

October 3, 2019

The Honorable Anthony Hood, Chairman
D.C. Zoning commission
441 4th Street NW, Suite 210S
Washington DC 20001

**RE: Case number 19-10 Valor Development, LLC Consolidated PUD Square 1499,
Lots 802, 803, 806, and 807 Letter in Opposition From 200-Footers**

Dear Chairman Hood and Commissioners,

As members of the community that live within 200 feet of the aforementioned proposed development (“200-Footers”), we have unique concerns due our very close proximity to the Valor development. The undersigned share concerns about *at least* the following aspects of the project:

The proposed scale of the project is incompatible with the existing neighborhood of single family homes. At 1.9 acres, the site is much too small for 4-6 stories of 214-235 apartments PLUS 5 townhouses. *This would represent an increase of about 9% in the total number of residences in all of American University Park.*¹

Some argue that the scale of the project is in step with the American University office building at the corner of 48th street and Massachusetts Avenue (hereafter “AU’s office building”) which sits beside the lot that Valor seeks to develop. The background here is important. When AU’s office building was originally built, density was borrowed from the SuperFresh lot that Valor seeks to develop. At the time, it was oversized for the neighborhood, but it was successfully argued that it was OK since the building faced Massachusetts Avenue (a major roadway). In contrast, Valor’s proposed building would not face a major roadway, but instead would be bordered by neighborhood streets (Yuma and 48th) lined with 1.5-2 story single family homes. Further, Yuma and 48 Streets, each 30-feet wide, were not meant to accommodate the volume of traffic and activity associated with a building of such a scale. Simply put, instead of having one already oversized building we would have two if this project were to go forward as currently proposed.

It also has been argued by those in favor of the current development that, since SuperFresh previously existed on the lot, then our concerns regarding increased traffic and the attendant safety and parking issues are moot. We disagree totally. First, the SuperFresh supermarket has been closed for several years and the neighborhood has evolved in that time. Additionally, the 219 to 240 apartment/townhome development with ~18,000 square foot of retail proposed by Valor is markedly different by way of sheer volume from the SuperFresh store. It is different not just in volume, but also in height and scale. For example, with the current SuperFresh site we actually can see the skyline and sunset from Windom and 48th (albeit partially since the current AU building blocks the other portion). After Valor’s project is complete, this view will be completely blocked by the oversized building.

¹ AU Park consists of 2700 households. See e.g., Wikipedia entry for “American University Park”, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_University_Park (last visited October 3, 2019)

Furthermore, directly across the two 30-foot wide residential streets that SuperFresh faces is a residential neighborhood of 1.5-2 story single family homes that are set back 30-35 feet from the street. The resulting airiness and open space is missing from the Valor building, which basically sits on (and projects over) the property line.

In summary, the proposed development is too big for the site and is therefore entirely out of scale with the surrounding single family homes.

Lost privacy. Our single-family homes would be dwarfed by Valor's proposed structure and our privacy lost to the looming rooftop terraces, penthouses and apartments on the third floor (and higher) of the Valor structure, which would allow residents of that building to peer into our daily lives.

Our enjoyment of natural features of our homes will be diminished. According to Valor's present plan, natural light would be blocked by the looming oversized structure. For example, our access to sunlight during the afternoons will be diminished. Also, there is no setback or green space landscaping to integrate the structure into the surrounding neighborhood. Trees surrounding the present structures would be eliminated. The quality of our lives would be diminished significantly.

Overcrowding of in-bound public schools that are already overcrowded. The existing proposal would bring at least 400 new individuals into the neighborhood, including families. This will include children needing placement within the in-bound public schools, which are already above capacity. Consequently, the development as proposed would create additional burdens that would undermine the neighborhood school's ability to provide quality education.

Safety and parking issues as a result of the increased traffic. The increase in traffic both around the buildings and in the surrounding alleys would create damaging pollution, vibrations and noise. Parking in the surrounding neighborhoods would become difficult, particularly closer to the proposed building. For example, visitors of the proposed residents would have nowhere to park except in the surrounding neighborhood—namely, directly in front of our homes.

Valor claims that the alleys will be pedestrian friendly, but that is impossible considering the increased traffic in cars and trucks (loading and unloading). Moreover, the sidewalks as currently proposed would not be adequate to accommodate the increased pedestrian, scooter and bicycle traffic. Notably, the sidewalks are so narrow that they cannot accommodate a standard sized wheelchair or double stroller. At a minimum, these sidewalks should be separated from the drive lanes (using a physical barrier or other means).

The huge increase in traffic in the entire neighborhood will create multiple hazards on the entire city block and the surrounding area. This creates untenable conflict with the safety and wellbeing of the many children who walk and ride bicycles on these residential streets.

So, what amenity is Valor offering to compensate for:

- diminished quality of education
- our loss of privacy
- our loss of our view of sunsets
- our loss of our view of the skyline
- our partial loss of sunlight
- our loss of our view of the night sky
- increased air pollution
- increased noise pollution
- increased light pollution at night
- increased congestion
- increased safety hazards for pedestrians
- increased safety hazards for residents on 48th Street and Yuma Street backing out of their driveways to exit their properties

In one word: Nothing.

Along those lines, there are other questions that have been raised in public forums that Valor has failed to adequately address, including:

- What plans does Valor offer to ensure the safety of pedestrians in the immediate area of their proposed building?
- What plans does Valor offer to ensure the safety of children walking and bicycling in the immediate area of their proposed buildings?
- What plans does Valor offer to abate the additional air pollution?
- What plans does Valor offer to abate the additional noise pollution?

All these are issues which will affect those of us within 200 feet to a much greater degree than others further away. They should be specifically addressed-- each and every one before approval.

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There are no amenities that can be offered that would truly compensate for the losses to our well-being. What Valor is proposing to take away is priceless and irreplaceable; the risks to our wellbeing cannot be effectively managed. We are supportive of responsible development that takes into consideration the existing neighborhood and the people who live in it. Should Valor's monetary gain outweigh our concerns and enjoyment of our homes? We hope not and look to you to protect our well-being.

We 200 footers are on the front lines for all these issues because our family's households will suffer the negative consequences the most. Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,
200-footer families from the following addresses:

Jane Petit-Moore
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Laura Ivers
Philippe Chabot
4710 Windom PL NW

Keisha Hylton-Rodic
Nemanja Rodic
4712 Windom PL NW

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4713 Windom PL NW

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4301 48th Street NW

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4711 Warren St NW

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4811 Yuma St. NW

Edgardo Favaro
4729 Yuma Street NW

(--additional signatures continued on next page--)

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4815 Yuma Street NW

cc:

Councilmember Mary Cheh : mcheh@dccouncil.us
Chairman Jon Bender (jonbender@gmail.com)