

CITIZENS FOR RESPONSIBLE DEVELOPMENT

RESPONSE TO VALOR DEVELOPMENT'S DESIGN REVIEW APPLICATION ZC CASE 16-23

January 24, 2019

Proposal

The Applicant, Valor Development, LLC, through the Design Review Process, is proposing to construct a multi-use project in AU Park consisting principally of a 4 to 6 story, 214 unit apartment building. Five townhomes are also included.

Neighborhood Photos



Yuma Street



Windom Place

Yuma Street View



OUTLINE OF BUILDING HEIGHT
FROM DEC 14, 2017 DESIGN
REVIEW SUBMISSION

—————
HEIGHT OF THE MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE PARKING
SHOPS COMMONLY MISLABELED AS THE SPRING
VALLEY SHOPPING CENTER



Surveyor

The Ladybird

Goals:

- Evaluate the visual impacts of the 10/06/2018 Ladybird Design on the nearest neighbors.
- Evaluate the accuracy of the Valor 10/06/2018 visualizations.
- Specify the type of realistic visualizations needed to allow all parties the ability to make fair and logical comparisons between existing conditions and the newest proposed design.

View from Windom Pl. - Original Design



Windom Place Camera Location: Camera Loc. 01 shown in Orange. 50mm FOV shown in Blue.
Green Model Massing shows the 12-21-2017 Ladybird Design.

View from Windom Pl. – Revised Design



Windom Place Camera Location 01 shown in Orange. 50mm field of view shown in Blue.
Model Massing shows 10-16-2018 Design.

View from Window PI. – Difference



This graphic compares the 2017 and 2018 Designs. The highlighted red area indicates where the 2018 Design reflects a height increase of the proposed building from the 2017 Design.

View from Windom Pl. - Existing Conditions



Camera Loc. 01. Existing Conditions. A 25ft tall survey rod is held by surveyor.

View from Windom Pl. – DDIS Model of Original Design



12-21-2017 Design as seen from Camera Loc. 01. The 3D model's massing accurately represents the height and width of the proposed development from this Windom Pl perspective. A 25ft tall survey rod is held by surveyor.

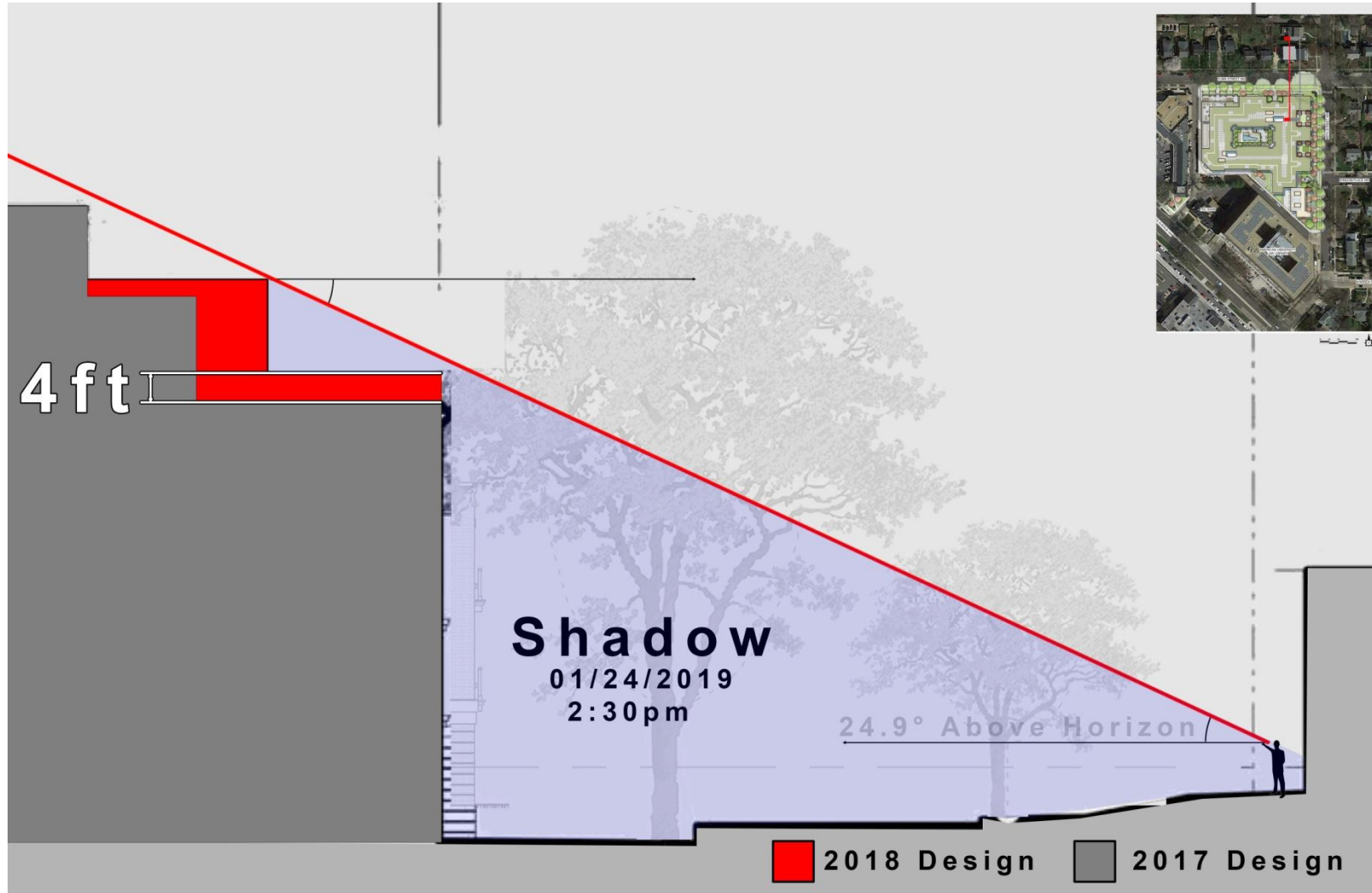
View from Windom Pl. – DDIS Model of Revised Design



