

November 14, 2018

Vicki Gersten - Testimony in Opposition
BZA Case No. 19751

Good morning. I am the new ANC Commissioner-elect for 3C 08. MAHCA is located in my district. I want to share with you the extent of community opposition to this project.

We Are a Community United in Opposition to this Out-of-Scale Project

For the election, I knocked on 139 doors within MAHCA and spoke personally to 94 families there. Each one of those 94 families are emphatically opposed to this development project. **Not even one** of the families I spoke with support it. You heard that correctly – **zero** of the 94 families I spoke with in our small community are in favor of this application.

Even more striking is the depth of the opposition throughout the entire MAHCA neighborhood. One might think that families closer to the lots would oppose more vehemently, but in fact, opposition is spread uniformly from Garfield to Calvert Streets, and from Wisconsin to Massachusetts Avenue.

Outside MAHCA too, this special exception application arose often in conversation throughout my district. People were incredulous there was this attempt to “break [our] residential zoning”, as they put it. So there is opposition to this outside our immediate neighborhood as well.

Public Should Not Bear Parking Burden for Private Developer

MAHCA neighbors cited many reasons for their opposition. One multi-family developer expressed outrage that MED was asking the community to absorb such a huge parking burden. She said providing sufficient parking is generally built into a developer’s project costs, even if that means paying for an underground lot. Other neighbors noted that the burdens of increased traffic, congestion, and alley annexation were being foisted upon the neighborhood through this special exception application; they pointed out how unfair it is to enrich a private developer at the expense of the public. “Was this ‘inside baseball’?”, these neighbors asked. “What gives this developer the right to co-opt our public alley for his personal use and private gain?”

Facility Not Viable, No Business Details Shared; Likely “Bait & Switch” Attempt to Up-Zone

Another neighbor said she knows enough about best practices and facility design to recognize this application is not a serious attempt to create a viable facility. The fact that this developer chose a food services concessionaire with little to no experience in elder care was no surprise to this neighbor or many others. Time and again, neighbors voiced concerns that this developer is using this process to up-zone, build, then “flip” the project, leaving our neighborhood with a gargantuan, non-conforming building no one wants or needs.

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Your decision today is not just about one developer's attempt to profit through these special exceptions. Massachusetts Avenue Heights is a thirteen-block neighborhood with homes constructed as far back as 1923. It has flourished as a community largely because of the protection afforded to it under the Comprehensive Plan by its residential R-1-B zoning. Allowing developers to use the BZA process to up-zone properties in neighborhoods such as ours has the potential to render our residential zoning meaningless, lot by lot.

Please do not let the greed of developers destroy this neighborhood that we love so much. Thank you.