

## **Objection to Build Out at 1128 Buchanan Street, NW**

**Prepared by Samuel and Cynthia Prather  
Owners of 1130 Buchanan Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20011**

**February 2, 2018**

This document is in response to the notice received December 24, 2017 notifying us of a proposed construction at 1128 Buchanan Street, NW, which is next door to our property at 1130 Buchanan Street, NW. Permit No. is B1803208.

### **Current Description of the Property**

The current house is a two-story, single family row house, with basement, attic, and a low-ceiling roof, tapered to the rear of the house. The total distance from the front of the house to the alley is 156.30 ft. (See Attachment 1, p. A-4 and A-5). On the front and back, the current house is aligned with all other homes on the block.

### **Proposed Construction**

Cambridge Holdings, LLC is proposing to change the house from a single family home to a 3-unit apartment house, with one unit in the basement or lower level, one unit on the first floor, and a two-story unit on the second and third floors. This will involve:

- a pop up addition, bringing the height of the building to 35 ft. on the front of the house, with a 20 x 21 ft rear top deck;
- a 10 ft pop out addition on the first, second, and third levels;
- 9 ft, 9 in (9.75 ft) decks on the back of the house on the first and second levels;
- a 5 ft spiral staircase, extending beyond the almost 10-ft deck from the first to the second level; and
- the width of the addition extending 21.2 ft, taking the wall of the building to the property line.

A copy of the proposed construction plan is provided as Attachment 2 (pp. A-6, A-7, and A-8).

### **Comments**

We welcome improvements to property on the block and respect an owner's right to develop his/her property. We appreciate the proposal to maintain the roof line on the front side of the house. Nevertheless, we have several objections to what has been proposed by Cambridge Holdings, LLC. Objections and impacts to our adjacent property are outlined below.

***Objection 1. Three Units Instead of 1 or 2***

***Objection:*** For at least three generations, the 1100 of Buchanan Street has been a block of row houses and single family homes, with some homes with two units. As specified in DCRA Regulations (Subtitle §U-301), the block is zoned RF-1, which specifies no more than two dwelling units per building. Cambridge, LLC is proposing three units in one building, which violates the zoning regulations.

***Impact on Our Property.*** One major impact is a violation of the overall character of Buchanan Street. Approving this would start a precedent for multi-units on the block, which contradicts the current character and the zoning regulations. A second impact is parking. More units generally mean more people, which mean more cars. Parking is already at a premium on Buchanan Street. This ambitious addition would bring additional cars to an already crowded street. The main impact, however, relates to the size of the construction, which is discussed in Objection 5 below.

***Objection 2. Discrepancies in the Drawings***

***Objection:*** We have noticed some discrepancies in the drawings of the proposed addition. For example, in Drawing A-6, the stairs to the proposed cellar floor conflict with the first level stairs. In Drawing A-8, the spiral staircase to the roof level is on the west side, but in Drawing A-9, the spiral staircase to the roof is shown on the east side. On Drawing P-1, we are concerned that some of the pipes are 3 inches while others are 2 inches.

***Impact on Our Property.*** We cannot fully consider the impact to our property without all of the information. We would need a corrected version or explanations for the discrepancies in order to assess impact.

***Objection 3. Protection Against Damages to Our Property***

***Objection:*** We see no discussion of a written contract to protect our property against damages during construction, renovation, and/or completion.

***Impact on Our Property:*** The construction could leave us with unexpected repairs to our home. We would need assurance, in writing, against the occurrence of and compensation for unexpected damages.

***Objection 4. Property Line Encroachment***

***Objection:*** The existing structure ends about 1/2 foot from the property line, with a hollow space between the houses' two brick walls and a shared fence in the back yard. If the new structure is built as designed in the construction plan, the pop out walls would come right to the property line.

***Impact on Our Property:*** Building right to the property line would eliminate every inch of space between the two properties. Would this prevent us from doing our own pop-out if we wanted to do so? We fear that it would. Please confirm or refute.

### **Objection 5. Size of the Proposed Addition**

**Objection:** The proposed addition extends almost 25 ft beyond the existing structure, which we estimate will block about 50% of the sunlight that we get in the house and yard.

**Impact on Our Property.** We feel that the proposed addition would have a significantly negative impact on our property. Our house, which faces north, is on the shady side of Buchanan Street and gets little sunlight from the front. The back of our house, however, which faces south, getting considerable natural light each day. As reported by Sunroof,<sup>1</sup> the house has 1,578 hours of useable sunlight per year based on day-to-day analysis of weather patterns. The roof has 70 sq ft available for solar panels.