10-16-2018 “New” design as seen from Camera Loc. 01. The 3D model-massing accurately represents the height and width of the proposed development from this Windom Pl perspective .

Greater Visual Impacts:

2017 Design vs. 2018 Design: Visual Impacts on Nearby Neighbors




The nearest sections of the building have increased in height by 4ft, and portions of the penthouse now protrude further East (and North along Yuma), which makes them closer and taller. This increase in height along the perimeter of the building negates the proposed decrease in height at the building's center with regards to the nearby neighbors.

View from South end of Alley



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Alley View

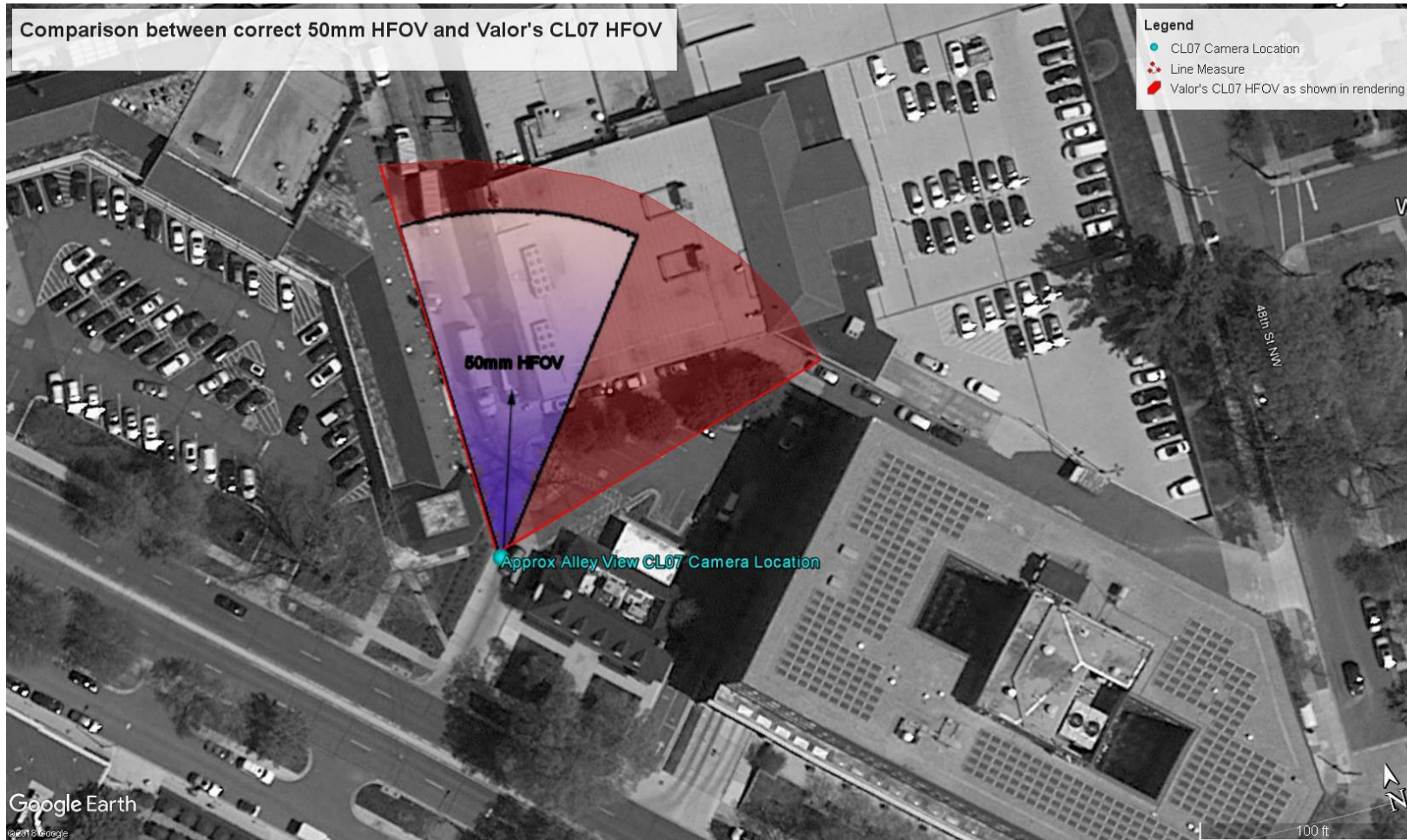
 VALOR DEVELOPMENT
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50 MM Lens (Produced in Lumion) ^{10/16/2018} CL07

