

ward3vision

smart growth • vibrant neighborhoods

TESTIMONY OF SUSAN KIMMEL ON BEHALF OF WARD3VISION
BEFORE THE DC ZONING COMMISSION IN ZC CASE NO. 16-23
JANUARY 7, 2019

Good evening, Chairman Hood and Commissioners.

My name is Susan Kimmel and I have been a resident of Cityline Condominiums at 4101 Albemarle St. NW for the past 13 years. I speak this evening on behalf of Ward3Vision -- a group of residents who can imagine our neighborhoods as even better urban places – more walkable, sustainable, and vibrant. We work to ensure that D.C. grows in a way that is environmentally and socially responsible, positive, and progressive, while protecting the character of our residential neighborhoods and bringing the vitality of urban life to our commercial corridors.

Although the Valor project, The Lady Bird, is not a prime example of transit-oriented development; we strongly support it for contributing a much-needed grocery store to the Spring Valley neighborhood and benefiting the housing shortage and lack of affordable housing throughout DC.

- It's location is not along metro and so not as accessible to transit as one may desire, but Massachusetts Avenue has reasonably good bus service and it is easy to add more if demand increases significantly. Also, American University provides frequent shuttle service from the Tenleytown Metro Station to their facilities in Spring Valley.
- [As an aside, while AU allows the general public to ride for free, Ward3Vision believes it would have been better to have this arrangement memorialized in some formal agreement with Valor.]
- Neither is Mass. Ave. a commercial corridor, but that is all the more reason that some retail, and particularly a grocery store, is so desirable to make the area more walkable.
- Increasing the number of nearby residents from the 219 units of the Lady Bird will likewise increase the viability of the grocery store by providing a sufficiently large client base. Because MOM's Organic is somewhat of a specialty store, it should also draw on a larger region for destination shoppers.

These factors add up to our vision of making our neighborhoods “even better urban places – more walkable, sustainable, and vibrant.”

With regard to Ward3Vision's objective to “protect the character of residential neighborhoods,” Valor has worked hard to address some of the residents' concerns about massing. In the revised design, by eliminating one entire story of residences and sinking the building below grade by 6-plus feet, the overall height of the structure had been reduced which significantly lessens its visual impact. The original

design had already acknowledged the smaller scale of the houses along Windom by breaking up the massing with bay windows and courtyards. Transforming the former stand-alone condo building into a series of 5 townhouses is also respectful to the residential scale of the street front.

Other design devices, serve to modulate the facades and thereby reduce the mass by providing human-scaled elements.

- Cast stone cornices and lintels
- Varied window treatment
- Series of arches forming the façade of the grocery
- Use of different colors of brick to identify smaller segments of the building's mass.

In addition, the choice of red brick for the south and west elevations, including the grade-level grocery store, is respectful of the brick from the PNC Bank, the AU office building and the historic Spring Valley Shopping Center. It forms a backdrop curtain behind these buildings when viewed from Massachusetts Avenue and visually integrates the Lady Bird into the texture of the urban fabric.

It is truly in the size of the units and allocation of the number of studio to 3-BDR that sets the Lady Bird apart from other new construction in the Tenleytown area. While most new buildings have studios and junior 1-BDR's, this project has 37% 2-BDR and over 16% 3-BDR. The IZ units have a similar mix. This means that there is real choice for baby boomers who want to downsize and move into the city once they sell their suburban homes but need an extra bedroom or two for when their kids and grandkids come to visit. It also means that workforce housing at 60% median income can find an apartment big enough for a family – just picture a single mom school teacher with a few kids. Of course, one project will not solve DC's housing shortage, but the Lady Bird is a big step in the right direction.

Ward3Vision will refrain from entering the fray of interpretation of the DC zoning ordinance on the aggregation of sites within the project boundary to achieve the allowable density and calculate the number of IZ units required. Neither will we opine on the aesthetics of the proposed design. Rather from the standpoint of smart growth, we commend Valor Development for working closely with the community to refine their initial design into a sophisticated, workable, respectful example of contextual architecture bringing “vitality to our urban corridors.”

Respectfully submitted,

/s/

Susan Kimmel

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that on January 7, 2019, copies of this letter were sent via email to the following:

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