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Testimony regarding ZC15-16, proposed development at 4th & Rhode Island Ave NE

This letter is in opposition to ZC15-16 proposed development at 4th and Rhode Island Ave NE.

As a neighbor in the ANC where this development is proposed, I am writing to urge you to oppose this proposed development. The fact that the developer calls the strip shopping center “underutilized” shows how little they know about our current community. The stores in this shopping center are widely used by neighborhood residents across many boundaries. Both new and old residents frequent the Forman Mills for affordable clothing and home furnishings; the Big Lots for affordable home goods; and the Murray’s/Save-A-Lot for affordable groceries and fresh produce. The fact that the shopping center provides so many important things for the community results in a shopping center that does significantly interact with the community, despite the fact that the developer’s proposal states otherwise. The applicant also state that the parking lot “all but requires one to walk to the site”; as a neighbor who bikes and walks exclusively, I must say that this could not be more wrong. The Forman Mills has bike racks and a 4th St pedestrian entrance, both of which are widely used by community members.

The plan to raze the shopping center and extend the street grid with private streets will not benefit the community. We do not want private streets in this space that is currently a public area and meeting ground. With great community businesses like Mr. P’s ribs and the car wash, this parking lot is transformed into a place that is creatively and widely utilized by the community in many ways.

A plan for 1555 condo units in this area is an unrealistic amount of people to bring to the neighborhood. While the plan idealizes that new residents will bike, walk, or take public transportation, it is not realistic to assume that most new residents would do so. Even if only a fraction of people brought cars, that would still be hundreds more cars in the neighborhood— not a great idea in an area that is already a traffic nightmare at rush hour and on Sundays when the Rhode Island Ave church is in session.

This plan will not enhance health, welfare, safety or convenience for residents and we do not want this in our neighborhood, The look is not good and inconsistent with the neighborhood. Please consider the utility of the current shopping center and the traffic nightmare that will be created by this new development, and vote no on this zoning application.