THE LADY BIRD

Valor's Rendering CL07

Viewshed diagram - "CL07 Alley View"



This graphic compares a true 50mm's horizontal field-of-view (Blue HFOV)(39.6°) with the actual Red HFOV portrayed in Valor's CL07 rendering. Note the dramatic difference between the two. While the rendering is labeled as a 50mm, it is clearly much wider. It is likely a 24mm lens. Using a wide-angle lens inherently reduces the visual impact of the proposed development by shrinking the building.

Conclusions:

While the 2018 Ladybird design has a lower height profile of 8ft, overall, the new 2018 design has an even **greater visual impact** on the neighbors to the East and the North. Here is why:

Factors:

- The biggest impact stems from the loss of “Windom Walk,” which would have created a visual extension of Windom Place, and maintained some of the light, sky, and visual openness, which currently exists. This current design change effectively creates a wall along 48th St into which Windom Place dead ends. Summer sunsets against the treed horizon would be blocked.
- The nearest sections of the building have increased in height by 4ft, and portions of the penthouse now protrude further East (and North along Yuma), which makes them closer and taller. This increase in height along the perimeter of the building negates the proposed decrease in height at the building’s center with regards to the nearby neighbors.

Side-by-Side Comparison Views of Windom Pl.

Understanding Renderings (Apples to Apples): The importance of visual consistency regarding real and virtual camera locations.

When comparing and contrasting the visual impact of competing designs, it is imperative to maintain a constant camera location and field of view. By maintaining the same perspective, there are fewer changing variables. This provides the viewer with a better understanding of the difference between existing and proposed views.



DDIS Cam 01 Existing Conditions.
Camera is approximately 254 ft from property line.

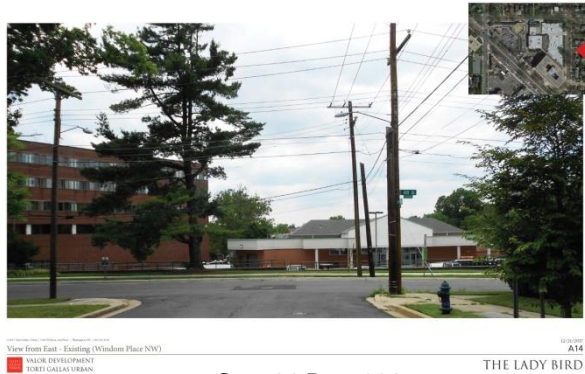
DDIS Cam 01 Proposed Conditions. **2017** Design.
Viewshed is identical to existing condition.

DDIS Cam 01 Proposed Conditions. **2018** Design.
Viewshed is identical to existing condition.

