. Despite this clear instruction in D.C. law, the Applicant sought a waiver of the housing requirement through a **non-public** process involving the Zoning Administrator at the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs. The Applicant claimed to be exempt from the housing requirement based on the landmark status of the Yale Laundry buildings and surrounding lots.

DCMR Title 11, Section 1706.20 **specifically** lists squares and lots that are exempt from the Downtown Development District residential requirement. Square 514, in which the Yale Laundry sits, is **not** on the list. On the contrary, Section 1707.3 states that "Uses within buildings in the historic districts and landmark sites within in the DD District are governed by the underlying zones and the special use requirements and incentives provided in Sections 1703 through 1706 of this chapter."

This misuse of authority and effective zoning change should be nullified. The matter should return to the proper forum for adjudication: the Zoning Commission. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter. Please let me or Esther Bushman, my Committee Clerk, know if you have any questions whatsoever. We may be reached at 724-8072.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sharon Ambrose". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sharon Ambrose, Chair  
Committee on Consumer  
and Regulatory Affairs

cc: Eric Price, Deputy Mayor for Economic Development and Planning  
Andrew Altman, Director, Office of Planning  
Tersh Boasberg, Chair, Historic Preservation Review Board  
Sheri Pruitt-Williams, Interim Director, Zoning Commission  
Darlene Taylor, Director, Office of Intergovernmental Affairs