

# Elizabeth H. Mohre

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4706 Windom Pl. NW, Washington DC 20016 | (202)288-5628 | Lmohre.fbg@verizon.net

Mr. Anthony Hood, Chairman  
District of Columbia Zoning Commission  
441 Fourth Street NW, Suite 210S  
Washington, DC 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 to express my continuing strong opposition to Valor Development's proposal to construct a six-story, 219-unit apartment building at the above referenced site.

I have for 22 years owned and resided in my home located within one block of the proposed development. The site is visible from my front yard, as my block dead-ends at 48<sup>th</sup> Street. While I support development of the now vacant property, the Valor proposal is too massive in scale and not suitable for our neighborhood of single-family, two-story colonial homes, most owner-occupied. Despite improvements Valor has made to the exterior to make it more consistent with the neighborhood architecture, the development would change the character of the immediate neighborhood because of its scale and the enormous increase in density it would bring.

Our residential side streets (Yuma and 48<sup>th</sup> streets) are not suitable for the tremendous increase in traffic and resulting congestion that would result from 219 additional residences and a grocery in this block, and the alleyways cannot support the increased traffic flow from both a residential garage and additional commercial deliveries, given the delivery and waste management needs of the existing retail properties (CVS, Wagshal's) that abut the proposed development. What may look workable on architectural renderings is NOT so in reality.

The increased automobile traffic would also exacerbate an already difficult situation at the intersection of 49<sup>th</sup> Street and Massachusetts Avenue for traffic coming out of the neighborhood and either crossing or turning left on Massachusetts, and even more so for customers of the Spring Valley Shopping Center trying to exit the parking lot at 49<sup>th</sup> Street by the gas station. That exit is already a bottleneck, and with a couple of hundred additional cars associated with the development using the same intersection, would become a nightmare. Combined with commuter traffic to/from the nearby Maryland suburbs, the proposed development, if approved, would push this area far beyond the avenue's and streets' design capacity.

I am astounded to learn that the Zoning Commission continues to find the October 2016 traffic study that the developers commissioned to be current, given the fact that two large new restaurants and a coffee shop have since opened on this block of Massachusetts Avenue, and the American University Spring Valley Building, which was closed and under renovation when the study was done, has now reopened and is being utilized not only by AU's own departments, but also by the Osher Lifelong

Learning Institute, whose attendees regularly park along 48<sup>th</sup> Street, Warren and Windom Place during class hours each day. Surely a supplemental study would better inform the Commission, and should be done before a blanket acceptance of a 2+-year-old study.

My family has loved the character of our block and neighborhood for the 22 years we have lived here. An oversized development such as the developers envision, immediately abutting our homes and towering over the existing properties, would permanently and negatively alter the character of this part of AU Park (and would prevent me from ever enjoying another sunset from my block). This was obviously taken into consideration in the DC Comprehensive Plan: Chapter 23 of the Plan calls for protecting the current low-density, stable neighborhoods and ensuring that land use decisions do not exacerbate traffic congestion and parking problems. The Future Land Use Map in the Plan shows the proposed development site as “low density commercial,” which is defined as “commercial development characterized by **one and two-story buildings**, often with off-street surface parking lots.” (Emphasis added).

I support smart growth in our city and would welcome a thoughtfully developed residential project on a smaller scale. However, this neighborhood is not the place for a large-scale development such as Valor proposes. I urge the Zoning Commission to respect the intent of the Comprehensive Plan and the wishes of the neighborhood property owners and taxpayers, and deny the Valor proposal as currently written.

Respectfully,

Elizabeth H. Mohre