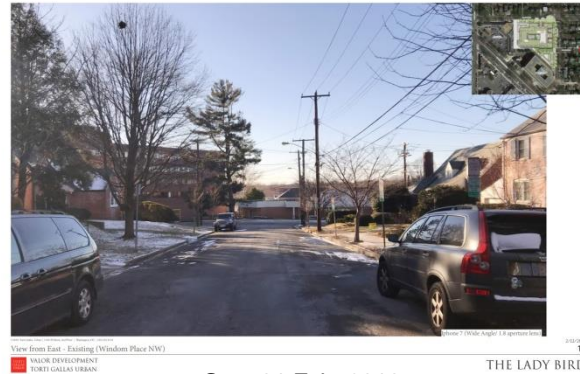
Misleading Comparisons

Evolution of the Lady Bird Development design, as portrayed by Valor over time. Notice the disorienting effect of changing camera locations and perspectives. With each generation, the camera location moves further away from the proposed development. Additionally, the camera lens and, therefore, the perspective changes with each version.

- The first shot (top left) is captured with a wide angle lens close to the intersection of 48th St and Windom.
- The second shot (top center) is captured from farther back with a wide angle lens. As with the first image, this artificially pushes everything further away and effectively shrinks things at a distance.
- The third version (top right) is the farthest away, but with a mid-range lens
- While each camera location is noticeably different, the camera location maps are virtually identical, and usually inaccurate.



Cam 01 Dec. 2017.
Camera is approximately 125ft from property line.



Cam 01 Feb. 2018.
Camera is approximately 240ft from property line.



Cam 01 Oct. 2018.
Camera is approximately 300ft from property line.



Cam 01 Dec. 2017. "Proposed Conditions"
Rendering associated with above shot.
Entirely virtual. No real references.



Cam 01 Feb. 2018. "Proposed Conditions"
Rendering associated with above shot.
Building overlay on real image, but wide angle.



Cam 01 Oct. 2018. "Proposed Conditions"
Rendering associated with above shot.
Entirely virtual. No real references.

Misleading Comparisons:

The Negative Impact of Camera Location/Perspective Shifts
Between Existing and Proposed Conditions: View from 48th St and Yuma St.



100% Northside Urban - 100% Northside Urban - 100% Northside Urban
View from Northeast - Existing (48th and Yuma Street)
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10/16/2018
50 MM Lens A16
THE LADY BIRD

“Existing” Shot from the intersection of 48th St & Yuma St.



100% Northside Urban - 100% Northside Urban - 100% Northside Urban
View from Northeast - Proposed (48th and Yuma Street)
VALOR DEVELOPMENT
TORTI GALLAS URBAN

10/16/2018
50 MM Lens (Produced in Lumion) A17
THE LADY BIRD

This “Proposed” view is from approximately 100ft further away and has nearly double the horizontal FOV as the above “Existing” shot. Additionally, as this are entirely virtual, there are no real references. The tall, foreground tree on the right does not exist.

The impact of the shift in camera location, coupled with the virtual environment, misleads the viewer, presenting it as smaller and further away.

Misleading Comparisons:

The Negative Impact of Camera Location/Perspective Shifts
Between Existing and Proposed Conditions: View from Yuma St, West of North/South Alley.