During heavy rain and snow, the elevated roof on 1128 Buchanan would create a pocket for excessive standing water and snow on the roof, which could overload our gutters and drainpipes, and/or seep down into our walls. In addition, heavy snowdrifts could be slow to melt because they would be accumulating on the east side of the roof wall, which would then be blocked from the sunlight.

Using the Sunroof estimates of useable sunlight per year and our estimates for amount of sun to be blocked by the addition, the new construction would reduce our hours of useable sunlight to 789 hours of useable light per year. This could result in the following:

- higher gas and electric costs (due to need for more heat and light);
- less skylight sun;
- less natural light in the interior of the house;
- 50% less garden light; and
- less possibility for installing solar cells as an alternative energy source.

For example, utilizing natural light can lead to a 20-60 percent reduction of energy used for electric lighting.<sup>2</sup> The lack of natural light would not only prohibit us from realizing that savings but would also push us to use more energy to light spaces once lighted naturally and to heat spaces once warmed by the sun. The proposed third story addition and deck would block light from our existing skylight and reduce our capability to add solar panels to our roof.

In addition, the reduced natural light could affect our mood and quality of life. For example, as stated in "A Literature Review of the Effects of Natural Light on Building Occupants,"<sup>3</sup> people are affected psychologically and physiologically by light. "Day lighting has been associated with improved mood, enhanced morale, lower fatigue, and reduced eyestrain." The author quotes a Dr. Lieberman who said:

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.google.com/get/sunroof#p=0>.

<sup>2</sup> Wymelenbert, Kevin Van Den. 2014. "The Benefits of Natural Light." *Architectural Lighting*. Posted on March 19, 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Edwards, L., and P. Torcellini. 2002. "A Literature Review of the Effects of Natural Light on Building Occupants." Golden Colorado: National Renewable Energy Laboratory.

"When we speak about health, balance, and physiological regulation, we are referring to the function of the body's major health keepers; the nervous system and the endocrine system. These major control centers of the body are directly stimulated and regulated *by light, to an extent far beyond what modern science has been willing to accept. [emphasis added]*.

The author references studies where prisoners do better, sick people recover faster, and people are less stressed. He also discusses Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), one of the most researched areas "clearly attributed to the amount of light available for individuals," where people can become melancholic, sluggish, prone to overeating, and even less likely to have a normal workday! Blocking daylight could simulate a late fall/early winter natural lighting environment in our home even in the height of summer. In Kevin Van Den Wymelenberg's article, "The Benefits of Natural Light,"<sup>4</sup> he states that daylit environments "increase occupant productivity and comfort, and provide the mental and visual stimulation necessary to regulate human circadian rhythms." We can extrapolate that if daylit environments have these effects in the workplace, similar impacts also occur at home.

Reduced natural light could affect/reduce the very value of our property. The *Architectural Lighting Magazine* article states that commercial real estate with no windows leases for about 20 percent less than spaces with windows. A recent article, "How to Maximize Natural Light and Increase the Value of Your Home," states that "research has proven that homebuyers are likely to pay more for homes that have a lot of natural light."<sup>5</sup> It is logical to assume that homebuyers are likely to value less and likely to pay less for homes without a lot of natural light.

Without the natural light, 1130 Buchanan Street would be a shadow (figuratively and literally) of its current self. This is unfair.

### Summary

We respect the right of owners to make improvements to his/her/its property, but these improvements should not negatively impact the rights of existing homeowners. At a larger level, Cambridge, LLC's proposed changes violate DCRA regulations and would disrupt the character of a long-established residential block. At a personal level, it would deprive our property at 1130 Buchanan Street of its significant portion of its natural light, resulting in a property more susceptible to snow pileups on the roof and drainage problems from rain and snow, less appealing for living and working, more expensive to heat and cool, and an affront to our family's very health and quality of life. We must object to Cambridge, LLC or any other owner of the property who proposes such additions. We suggest that the design be modified to a one or two-unit home with additions that do not negatively impact our property.

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<sup>4</sup> Wymelenbert, Kevin Van Den. 2014.

