

**Sondra L. Mills**  
**4827 Alton Place, N.W.**  
**Washington, D.C. 20016**

December 27, 2018

Mr. Anthony Hood, Chairman  
District of Columbia Zoning Commission  
441 – 4<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W., Suite 210 S  
Washington, D.C. 20001

**Re: Case No. 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 Members of the Commission:

I am writing in opposition to Valor Development's proposal to redevelop the site of the former SuperFresh grocery store located at 4330 – 48<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W. For 12-1/2 years, I have lived on the 4800 block of Alton Place, N.W., approximately a block and a half from the proposed project. Valor's revised proposal for this development includes few changes from its previous plans. I have reviewed the many factual and legal arguments submitted both for and against the project. Rather than rehashing these points in detail, I write to invite the Commissioners to step back and consider two questions: (1) Does this project benefit the AU Park community? (2) Does this project benefit the District of Columbia as a whole? I believe that the answer to both questions is no.

**(1) No benefits to the AU Park neighborhood community:** The AU Park neighborhood consists almost entirely of two story, single family homes. The peaceful, low density character of the neighborhood attracts young families. The children can walk to school and play in the streets, and many parents choose to age in place after their children are grown. The neighborhood offers many amenities to residents, including good public schools, the shops and restaurants along both sides of Massachusetts Ave., local medical offices, and adequate parking, to name a few. Valor's proposed 219 unit apartment building brings no benefit to the neighborhood and in fact greatly diminishes it:

- The proposed 5-6 story structure is just too big for the neighborhood. It overshadows the two story homes that face the building and the adjacent historically landmarked Spring Valley Shopping center.

- The development will eliminate at least three long-established, locally owned businesses, including a popular restaurant, a hair salon, and the kitchens for the famous Wagshal's delicatessen, restaurant, meat and seafood market as well as its catering establishment. Sixty employees could lose their jobs.
- The proposal does not provide for adequate parking, which will flow into the neighboring streets. The traffic generated by the grocery store and 219 or more apartments will cause dangerous congestion on the neighboring streets.

Moreover, Valor's claimed benefits to the community are illusory:

- The much vaunted full service grocery store that Valor has promised will be included in the project is a phantom. Valor continues to negotiate with grocers and claims to have two letters of intent from Balducci's and Mom's Organic. There is still no commitment from either of these stores, and neither of them is a full-service grocer in any event.
- The proposed "hawk light" on Massachusetts Ave. has been opposed by the transportation authorities, is unnecessary given the two traffic lights and cross-walks at 48<sup>th</sup> and 49<sup>th</sup> Streets, and would lead to traffic back-ups on Massachusetts Ave.
- The purported creation of "affordable housing" is virtually non-existent. The vast bulk of the apartments will be rented out at "market rate."
- The development offers no meaningful public space to the community.

**(2) No Benefits to the District as a whole:**

Valor's proposal represents a cynical effort to avoid its responsibilities to the District overall:

- The proposed development does little, if anything, to advance the District's goal of increasing affordable housing. When Valor's initial proposal fell short of satisfying the Inclusionary Zoning requirements, Valor revised its plans to minimize the number of affordable housing units it would have to offer. Rather than redesign the project to provide more affordable units, Valor instead resorted to the trick of sinking the apartment building into the ground by 6'6" to circumvent the IZ requirements.
- The proposed development diminishes the historically landmarked Spring Valley Shopping Center and the locally owned businesses housed within it. While Valor must "borrow" density from the shopping center to do this project, it seeks to avoid the accompanying historic preservation responsibilities.
- The development creates a towering structure that violates the Height Act.
- Valor's attempt to bend the "Design Review" process to permit this project would render the governing regulations meaningless, establishing a bad precedent for future projects.

For the foregoing reasons, I respectfully request that the Zoning Commission reject Valor's proposal. It represents a cynical misuse of the District's zoning laws to achieve purely private financial gain at the expense of the AU Park neighborhood and the District as a whole.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sondra L. Mills". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'S'.

Sondra L. Mills