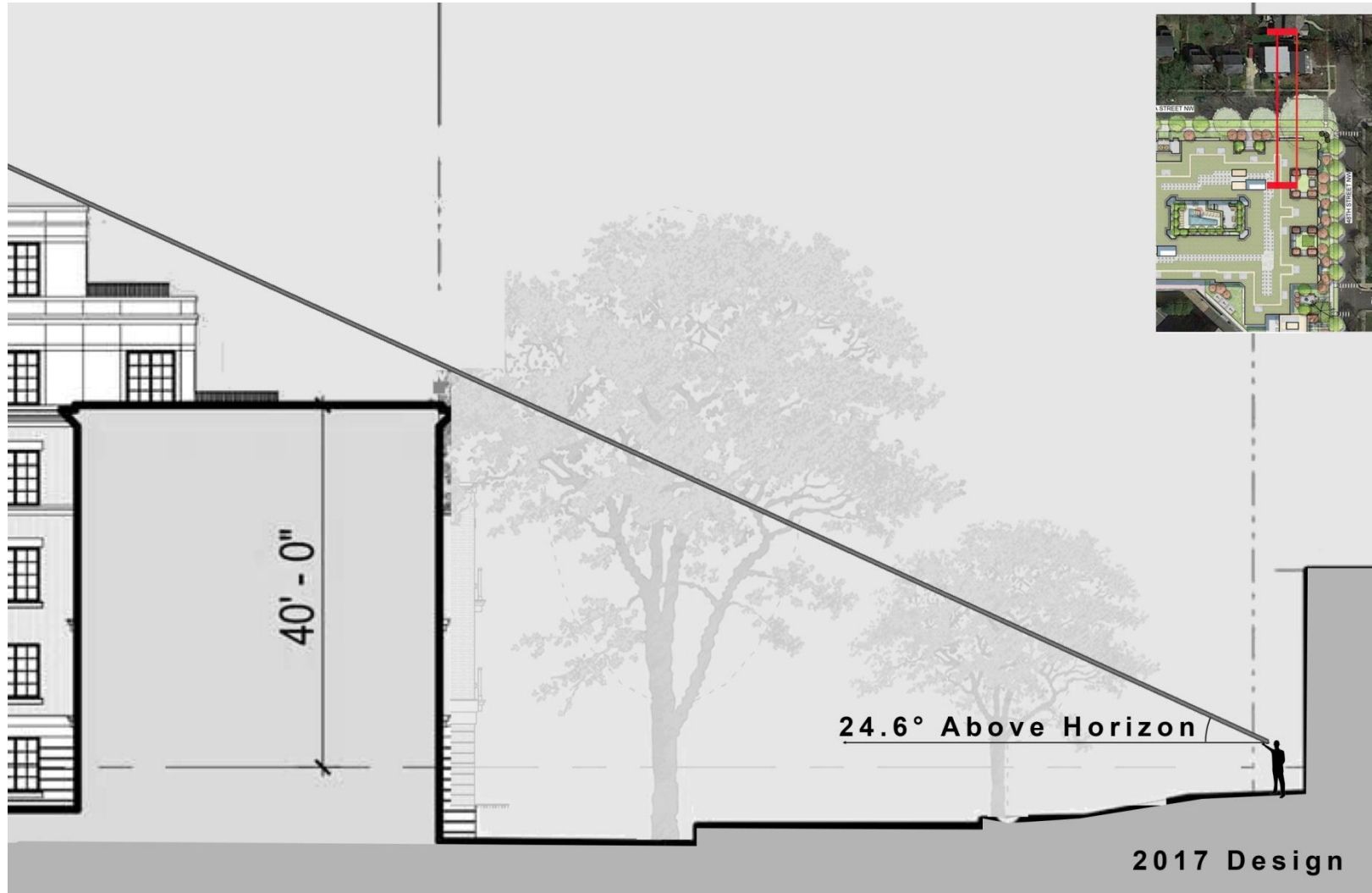
“Existing” Shot from Yuma St, West of the North/ South Alley.



This “Proposed” view is from an entirely different perspective. It appears to be from deep within the yard of one of the neighboring houses, as opposed to the street view presented above.

Greater Visual Impacts:

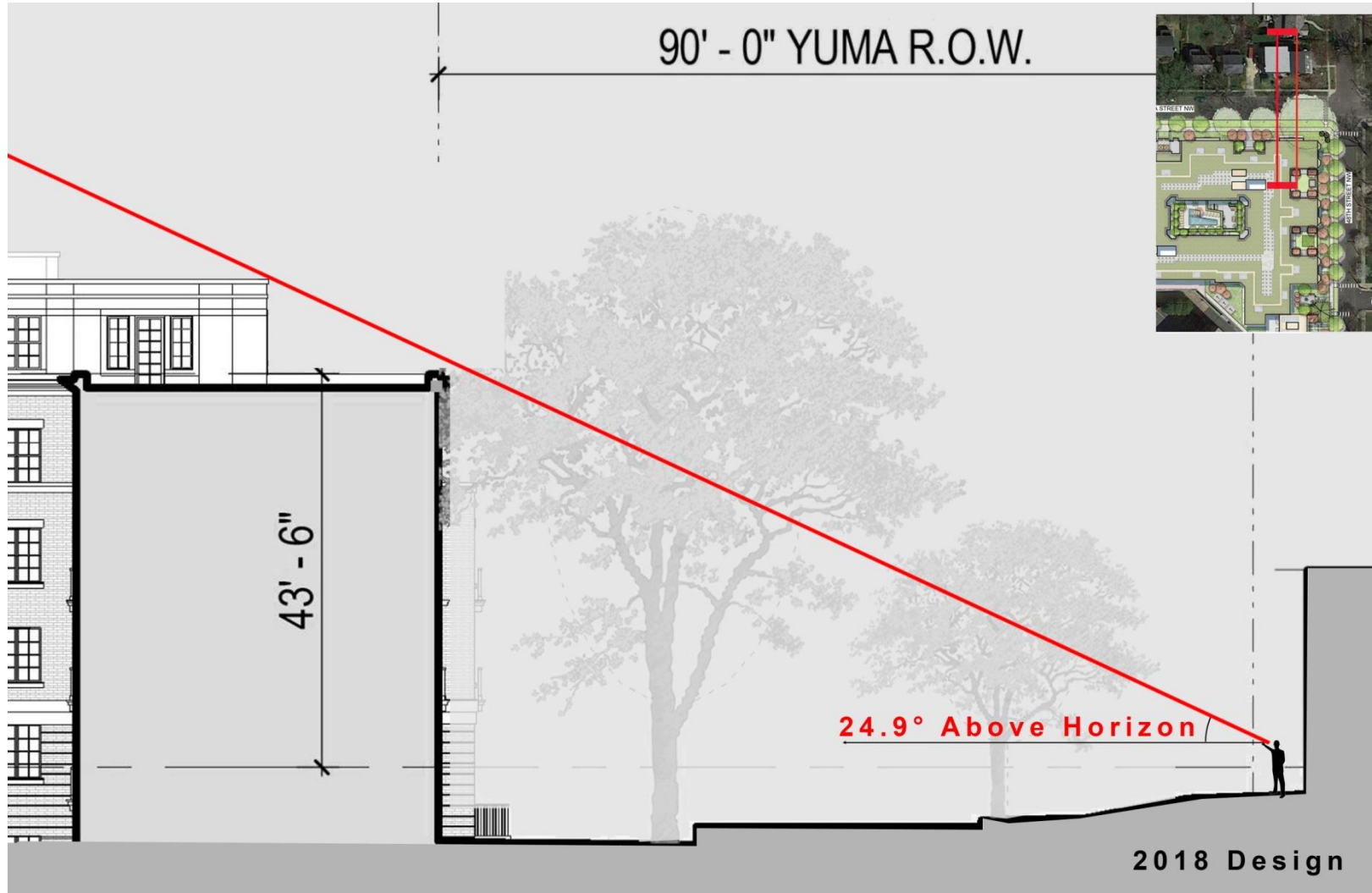
2017 Design vs. 2018 Design: Line-of-Sight Cross Section from Yuma St near 48th St.