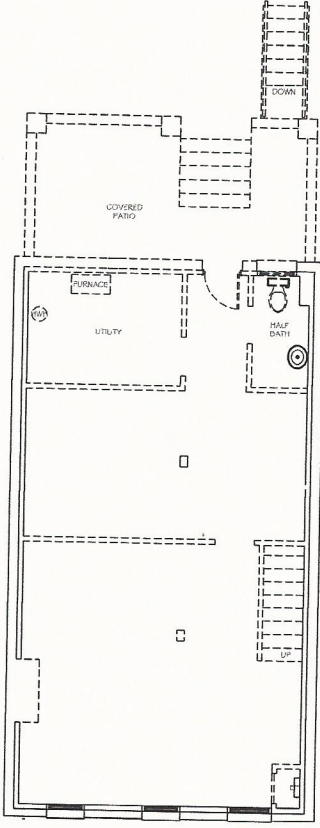
<sup>5</sup> "How to Maximize Natural Light and Increase the Value of Your Home." Castle Impact Windows, July 31, 2017. [www.castleimpactwindows.com](http://www.castleimpactwindows.com).

# Attachment 1. Existing Structure

**DEMOLITION NOTES:**

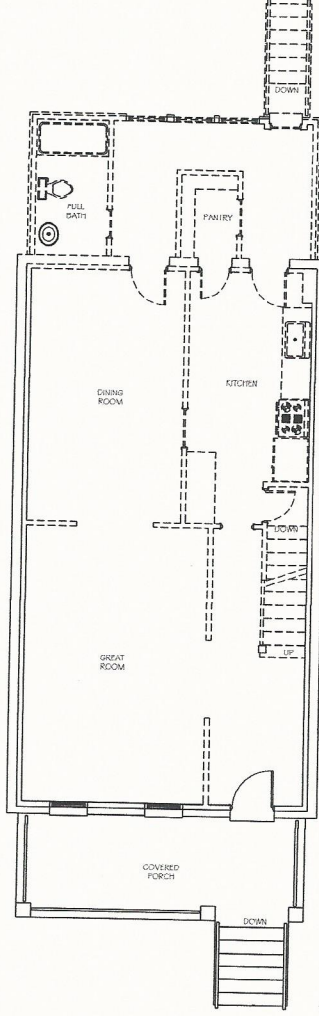
1. FOR EXTENT OF DEMOLITION WORK SEE ALL ARCHITECTURAL PLANS.
2. SITE VERIFY ALL EXISTING DIMENSIONS AND CONDITIONS INDICATED ON THE EXISTING CONDITION DRAWINGS
3. THE CONTRACTOR WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR DETERMINING THE FINAL EXTENT OF WORK TO WHICH DEMOLITION, REMOVAL OR REPAIR ACTIONS IS REQUIRED TO ACCOMMODATE CONTRACT DOCUMENT REQUIRED WORK
4. WORK SHALL BE SCHEDULED SO AS TO MINIMIZE THE TIME WHEN UNFINISHED OPENINGS EXIST IN THE EXISTING ROOF AREAS. OPENINGS IN THE WALLS SHALL BE PROPERLY COVERED AND SECURED TO PROTECT FROM MOISTURE, COLD AND RAIN AT ALL TIMES.

--- REMOVE/DEMOLISH



1 EXISTING CELLAR

SCALE: 1/8"=1'-0"



2 EXISTING FIRST FLOOR

SCALE: 1/8"=1'-0"



CERTIFICATION: Ike R. Agbim RA

I CERTIFY THAT THESE DOCUMENTS WERE PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION OR APPROVED BY ME AS A D.C. LICENSED ARCHITECT. REGISTRATION NUMBER : 100239

D + O INC.  
DESIGN BY OLYMPIA  
DESIGN CONSULTANTS

1201 HAMLIN STREET N.E. 20017  
202.276.1999

1128 BUCHANAN ST. N.W WASHINGTON, D.C. 20011

REVISION	DATE

REVISIONS

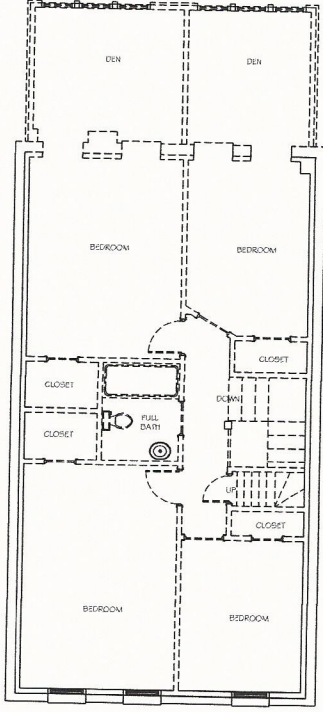
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DRAWN BY: R.P.

