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From: ethiervg@gmail.com
Sent: Thursday, November 16, 2023 5:35 PM
To: DCOZ - ZC Submissions (DCOZ)
Cc: Schellin, Sharon (DCOZ)
Subject: 1617 U: Please don't upzone!!

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Commissioners,

The thought of a high rise luxury apartment at the 1617 U St / 1620 V St NW site puts a pit in my stomach. I agree that there needs to be more affordable housing in this part of the city, but taking away public land and upzoning a historic district is not the answer. Please consider the mental and community health of the residents of this area. These newer buildings are built in a way that removes the residents from the community. They separate residents from the street-level community and disorient passerbys with their enormous scale.

I think of the Japanese store, Hana Market, across the street from the lot. I think of this small business being swallowed by a behemoth of a building that changes the makeup of U St forever.

Please listen to your constituents.

When the FLUM Map Amendment was passed and the OP proposal to upzone this site was made, it does not appear that planners took into account or respected the fact that the site is completely surrounded by two historic districts - the Striver Section, and the 16th Street Historic District.

Neither of these areas are zoned for high density, high-rise buildings. Neither can they be rebuilt or upzoned, since they are protected as historic areas, both at the Federal and local level. The DC Zoning Handbook itself says that Mixed Use (MU) zones should be 'compatible with the prevailing development pattern within the zone and surrounding areas' and 'provide an appropriate scale of development'. A rezoning of this site from MU-4 to MU-10 would not be compatible with the current, adjacent RA-2 zone, either in density or in height.

It's understandable that the District is concerned about providing more housing for DC residents. But it is not appropriate, nor in the best of interest of the public, to use public land -- our land -- to build more luxury housing, which is what will happen if the site is radically upzoned to allow for for-profit development. We must ensure that our public land is there when we need it to provide the public services our residents need over time, and zoning is one way in which to do that.

The decision of the Zoning Commissioners on rezoning this site at 1617 U St / 1620 V St NW will have the impact of a lifetime. It should not be driven by the short-sighted desires of developers. Rather, it should be driven by good, reasonable, professional and well thought out zoning rules and practices, and by meaningful community engagement.

The community - our community - relies on your professional, respectful, and independent decisions to maintain coherence and stability within our neighborhoods and ensure our future well-being. Without good zoning, we not only lose the unique character of our Capital city, but we also lose neighborhood stability and integrity, as longtime residents, who have invested so much of their lives in the community, are forced to move out and be replaced by short-term residents and for-profit investors.

In light of this, I invite you, the DC Zoning Commissioners, to visit the site of 1617 U / 1620 V Streets NW in person and see for yourselves what the surrounding neighbors are so concerned about with the proposed upzoning. (We circulated a petition to oppose this rezoning, and in a relatively short time we collected over 1,000 signatures just by walking around the neighborhood and standing on the corner of 17th & U Streets for a few consecutive weekends.)

See for yourselves what the District would be giving away to private interests on what is now publicly-owned property. Walk around the neighborhood and see for yourselves why it is that people who have moved away from this community always come back to visit because of the neighborliness, vitality and uniqueness of the area. See for yourselves that there is already a surfeit of luxury housing in the area. And see for yourselves the stability and safety the police and fire stations which are currently on site provide for the neighborhood and community at large. And I think you will agree, that a radical upzoning of this site and a relinquishing of this site to private development is not in the District's best interests.

I respectfully submit to you that the OP request to rezone this site to MU-10 in OZ Case #23-02 be denied so that a more reasonable and publicly beneficial outcome for this property can be found.

Thanks,

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