The nearest sections of the building have increased in height by 4ft, and portions of the penthouse now protrude further East (and North along Yuma), which makes them closer and taller. This increase in height along the perimeter of the building negates the proposed decrease in height at the building's center with regards to the nearby neighbors.

Greater Visual Impacts:

2017 Design vs. 2018 Design: Visual Impacts on Nearby Neighbors



The nearest sections of the building have increased in height by 4ft, and portions of the penthouse now protrude further North toward Yuma and East toward 48th Street. Both changes makes them closer and taller . This increase in height along the perimeter of the building negates the proposed decrease in height at the building's center with regards to the nearby neighbors.

Conclusions:

While the 2018 Ladybird design has a lower height profile of 8ft, overall, the new 2018 design has an even **greater visual impact** on the neighbors to the East and the North. Here is why:

Factors:

- The biggest impact stems from the loss of “Windom Walk,” which would have created a visual extension of Windom Place, and maintained some of the light, sky, and visual openness, which currently exists. This current design change effectively creates a wall along 48th St into which Windom Place dead ends. Summer sunsets against the treed horizon would be blocked.
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Overview

- Valor has revised its previous plans by now proposing to sink the main building 6 to 8 feet into the ground.
- In this way, Valor is attempting to circumvent affordable housing requirements.
- Density is unchanged.
- Traffic volume is increased.
- The basic flaw remains: the project is just too big for the neighborhood.

Overview Continued

There is considerable opposition to a project of this size.

- Westmoreland Citizens Association representing 990 households has submitted a letter in opposition.
- The 157-home Spring Valley West Homes Corp. opposes the project.
- 32 residents of Spring Valley Court, just across Massachusetts Ave., have signed a petition opposing the project.
- Almost 600 Ward 3 residents have said they would support a 2-3 story building, but not a building as large as Valor proposes.

Proposal Fails to Meet Design Review Requirements

Project is inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

- Basic flaw: the project is just too big for the neighborhood.
- It creates an “overpowering contrast in scale, height, and density” with the surrounding residential and commercial neighborhood.
- The site is designated as low density.

Proposal Fails to Meet Design Review Requirements

1. Impermissible increase in density - contrary to multiple Design Review regulations.
 - Matter-of-right density is 184,514 square feet of GFA
 - Valor is proposing 234,629 square feet of GFA
2. Project also includes 26,050 sq. ft. of below grade residential space.
3. Project “bulks up” a low density neighborhood.

Proposal Fails to Meet Design Review Requirements

Contrary to § 604.8 of the Design Review regulations, Applicant has not shown that the Project is “superior to any matter-of-right development possible on the site.”