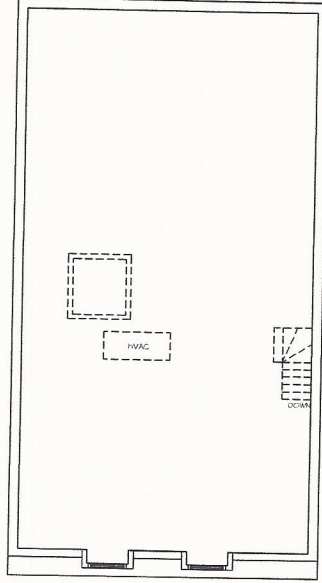
CHECKED BY: O.A.

DATE: 24TH NOVEMBER 2017

A-5



3 EXISTING SECOND FLOOR  
SCALE: 1/8"=1'-0"



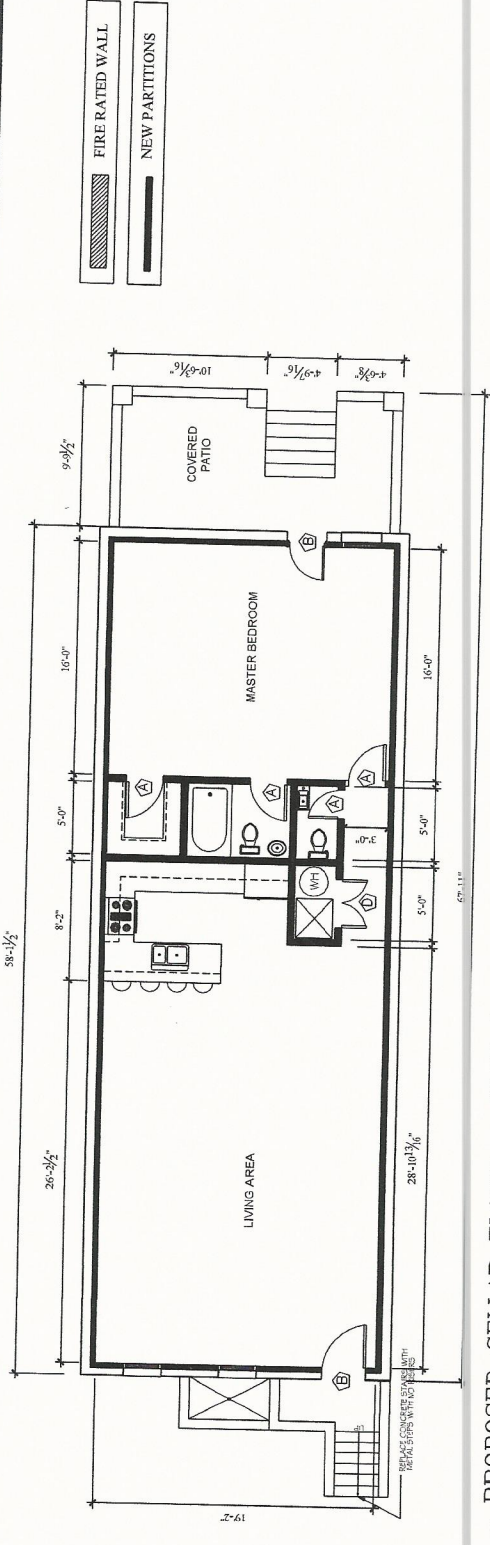
3 EXISTING THIRD FLOOR  
SCALE: 1/8"=1'-0"



