

December 15, 2018

Mr. Anthony Hood, Chairman
District of Columbia Zoning Commission
441 4th Street NW
Suite 210S
Washington, DC 20001

RE: Case Number 16-23, Proposal for Design Review and Development by Valor Development, LLC, Square 1499, Lots 802, 803, 806, 807. Letter in Opposition

Dear Chairman Hood and Commissioners:

I reside at 4817 Butterworth Place NW, three blocks from the proposed Ladybird development at the corner of 48th Street NW and Yuma Street NW. As the Commission will recall, Valor Development, LLC (“the developer”) submitted its application for voluntary design review for this project in 2016 and the Commission held a hearing on the application on January 11, 2018, with further testimony on January 25, 2018.

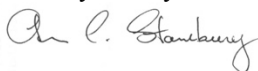
The developer submitted a revised application on October 16, 2018, in which it made certain changes to its plans, but the overall scale of the project remains the same. The developer has maintained about the same number of apartments, and has minimized the space allotted to affordable housing units by placing some residences below ground level. Instead of a separate condominium building separated by a walkway from the main apartment building, the developer has proposed five townhouses and eliminated the walkway. This would reduce pedestrian access through the development to Massachusetts Avenue and create a solid block facing a residential neighborhood. The height of the building, which includes a penthouse, is 79 1/2 feet on the side of the building facing Yuma Street, which is still the main entry point for the apartment building and any retail.

The proposed development continues to fail to meet the Design Review Standards of the Zoning Regulations, particularly the criteria for connectivity set forth in §11-604.7 (f). The developer has eliminated the walkway through the development, but has not made any commitment to provide bicycle facilities or shuttle services to the nearest Metro station, which is one mile away. The alleys will have to be used on an ongoing basis by large delivery trucks because Valor has made no other provision for them, thus making the alleys dangerous for pedestrians.

Other commitments are not yet in place. As of this date, it appears that the development has not yet been certified as LEED Gold. It is still negotiating with American University regarding the deeded parking easement that American University holds with respect to the property. The amenity that the developer has long promised to the community is a grocery store to replace the defunct SuperFresh, and that is still not assured.

The developer has met with members of the community and with the Area Neighborhood Commissions (ANCs), but has largely retained the design and scale of the project that it intends to build. The community would welcome development of this site in a way that is appropriate and reasonable. We are concerned that this developer would use the design review process to construct a building that is in essence a gated community (with most apartments going at “market rate”) and does very little to fulfill the very real need for affordable housing in our city.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.



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ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16-23
EXHIBIT NO.250