Valor's Matter-of Right Illustration



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View from Northeast - Matter of Right (48th and Yuma Street)

10/26/2016

A18

Project Raises Historic Preservation Issues

- There is no authority to transfer density from the Spring Valley Shopping Center
- MU-4 zoning does not determine the SVSC's allowable density
- Project provides no preservation benefits to SVSC as claimed

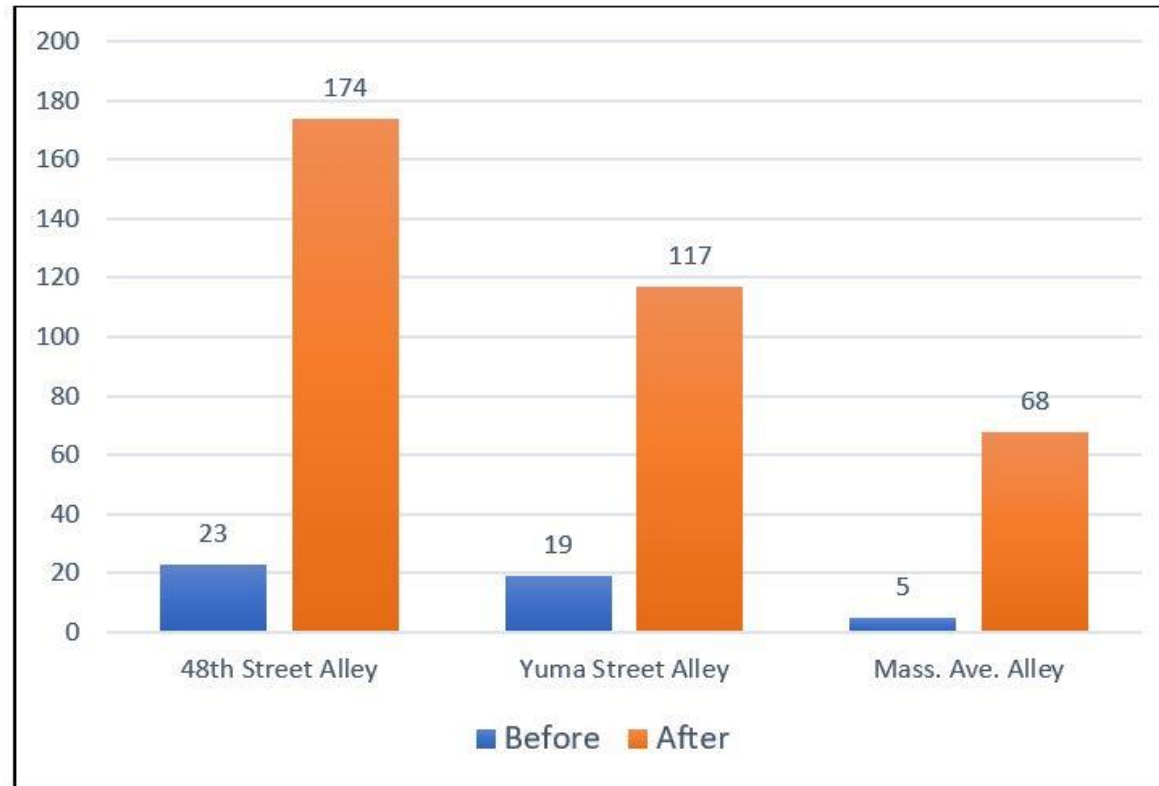
Proposal Fails to Meet Design Review Requirements

There will be an adverse impact caused by the added traffic.

- Valor's estimate of base traffic is based on traffic counts that are over two years old (AU and new restaurant traffic not counted).
- Valor estimates that the Project will generate 322 additional vehicle trips per hour during afternoon peak hours.

Traffic through 48th St Alley will increase 600%

Vehicles Entering and Exiting Alleyways per Peak PM Hour Before & After Project



Source: Data from Gorove/Slade 2017

Proposal Fails to Meet Design Review Requirements

There will be an adverse impact caused by the added traffic.

