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Anthony Hood, Chairman
Zoning Commission
441 4th Street NW
Washington, DC 20001

RE: Applicant/Case Name: Residents of Lanier Heights & ANC 1C
Case Number: 15-09

Dear Chairman Hood, Vice Chairwoman Cohen, Mr. Miller, Mr. Turnbull, and Mr. May.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

My name is Meg Staines. I have been a resident of Lanier Heights for 20 years and I am writing to urge you to support the requested change in zoning for Lanier Heights from R-5-B to R-4. The situation in our neighborhood is completely out of control. The developers are robbing us of our quality of life. The people who designed and built the Lanier Heights neighborhood placed a value on aesthetics, they knew right from wrong, they appreciated architecture, and they designed and built houses where families would have what they need to live a pleasant life, including lovely back yards. The developers buying up row homes in Lanier Heights today view the whole entire place as nothing but square footage. These people do not live in Lanier Heights, they do not intend to ever live in Lanier Heights, they don't care about Lanier Heights, and they don't care about anybody that lives there. They come from Chantilly, VA and Potomac, MD, and they rob us of our back yards, our views, our light, our air, our green space, the harmony of long rows of back yards (each unique, but all at the same scale), and long rows of multicolored facades (with green front yards) that characterize the neighborhood. These developers will build pretty much anything, no matter how ridiculous, no matter how offensive to neighbors, and no matter how ugly, and boy are those Pop-Ups ugly. These developers rob us, leave us with ugly 50-foot brick walls along our back yards instead of neighboring yards where families relax, and then they go back to Chantilly, VA and Potomac, MD with a whole lot of money. Lanier Heights is my home, and has been my home for 20 years, and Lanier Heights is not merely square footage. What about our property rights?

I spent my life savings to buy an extremely deteriorated rowhouse, sold "as-is" for \$220,000, with lots of problems. I have spent the past 19 years fixing those problems, and I have fixed all of the problems that I know about, and I have sunk hundreds of thousands of dollars into doing so. It all seemed completely worthwhile to me, and I had no plans to leave, because 1768 Lanier is my home, it is a lovely place to live, and I love the neighborhood. Well, that all came crashing down on me on May 18th, 2015, when my neighbors at 1766 Lanier told me that they had sold their house to the developers in March 2015. The developers plan to demolish the house and build a 6-unit monstrosity that stretches all the way to the alley, 50 feet tall, and in "compliance" with the 60% occupancy rule, they plan to place the 40% "non-occupancy" INSIDE those walls in the form of a courtyard. When he is finished, and the development on Columbia Rd is finished, my back yard and parking area will be surrounded on three sides with 50-foot walls, with the fourth side being my much shorter 31-foot-tall house. I will lose sunlight, the view of the sky, air, and the enjoyment of my back yard.

My neighbors on the other side of 1766 Lanier, are the most lovely people you could ever want to know. They have lived at 1764 Lanier for 31 years, and raised 13 children there. They are 83 and 85 years old, and every day,

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they are in their back yard tending to trees, and vegetables, and fruit trees, and other plants. They are always working on something. The 50-foot tall monstrosity will block all sunlight to their yard, as they are situated northeast of 1766 Lanier. In my opinion, doing that is immoral and it definitely should be illegal. What about their property rights? At the present time, the configuration is one large apartment building next door to me, then seven contiguous rowhomes at the same scale, and then another large apartment building. After the monstrosity is built, it will be: apartment building, one rowhome (mine), monstrosity, five rowhomes, and apartment building. It is fairly obvious to anyone who thinks about it, that this is the beginning of the end of the other six rowhomes as well.

The presence of the architectural charm and open space provided by the rowhomes is not only good for the rowhome owners. It makes the neighborhood more pleasant for people living in the apartment, co-op, and condo buildings too. The residents of the existing apartment building adjacent to my yard will also be robbed of their quality of life when the monstrosity is built, as they used to have a view from their balconies of seven lovely rowhome back yards and now they will look at a 50-foot wall (70 feet long). What about their quality of life? The ever-tightening parking situation, loss of green space, and increased noise also affects everybody. Since the recent neighborhood developers have been unwilling to provide a few square feet of space to store their garbage cans, our alleys are now an obstacle course of garbage cans permanently stored IN the alley because there is no place to put them away. This is what zoning laws are supposed to prevent.

I do not know how the neighboring developer will possibly be able to underpin the foundation enough to support a 50-foot building without destroying my foundation and the party wall. My house may literally get destroyed in this process – such has happened in similar situations in the neighborhood in recent months. How will my roof hold up to the snow from 19 feet above it? They could destroy both our houses, 1768 and 1764. Then they will go back to Rockville, MD with all the money that they got from Lanier Heights. Of course, they hope that we will throw up our hands in frustration and sell our homes to them too.

The fact is that if you have some capital, you can buy one of these rowhouses, and fix it up really nicely, without building up or back, and not rob anybody of their quality of life, AND you maintain the historical /architectural charm of the neighborhood, and you can sell the place a year later and make hundreds of thousands of dollars. Isn't that enough? When did everybody get so greedy?

Lastly, this process has been going on for a really long time. After years of discussions with neighbors, Zoning, Planning, and the ANC, the original proposal was submitted to the ANC in October 2014. The neighborhood turned out overwhelmingly in favor of R-4 in January 2015 when the ANC hearing took place. The ANC voted unanimously in favor of the R-4 proposal in April 2015, and now it is March 2016. In the meantime, more ugly PopUps have blighted the neighborhood.

I thank you, the Commissioners, for addressing this, and I urge you to vote in favor of the zoning change to R-4. Your decision will literally determine whether Lanier Heights survives or gets destroyed by blight. You will also be deciding whether I have to give up my home if this developer is allowed to rob me of my quality of life.

Sincerely,
Meg Staines
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