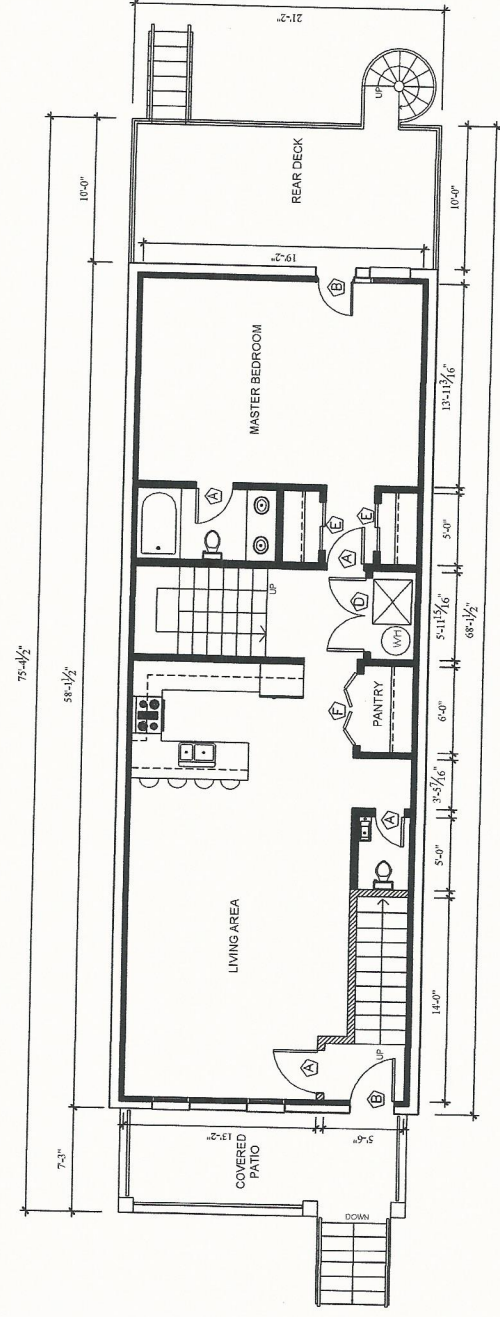
CERTIFICATION: Ike R. Agbim RA

I CERTIFY THAT THESE DOCUMENTS WERE  
PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION OR  
APPROVED BY ME AS A DC LICENSED ARCHITECT.  
REGISTRATION NUMBER : 100239.

Attachment 2. Proposed Construction



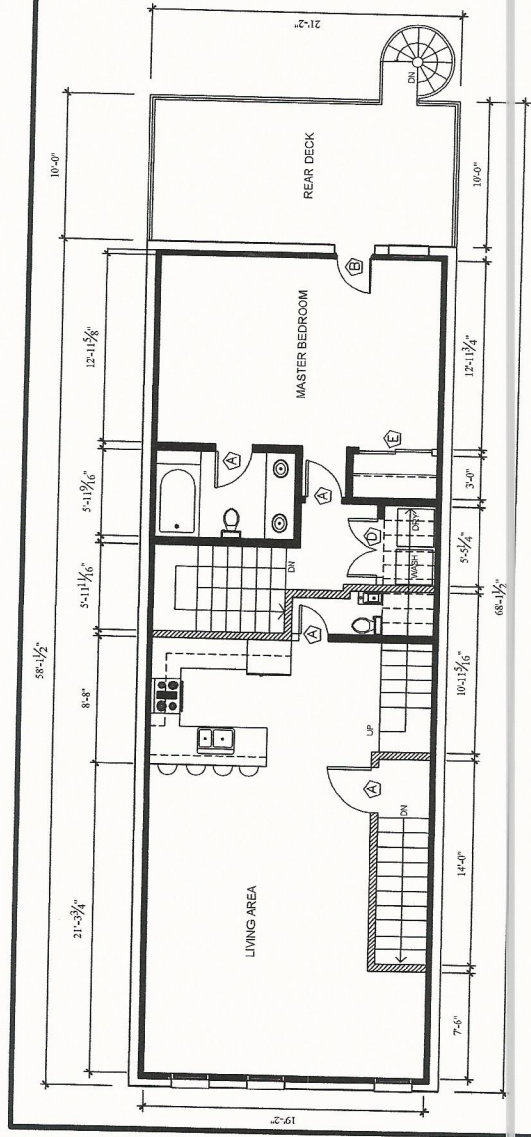
1 PROPOSED CELLAR FLOOR - UNIT #1  
 SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"



2 PROPOSED FIRST FLOOR - UNIT #2  
 SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"



CERTIFICATION: Ike R. Agbim RA  
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 APPROVED BY ME AS A LICENSED ARCHITECT.  
 REGISTRATION NUMBER: 100239