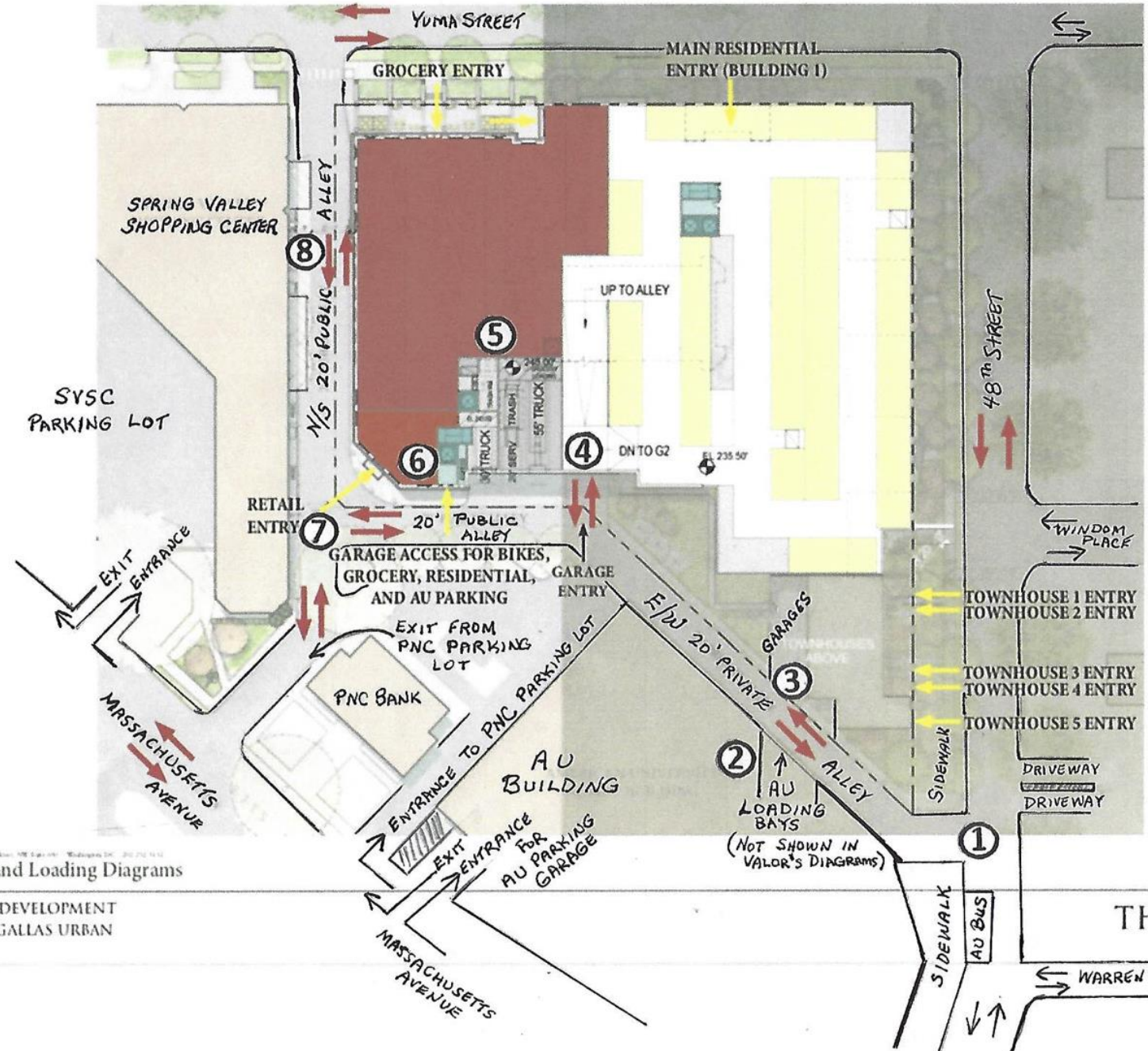
- The volume of traffic in the alleys will reach levels of the nearby city streets.
- Most cars and trucks will use E/W alley; volume will be 342 vehicles from 4 to 6 pm weekdays.
- AU buses load near the entrance to this alley.



AU buses idling on 48th Street and blocking entrance to alley 34

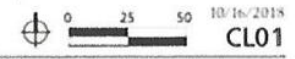


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 Circulation and Loading Diagrams



Circulation and Loading Diagrams

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THE LADY BIRD

American University Loading Bays Along E/W Alley





38

Trucks servicing Spring Valley Shopping Center in alley off Yuma Street

Height of Building

The Zoning Regulations at 11-B § 307.7 do not allow the Applicant to use 48th Street (the highest point) as its measuring point given a lot that slopes down 23 feet with an embankment along 48th Street.



48th Street Embankment

Additional Problems

- Parking is not adequately addressed.
- Project has few or no benefits to the community.
- Project violates the terms of the 1979 Declaration of Easement and Agreement.
- Project continues to fall short on Inclusionary Zoning.
- Project will result in pollution, noise, and deprivation of sunlight.

Conclusion

- The oversized project is just too big for the neighborhood.
- The Zoning Commission should deny the Application and encourage Valor to work with the neighbors on a right-sized proposal.