

To: DC Zoning Commission

RE: Case No. 08-6A

Date: 25 February 2014

To Whom It May Concern:

As residents of Adams Morgan in Ward 1 for more than 20 years, we are deeply concerned by the increased conversion of row houses in our neighborhood into pop-up buildings that loom over their neighbors' properties and destroy the enjoyment and use of adjoining back yards. This is a quality of life issue that, if left unaddressed, will lead to fewer housing options for Adams Morgan residents and newcomers and a diminishment of the character and beauty that first attracted us to this neighborhood in 1992.

We have first-hand experience of the negative impacts of row house pop-ups, as we live two doors east of a particularly egregious example on Lanier Place. Our immediate neighbors to the west adjoin this property, and their back yard has been rendered useless as a garden now that it is completely shaded by the new construction. Opportunistic architectural shoe-horning has turned what was a three-story building into four stories with a roof deck. Apparently, current zoning regulations also allowed the developer to use every square inch of the back yard for expanding the structure. Consequently, neighboring properties on all sides have diminished viewsheds, less sunlight, and a structure looming over them that is significantly higher and larger than any other row house on the block. This project did not create more affordable housing for the neighborhood, as even the smallest of the units was originally offered for sale for more than \$300,000.

We are not opposed to multi-unit buildings in Adams Morgan and understand that reasonable development, and the architectural diversity that comes with it, is one of the things that keep a city vibrant. However, one can hardly argue that the neighborhood is lacking apartment buildings, condominiums, or co-ops, especially when we now have several additional ones planned or already under construction on Adams Mill (site of the former Exxon station), Columbia Road (at the old Ontario Theater site), the Glass property next to Fire Company 21 on Lanier Place, and the huge development behind Harris Teeter. What the neighborhood will be lacking soon is single-family homes, unless new zoning restrictions are placed on the height and extent of the property that can be developed.

Lanier Heights is currently zoned as R-5B. This zoning is not characteristic of many of the residential neighborhoods in the city and allows property owners to build to the back *and* to the front of the lot, as well as pop-ups. As a remedy, we propose **changing the current zoning** for the cluster of streets with row houses — Lanier Place, Ontario Place, Argonne Place, Ontario Road, and 18th Street — with features adopted from the R-4 zoning requirements that limit the number of units in any one row-house to two, limit the part of the lot that can be occupied by new construction, and limit the height of row-houses to prevent the addition of a fourth floor. Existing apartments, condos, and multi-unit properties will be unaffected by this re-zoning—it will simply limit the ability of developers to convert more of the existing homes to pop-up developments.

Sincerely,



Charles G. Burg and Jessica H. Beels

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