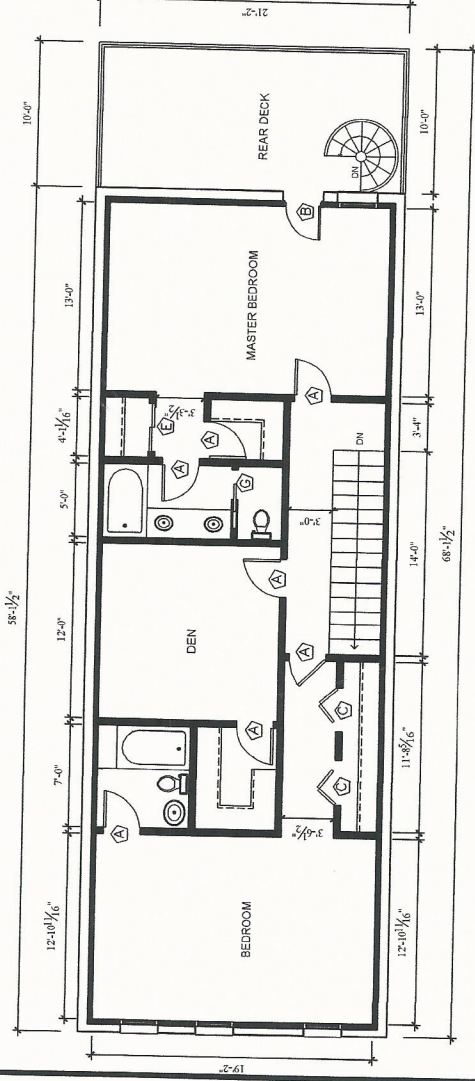


3 PROPOSED SECOND FLOOR - UNIT #3

SCALE: 1/8"=1'-0"

CERTIFICATION: Ike R. Agbim RA

I CERTIFY THAT THESE DOCUMENTS WERE PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION OR APPROVAL AND I AM A D.C. LICENSED ARCHITECT. REGISTRATION NUMBER: 100232



4 PROPOSED THIRD FLOOR - UNIT #3

SCALE: 1/8"=1'-0"

D + O INC.  
DESIGN BY CONTRACT  
DESIGN CONSULTANTS

1201 HAMLIN STREET N.E. 20017  
202.276.1999

1128 BUCHANAN ST. N.W WASHINGTON, D.C. 20011

REVISION	DATE

REVISIONS

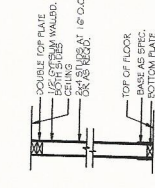
CLIENT: CAMBRIDGE HOLDINGS LLC

DRAWN BY: RP.

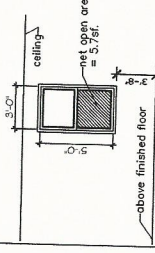
CHECKED BY: O.A.

DATE: 24TH NOVEMBER 2017

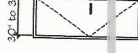
A-7



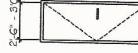
INTERIOR PARTITION WALL  
SCALE: 1/2"=1'-0"



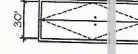
EMERGENCY ESCAPE & RESCUE WINDOW DETAIL  
EMERGENCY ESCAPE, EGRESS OR RESCUE WINDOWS FROM SLEEPING ROOMS SHALL HAVE A MINIMUM OF 5.7 SQ FT. & A MAX SILL HEIGHT OF 44" FROM FINISHED FLOOR.



