

Cochran, Patricia (DCOZ)

From: Chris Benderev <cbenderev@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, April 23, 2024 4:17 PM
To: DCOZ - BZA Submissions (DCOZ)
Cc: Reid, Robert (DCOZ); Bardin, Sara (DCOZ)
Subject: Letter of opposition to BZA Case 21103 — 71 Kennedy St NW

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To the Board of Zoning Adjustment,

I'm Chris Benderev. I live at 56 Longfellow Street NW, with a 200 feet radius from the proposed construction at 71 Kennedy Street NW. I am writing in opposition to its modification in case 21103. I believe the removal of ground-floor retail will be deeply detrimental for the neighborhood.

I know the BZA is focused on the courtyard and rear yard requirements. But I'd like to make a point about the ANC 4B's support for this case, because ANC reports "[are given 'great weight' in the BZA's decision-making process.](#)"

I can fathom why the ANC lent its support last fall. No community opposition surfaced then. (I regret not showing up myself.) But the expiration of RE1's application has offered a second chance. And this time the picture is quite different.

By my count there have been 32 letters submitted to the BZA in opposition to the modifications at 71 Kennedy, with just two in support. Plus at least [246 signatures of opposition on a Change.org petition](#). I can't verify that 100% of these are 4B residents, but it seems most are. Furthermore, on Thursday March 28th, dozens of neighbors showed up to [a meeting about this at Roots Public Charter School](#). Not all were in opposition, but many were. I know the rhetoric of this debate has at times become regrettably heated. But, by and large, those in opposition have acted in good faith.

And yet our ANC, led by its chair, seems intent upon re-issuing the same letter of support for this modification it did last fall. The ANC4B's [April 29th meeting agenda](#) has an item for "providing clerical correction and reiterating support for proposal for 71 Kennedy Street, NW."

In short, I suggest the BZA exercise skepticism that ANC4B's support for case 21103 fully or accurately represents the community's sentiments. I do not believe it does.

One more final point, perhaps outside the BZA's purview, that seems worth saying.

The developer in charge of RE1 and others have argued the modified plans for 71 Kennedy are all about creating more affordable housing. I agree wholeheartedly that more affordable housing is something this neighborhood and the city desperately need. But, as best I can tell, the new plan has only one additional housing unit compared to the old plan (from 46 to 47). The ground floor retail was effectively replaced by one new unit: a penthouse. Plus, as [Tim Harkin's April 10th letter to the BZA](#)

explains, despite RE1's claim that the retail was removed to adapt to less underground parking due to water issues, the mandated number of parking spaces would be roughly the same with or without retail. In other words, I think the developer's and others' assertion that this modification is a choice between more or less housing density is disingenuous.

Thank you for your consideration.

Chris Benderev
56 Longfellow Street NW