

**Subject:** Letter in opposition to ZC No. 24-15

**Date:** June 19, 2025

Dear DC Zoning Commission (ZC),

We are an adjacent neighbor of the proposed ZC No. 24-15, writing to express opposition to the 901 Monroe St development as currently proposed. While we support development of the site, the current proposal creates numerous adverse effects for immediate neighbors; it must be redesigned. We oppose discretionary design aspects that prioritize the developer profits over longstanding community members' quality of life. It is dangerous to hastily approve this project; instead the ZC should insist that the developers redesign the project for more appropriate scale and to better protect the safety and health of immediate neighbors.

**Health and safety concern: dangerous alley access.** The proposed use of the Lawrence Street alley as the main entrance/exit for 233 units creates serious safety hazards. Young children regularly play in this quiet dead-end alley, which serves as a community gathering space for families on our block. Converting it to a high-traffic corridor puts the existing families on the block—who have no protection between their back yards and the small alley—at risk. The constant flow of vehicles entering and exiting will also create air and noise pollution. Traffic may be especially congested due to an expected high number of daily deliveries at the 901 Monroe St apartments, and the traffic that will service the retail space allocated in the building.

→ 901 Monroe Street should the **use existing curb cut on 9<sup>th</sup> street**; that alley entrance served the businesses and homes previously on the property (which were demolished by the developers). The **2011 design for this site used the 9<sup>th</sup> Street curb cut**; furthermore, to minimize adverse effects on the adjacent town homes.

→ **2011 design included tree buffers in the alley**—these elements should not have been abandoned in the current proposal. The ZC should require a green buffer in the alley.

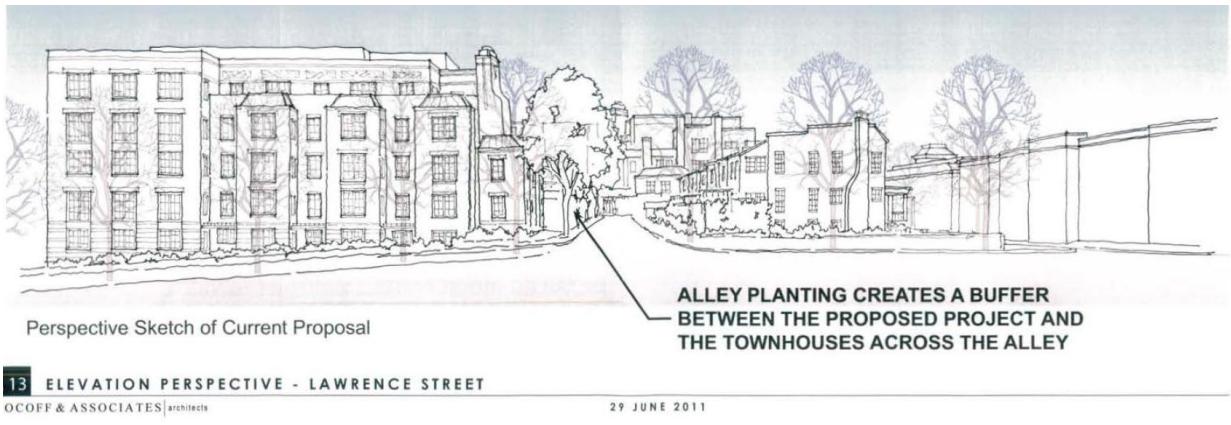
→ If the alley must be used, the developers **must compensate the homeowners** on the block, who will be forced to install significant infrastructure in their backyards to protect their health and safety.

**Excessive scale.** The proposed 6-story, 75-foot building will dominate the surrounding 2-story homes, blocking air and sun of neighboring properties, and obstructing sunlight for children's bedrooms, gardens, and solar panels. No other building on this side of the train tracks come near approaching this scale (including the two 4-story DC buildings across the street, adjacent to the train tracks). Moreover, No. 24-15's boxy design makes for a 6-story wall, instead of an integrated design that is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.

→ The design should incorporate 45-degree setbacks along the alley to avoid adverse effects for the adjacent neighbors, and improved compatibility with the neighborhood.

→ To integrate with the surrounding homes and buildings, a maximum of 4-5 stories would be more appropriate. This could be accomplished by including underground parking instead of above-ground parking.

→ The image below, of the 901 Monroe St 2011 design, shows appropriate setbacks facing the immediate neighbors, as well as a tree buffer in the alley.



**No. 24-15 lacks amenities for immediate neighbors.** The developers have failed to seek input (or respond to input) from the immediate (200-footer) neighbors regarding amenities that would benefit those most adversely affected by the new development. Even the proposed patio/greenspace in No. 24-15 is private, and thus, inaccessible to neighbors.

- The ZC should **insist that the developers incorporate input from immediate (200-footer) neighbors** and provide amenities that directly **benefit the immediate neighbors**.
- The ZC and the developers can reference the November 2024 **survey of 200-footer neighbors** for initial amenities that were suggested, in addition to the developers' responding to 200-footers' requests to meet with the developers (see below).

**Developer and ANC 5B04 Unresponsiveness.** The development team has been largely unresponsive to immediate neighbors' concern. While they've set up a promotion table at the local farmers market and attended formal meetings, they have ignored independent requests from 200-footers for conversation. In addition, the 5B04 ANC representative has failed to hear and represent the concerns of the 200-footer immediate neighbors in his single member district. Instead of acting as an intermediary in meetings, the 5B04 representative has regularly spoken *on behalf of* the developers, dismissing neighbors' concerns while he argued in defense of the developers' interests. When 200-footer neighbors requested a meeting with DDOT regarding 901 Monroe, the 5B04 representative promised to set up that meeting, but failed to follow through.

**Conclusion.** The current No. 24-15 proposal represents a hasty design. As neighbors we question if this design is ***profit-maximizing for the developers, while externalizing costs onto the community*** through safety and health hazards, sunlight blockage, and loss of greenspace—without providing amenities to neighbors most adversely affected. We seek development that balances density with neighborhood compatibility. The developer has the means to achieve their development goals without sacrificing neighbors' safety, air and sunlight, and quality of life. We request major revisions to align this project with the community most impacted.

Sincerely,

Peter and Allison Boller

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