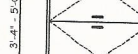
A. INTERIOR DOOR



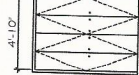
B. EXTERIOR DOOR



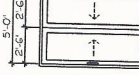
C. BI-FOLD DOOR



D. CLOSET DOOR



F. BI-FOLD DOOR



E. CLOSET SLIDING DOORS



G. BATHROOM POCKET DOOR





D + O INC.  
DESIGNERS BY CONSULTANTS  
ARCHITECTS

1201 HAMLIN STREET N.E. 20017  
202.276.1999

1128 BUCHANAN ST. N.W WASHINGTON, D.C. 20011

REVISION	DATE

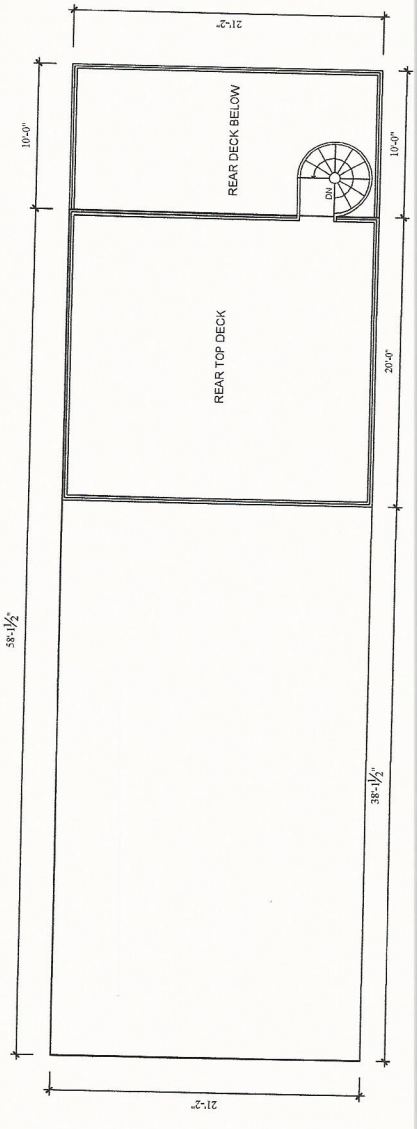
CLIENT: CAMBRIDGE HOLDINGS LLC

DRAWN BY: R.P.

CHECKED BY: O.A.

DATE: 24TH NOVEMBER 2017

A-8



1 PROPOSED ROOF  
SCALE: 1/8"=1'-0"



CERTIFICATION: Ike R. Agbim RA

I CERTIFY THAT THESE DOCUMENTS WERE  
PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION OR  
APPROVED BY ME AS A DC LICENSED ARCHITECT.  
REGISTRATION NUMBER : 100239

Adjoining Owner's Response

Address of Proposed Work: 1128 Buchanan St. NW Wash. DC

Adjacent Property Address: 1130 Buchanan St. NW Wash DC 20011

I do ~~not~~ object to the proposed work plan \_\_\_\_\_.

Requested access to my property is:

Granted \_\_\_\_\_  
Granted with Conditions Contact First  
\*Denied \_\_\_\_\_

I object to the proposed work plan on the grounds that the prop proposed work plan will not protect my adjoining property, and I have attached technical support for my objection prop. Following resolution of my objection under Section §3307.2.2.2 of the Building Code, I understand that I will have an opportunity to decide whether or not access to my property will be granted.

Samuel Prather  
Adjoining Owner's Signature

Date: 2-2-2018

Cynthia J. Prather

2-2-2018

\*If access is denied, I understand that (1) I will be responsible for making safe my own property without delay so as not to impede or materially delay the proposed construction; and (2) limited access will still be authorized in the following circumstances  
(a) where a wall or foundation located on a party line or on my property requires underpinning as a result of the proposed work;  
(b) where the owner causing the work can provide the underpinning by undertaking the work from his/her/its property, even if the footing extends onto my property; and (c) where extension of the footing is required to stabilize and support my building, and to avoid unreasonable delay in excavation and development of the permitted project.

This form has been provided by DCRA for the purpose of demonstrating a permit applicant's compliance with the notification and property access requirements of Section 3307 of the Building Code. Compliance with these requirements does not relieve a permit holder, or person causing the work, of any obligations or responsibilities under civil or criminal law to protect an adjoining property from damage.

**Samuel and Cynthia Prather**

7832 12th Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20012

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February 2, 2018

Cambridge, LLC  
1128 Buchanan Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20011

Re: Permit No. B1803208

Dear Owners:

Per your mailing delivered to us on December 24, 2017, we are writing to present our objections to your proposed construction plan at 1128 Buchanan Street, NW.

We appreciate the notification, the documents, and your willingness to meet with us to provide more detail. We welcome new neighbors on the block. But we must object to this construction, which could change the character of the block and negatively impact our property and the people who live there now and/or in the future.

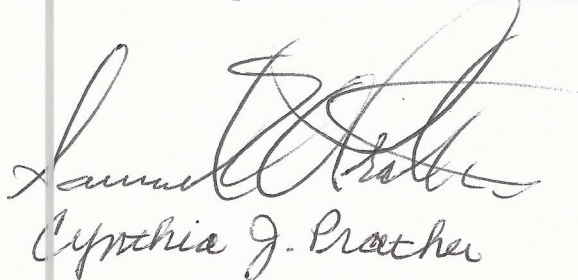
Feel free to contact us to discuss or if you have questions about this submission.

Sincerely,

Samuel and Cynthia Prather

Enclosure

cc: DCRA



Samuel Prather  
Cynthia J. Prather