

## Cochran, Patricia (DCOZ)

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**From:** Patricia E. Kolesar <pkoles@verizon.net>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 25, 2019 8:00 PM  
**To:** DCOZ - ZC Submissions (DCOZ)  
**Subject:** Case number 19-10 Valor Development, LLC Consolidated PUD Square 1499, Lots 802, 803, 806, and 807; Letter in Opposition

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Dear Chairman Hood and the DC Zoning Commission:

As President of SaveWestbard, Inc., I write in opposition to the Valor Development Project in the Spring Valley area of DC.

SaveWestbard is a grass roots organization representing the majority of residents in the Westbard area of Montgomery County in our active lawsuit against Montgomery County regarding the Regency development project at the Westbard Shopping Center and environs. As we continue to fight excessive over-development at the Westbard Shopping Center (MD) - which is quite near Spring Valley, DC – we are also watching the referenced Valor project.

These two projects share similar problems: The projects are simply too big and too dense, and the local infrastructure cannot support the projects in this crowded suburban area along the DC/MD line. The expected crushing impact on traffic flow and local schools has been well documented for the Westbard project, and the Valor Project is no different. Our residential community cannot handle over-sized, over-developed, and blatantly harmful projects. Just like the Westbard project, the Valor development project is too big for the site; it is intrusive and overwhelming for the neighborhood; it is detrimental to local businesses; and it is environmentally unsound.

### **1. The Valor project is too big and dense for the site.**

The SuperFresh property is a 1.9 acre site – which is too small and constricted to hold the planned enormous apartment building plus adjoining townhouses. Further, the surrounding neighborhood is entirely residential (single family homes, R-1-B zone) and the neighborhood is a mere 30-feet across the street from this proposed project. This project is intrusive and overwhelming for the established residential neighborhood and will negatively affect the residents and their homes. Natural light will be blocked by an over-sized building and the neighbors' privacy will be invaded by a towering new building. Moreover, the developer has planned no scenic buffers or attractive landscaping in order to mitigate the negative impact of the project and to appropriately transition to the residential neighborhood. Indeed, the developer currently plans to build on the property line along 48<sup>th</sup> Street and Yuma Street – completely disrespecting the surrounding setbacks of 30-35 feet in front of every single home. Finally, since the beloved Spring Valley Shopping center is historic, the placement of the Valor building is incongruous for the area and inappropriate as well in an area where historic simplicity is maintained and desired.

### **2. The Project will have adverse impacts on the community.**

Many of SaveWestbard residents commute to work using the Massachusetts Avenue corridor, which is already congested during rush hours, particularly around Ward Circle. The added traffic generated by the Valor project will make this situation worse. I understand that the traffic report prepared by Valor shows that the project will generate over 130

additional vehicle trips per hour during the morning rush hours and more than 280 per hour during the afternoon peak hours, as well as 260 per hour during the peak weekend times. The proposed mid-block HAWK signal on Massachusetts between 48<sup>th</sup> and 49<sup>th</sup> Streets will cause additional backups. It's very likely that the congestion will cause commuters to cut through the AU Park and Spring Valley neighborhoods as an alternative. The added congestion will also discourage our neighbors from shopping in Spring Valley. Millie's restaurant is a popular destination, as is Pizzeria Paradiso. There's really nothing like Millie's in the Westbard area, and we must drive to get there to enjoy the local businesses, and parking is already extremely difficult. The Valor project can only make the parking situation worse.

Further, the project plans 214 new apartment units, 5 new townhouses, and a grocery store; and excessive over-development of this nature will lead to an increase in traffic and congestion on both neighboring streets and arterials such as Massachusetts Avenue. Additionally, the alleys designated by the developer for ingress and egress of cars, trucks, pedestrians, and bicycles will fail. The project also fails to provide infrastructure that can accommodate large (50 foot) truck deliveries required for the operation of a grocery store on the premises, especially since the alleys will only be 20 feet wide. Since the alleys cannot accommodate deliveries, we fully expect that trucks, and other delivery and/or service vehicles, will park on 48th Street and Yuma Street to unload and/or pick up, thus blocking one lane of these residential streets. The domino effect will cause pedestrians and bicyclists to swerve or walk around these large vehicles, jeopardizing the safety of our residents. Trucks, bikes and pedestrians cannot safely co-exist in the 20 foot alleyways – especially since the developer has ill-planned narrow pathways with no barriers to separate vehicles from pedestrians. We further note that parking for new residents, grocery shoppers, visitors, employees will necessarily overflow into the neighborhood. The increase in traffic congestion on all the local roads, the ongoing blocked lanes of traffic as vehicles enter and exit the alleyways, the inadequate on-street parking, and the increased noise and air pollution will reduce the livability of the neighborhood and likely decrease the value of the surrounding homes. We also expect a sizeable increase in the number of school-aged children which will strain the already overcrowded local neighborhood schools.

### **3. Current existing businesses will be forced to close if the Valor project is approved.**

While the grocery store part of the site has been closed, the SuperFresh building is not vacant. Other businesses - DeCarlo's Restaurant, Spring Valley Catering, Pitmaster's Barbecue, and Wagshal's kitchens that service Wagshal's deli and market - continue to operate in the rear part of the building. These longstanding businesses are an integral part of the community; and approximately sixty people could lose their jobs. This is unacceptable; these are our neighbors and friends and they are part of the very fabric of the community. DC must protect its local businesses from developer overreach.

### **4. Neighborhood residents will suffer harmful environmental impacts.**

The Valor project is environmentally unsound. Excessive noise and air pollution will negatively affect nearby residents, including many children and retirees. We expect excessive lights from the new project that will shine directly into nearby homes and negatively affect neighbors. Further, the neighborhood will lose the large trees and bushes that currently exist around the site; and as noted above, the developer is not offering any substantial green space as a community amenity. In fact, the current green spaces with attractive flower beds around the site will be eliminated; and the neighborhood will suffer from the egregiously defective development plans.

Thank you for your attention.

Patricia E. Kolesar

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