

October 3, 2019

Jason Mitchell
4704 Warren St. NW
Washington, DC 20016

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

RE: Letter in Opposition: Case Number 19-10, Valor Development LLC Consolidated PUD Square 1499, Lots 802, 803, 806, and 807, in American University Park, District of Columbia

Dear Chairman Hood and Members of the Commission:

I live at 4704 Warren Street NW, around the corner from the proposed development of the site of the former SuperFresh grocery store at 4330 48th Street NW. I write to express my continued opposition to the proposal by Valor Development to construct a massive building of 5 to 7 stories in height, including 220 apartment units and a grocery store, on the site.

I have repeatedly attended meetings of the Commission, our neighborhood ANC, and with Valor to voice our opposition to Valor's proposal, for two primary reasons that Valor has never attempted to meaningfully address: the safety risks the proposed development imposes and its enormous size relative to the surrounding neighborhood.

First, the traffic planning for the building is fundamentally unsound and threatens the safety of our families. Virtually every house on our block and the others that surround the project is home to small children or seniors, and most of those blocks do not have sidewalks on both sides of the street. For example, for my children to get to school (or anywhere) each day, they must walk across the middle of our block on Warren Street because there is no sidewalk in front of our house. Nearly all of the traffic from the proposed development must travel through our neighborhood, which already sees many cars each morning speeding up our streets to cut between Massachusetts and Wisconsin Avenues. Most of the vehicular traffic for the development, including the tractor trailers to supply the grocer, will travel on 48th Street, which is just four houses down from us. Adding many hundreds of additional cars speeding down those roads every day is simply a recipe for disaster in terms of both traffic and safety for my family and the other existing neighborhood residents.

The risks of Valor's development to pedestrians are even more acute within the boundaries of the development area and on Massachusetts Avenue. Valor's proposed alleyway system to access the development will draw heavy foot traffic from pedestrians seeking to avoid walking around the very large block of the building, and those alleyways are too narrow to safely handle the car and truck traffic that Valor has planned for them, much less to do so in a way that will keep pedestrians safe. Valor has repeatedly rejected proposals that would enhance pedestrian safety—such as railings to keep vehicles out of walkways and ADA-compliant

sidewalks—because there simply is not enough room within the development site to build the massive structure Valor has proposed and workable, safe passageways for vehicles and pedestrians. Similarly, Valor has failed to propose workable measures to protect pedestrians around the main vehicular entrances to the project, including the primary entrance to the alleyway off of Massachusetts Avenue. Under Valor’s proposal, there will be no stoplight or other measures to control the flow of traffic off of that high-speed street into the alleyway, despite the fact that many pedestrians will need to cross that entrance to reach the N4 (or during off hours, N6) bus line and other commerce in the surrounding area.

Second, as many members of the neighborhood have discussed at prior hearings, the mass of Valor’s proposed development is fundamentally inappropriate for the neighborhood and inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan and FLUM. Legally, Valor is seeking to construct a medium density building on a lot that is not zoned for that density, and its proposal should be rejected for that reason. But the problem is easy to see from a common sense perspective as well. The proposed building will dwarf the single-family homes directly across the street of its main frontage on Yuma and 48th Streets. It is out of character with the surrounding neighborhood, a fact that Valor has repeatedly attempted to hide through the deceptive visual renderings it has provided to the Commission and its failure to submit a clear visual comparison of the size of the development to the surrounding homes, despite Chairman Hood’s requests such a visual comparison. To the extent that a structure of the size Valor proposes belongs anywhere in the vicinity of our neighborhood, it is on Massachusetts Avenue, not on the neighborhood streets where Valor wishes to place it. If Valor’s proposed development goes forward, not only will homes in the neighborhood be dwarfed and cast in shadows, but the transfer of density necessary for Valor to build this structure would guarantee that the prime commercial real estate on Massachusetts Avenue will never be meaningfully developed.

I strongly oppose Valor's current plan and respectfully urge the Commission to recommend that Valor rework their proposal to ensure safety and consistency with the surrounding neighborhood, the Comprehensive Plan, and FLUM. Despite its claims that it has worked with the community, Valor has consistently refused for years to make any meaningful changes to the overall mass of its proposed development or to develop the site in a manner consistent with the surrounding neighborhood. It is, understandably, seeking to maximize profits and will not make those changes and consider the impact to its bottom line without action by the Commission. This site should be developed responsibly, and the neighborhood would support responsible development that addresses safety and mass concerns. This proposal simply does not, and would irreparably harm those nearby, including my family and neighbors.

Thank you for your diligence and consideration of our concerns.

Sincerely,



Jason Mitchell
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