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From: Susan Leighton <susanleighton@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 17, 2016 11:49 PM
To: DCOZ - ZC Submissions (DCOZ)
Subject: Support for 15-09

My name is Susan Leighton. For the past thirty plus years, we have lived on Lanier Place. I am writing to make known our support for the R-4 rezoning of Lanier Heights, our neighborhood. When we moved to Washington, DC, we chose to move to Adams Morgan rather than Cleveland Park or Chevy Chase, or similar neighborhoods. This was because we felt very strongly that we wanted to raise our children in an urban, diverse community. Adams Morgan seemed like the perfect place - multi-racial, multi-cultural, multi-income. Living on Lanier Place turned out to be wonderful for us, although not without its challenges. But, because we were committed to the neighborhood, we became involved in various community efforts, joining with neighbors to improve the schools, the recreation facilities, the parks, working to reduce crime, to eradicate rats, etc.

Another thing that we liked about Lanier Heights was the diversity of housing stock. On our block of Lanier Place, there were row houses, rental apartment buildings, cooperatives and condominiums. We valued this diversity and density, because it meant that all sorts of people were living on our block - families, single people, young people, older people, and homeowners and renters.

However, this desirable balance is now changing in an alarming way with a rapid increase in condominiums. On our block alone, there is a new nine-unit building where a single family house used to be, new units where the gas station used to be, and two other former single family row houses turned into condominiums. Of course, there have been no new row homes built. Nor will there ever be, for obvious reasons. This is a major change for one block. A block that already had five apartment buildings. But, there is nothing unique about our block. A similar pattern is taking place on the other blocks in Lanier Heights.

Very few of these new units are large enough for a family with children. And, of course, none of them have backyards where children can play. If this trajectory continues, what it will mean is that there will no longer be homes for families who value the type of neighborhood Lanier Heights has been and who want to bring up their children in such a neighborhood. They will have no choice but to move to the suburbs. This will be a very unfortunate turn of events, not only for them, but for the entire community and its institutions.

We recognize that with the increase in population in the District, there is a need for more housing. Locations such as the corner of Lanier Place and Adams Mill Road where a gas station used to be, the site on Columbia Road where the Ontario Theater used to be, and others, are providing new condominiums that will be desirable for young people. We would like to be clear that we have no objections to increased density in locations such as these. Indeed, it is nice to think that perhaps some of these young people will grow to love the neighborhood and as they get older, and maybe have children, might want to buy a house. How sad it will be if there are no more row houses left to buy.

While the District has become a desirable place for young people to move to, it has also become a more desirable option for many families now than it was thirty years ago. And so, in summation, what I would request the Zoning Commission to do is to think about balance. In order to have the kind of balance, of diversity, of residents that so many of us value, and that make for a vibrant inner city, we need to be vigilant about providing a balance in housing options, so that the other types of diversity will continue to exist.

Thank you for your careful attention to this matter.

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 15-09
EXHIBIT NO. 18

Susan Leighton
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