

RE: Case 16-23, Valor Development LLC Proposal

Written Testimony of Ellen Bass in Support of Ladybird Mixed-use Project

January 7, 2019

Chairman Hood and Zoning Commission Members:

I write this testimony in support of the proposed mixed-use project presented in this design review application. As a 36-year DC resident of Ward 3, I am keenly interested in improving the vitality, walkability and availability of amenities in the neighborhoods here. This project advances these goals.

This project offers a new grocery store, one that is not now available to northwest DC residents, along with new residential development to support it and provide critically needed housing in Ward 3. The grocery store and other small retail proposed will make the neighborhood more walkable and inviting. The buildings in question are a more-than-reasonable size for the space. This development replaces a grocery store that existed until it was closed several years ago leaving a dead and unsightly property; therefore, the retail component of the proposal before you is not a significant change. As for the residential component, my understanding is that it is not far larger (if larger at all) from what could be built as a matter-of-right. This project taken as a whole including a small public space and retail is superior to a matter-of-right residential-only development.

I welcome more residential development like this, because of the great need for more housing in DC. With the over 200 apartments and a significant number of larger units, the project will accommodate many people who want to move from single-family homes or do not want to or cannot afford to live in one. To the extent that those people come from outside DC especially, having new residents here will grow the tax base and fight commuter traffic congestion with the attendant environmental degradation it brings. There is close-by bus service and a shuttle service to the Tenleytown metro. We should encourage use of such transportation options, and this development does so.

It is important to consider this project in the context of the city-wide concern about affordable housing and displacement. This development will provide 27 apartments at below-market rates under the Inclusionary Zoning regulations. While this is not, of course, a complete answer to the affordable housing issue (no private development will be), it is a piece of the solution. This is especially true in super-expensive Ward 3. At the same time, this development does not displace anyone.

The Commission should also give credit for the extraordinary amount of public engagement the developer undertook to get to this point. The project was discussed at

length at two ANC's over several years (this application was first filed in 2016). It was changed significantly in response to community input. For instance, an opposition group strongly opposed the larger grocery store in the original design, and the current project proposes a smaller one. The residential component was made smaller too. While these changes might not be my personal preference, it is important to recognize that the opposition's position was accommodated.

I urge the Zoning Commission to rule favorably on this review application.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Ellen Bass".

Ellen Bass
3600 Cumberland St., N.W.