

January 29 2015

D C. Zoning Commission 441
4th Street, NW Suite 200S
Washington, DC 20001

**Re: Case no. 14-11
1521 Varnum Street, NW**

Dear Members of the Zoning Commission

My name is Elisa M. Irwin and I have owned my house at 1500 Varnum Street, NW since 1999 I was unable to attend your last Commission meeting, therefore I am sending you this letter in support of the proposed changes to regulations on R-4 districts. I must draw your attention to the recently unveiled plans to develop a single family residential dwelling into a **seven-unit, 2 bedroom with den and 2.5 bath** condo on 1521 Varnum Street, NW

To allow the construction of a seven-unit apartment building from a single family dwelling, sitting in a beautiful residential neighborhood of row-houses, is an obvious mistake and a misunderstanding/misuse of the R-4 zoning code which governs the lot in question.

You undoubtedly know this code well, but let me quote from the R-4 zoning code a section that clearly describes why the decision to allow an apartment building at 1521 Varnum Street has to be repealed:

" In the R-4 or residential flat zone district, two dwelling units are permitted as a matter of right, although the R-4 zone is unique in that it also includes a provision that allows for the conversion, within set limits, of existing buildings into multi-family units. Even so, **the Zoning Code goes on to state that "the R-4 District shall not be an apartment house district** as contemplated under the General Residence (R-5) Districts, since the conversion of existing structures shall be controlled by a minimum lot area per family requirement."

Further, in his letter dated August 11, 2014 addressed to the real estate attorney of the developer of 1521 Varnum Street, Zoning Administrator Matthew LeGrant states, **"The primary purpose the R-4 District shall be the stabilization of remaining one-family dwellings."**

While these are his words, **the actions he has taken run completely contrary protecting single family dwellings.**

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Importantly, the current investor, who plans to flip his recent investment of a quaint row-house into an apartment building which will basically destroy the character of all the backyards on Webster St and Varnum St. facing this wrongly proposed apartment building.

I have looked at the proposed drawing of the apartment building in detail. The height and the general size of this monstrosity will surely block my view and, steal any notion of privacy. This proposed development will significantly and negatively impact parking, public transportation, the shared *alley* between Varnum and Webster. It is a particular pain for me to realize the outstandingly large and old trees and greens that will have to be cut to make space for brick and mortar

Two things in summary:

1. I strongly urge the Board to support proposed changes submitted by the Planning Office (PO) which would repeal of §330 5 (e) and prevent residential structures in R-4 zoned areas from being converted into apartment buildings of multi-unit condominium buildings. It is critical that the ZB, ZA and PO work together to stop the exploitation of our neighborhoods by non-resident developers and to contain the rampant pop-up and pop-out construction.
2. Repeal all permissions for 1521 Varnum Street, NW to build the illegal apartment building.

Thank you ^s for

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elisa M. Irwin', written over the word 'for' in the preceding line.

Elisa M. Irwin
1500 Varnum Street, NW
Washington, DC 20011

your attention to this critical matter. Sincerely,