

Schellin, Sharon (DCOZ)

From: Elizabeth Mitchell <efcmitchell@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, October 7, 2019 4:22 PM
To: DCOZ - ZC Submissions (DCOZ)
Subject: Case number 19-10 Valor Development, LLC Consolidated PUD Square 1499, Lots 802, 803, 806, and 807 Letter in Opposition

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Dear Chairman Hood,

I am writing to you again to please oppose this development. We have been trying to get them to make this development safer for the past two years and it feels as though all of our pleas have fallen on deaf ears. They are creating a pedestrian hellscape in the alley system where small children and elderly neighbors are going to be competing with large tractor trailers, delivery trucks and other vehicles in a narrow space. Additionally, they are not implementing the metal guard rails I see in every other similar alley network across the city. This is not a huge ask or imposition on the developer and yet it could literally be the difference between life and death for pedestrians when they are trying to navigate these narrow twisting and often blind passages with massive trucks and distracted drivers. There is a strikingly similar example of just such an alleyway with proper pedestrian protections at the Whole Foods in Tenleytown just up the street.

I live at 4704 Warren Street NW less than a block away from the proposed Valor development. My sons (ages 4 and 6) need to cross Warren Street to get to a sidewalk as there isn't one on our side of the street. The intersection at 48th and Warren Street is already a mess as there are no stop signs on 48th St NW and there is frequently an AU Bus parked on the corner obstructing the view of on coming traffic and smaller less visible pedestrians like my sons who use this intersection on a daily basis. Cars (especially during rush hour) careen around the corner at high speeds without concern for pedestrians. I can only imagine how much worse these problems will become with the addition of tractor trailers, delivery trucks, Lyft drivers, scooters, bikes, and additional commuters.

The roughly 220 units proposed for the building is approximately equivalent to adding 10 blocks of homes to the neighborhood. Children who would move to the proposed development would rightfully need to be accommodated in local public schools, which are already overcrowded. For example, for this school year, Janney Elementary School utilization is about 107% with enrollment at 752 students (we were expecting 743). In addition, there are other housing developments planned within these school boundaries that will impact student attendance and thus the capacities of these schools to deliver quality education to enrolled children. On my block there are 16 houses. 6 of those houses have changed hands in the past four years. 100% of those houses have been sold to families ALL with at least two children ALL under the age of six. This trend is not unique to my block. This trend is actually exceptionally common. I only know of one house in the neighborhood in recent history that didn't sell to a family with small kids. That is why I was extremely puzzled by the Deputy Mayor of Education's letter. Somehow in a building that has the potential to house 336 children, the Deputy Mayor has calculated that there would likely be only 9 attending Janney. I find it even stranger that OP has recommended the developer incorporate a children's play area if the Mayor's office truly believes there are only going to be 9 children living in this building which could house up to 906 residents. The letter correctly states that all three of the schools in our area are currently "overutilized"

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and are projected to stay that way for the foreseeable future. What the letter fails to capture is that we're projected to be even overcrowded in the near future to the tune of 25%. There is absolutely no plan by DCPS, the Mayor, or Master of Facilities plan to address this but when I read that they expect only 9 students from this project I start to see why they aren't as bothered as I am. Overcrowding has very real consequences. Janney has already had to scrap their PK3 program and as we struggle to make space for the students we have to accommodate by law, we'll have to get rid of what is left of our PK4 program. Not having access to free local PK programs will further burden low and middle income families who are already struggling to afford to live in our neighborhood. If nothing is done, we're going to have a middle school with 2000 students and Wilson will not be able accept students from other parts of the city as it has done in the past.

This building is also massive! It would make sense on Wisconsin Avenue or another major artery or commercial zone but here you have a massive seven story building right across the street from two story homes in the bottom of a valley. Unlike buildings on Wisconsin Avenue and Connecticut, this building is also extremely far from public transportation. There's a bus that goes down Mass Ave but it's extremely slow and caught in the same rush hour traffic that sends cars racing through our neighborhood to find the illusive quicker route (also perhaps worth noting that the intersection at 48th and Mass seems to be the only intersection along Western and Mass that doesn't have rush hour restrictions). I would love better bus service and perhaps even an express bus and a bus lane but those aren't suggestions DDOT or the developer are making. The AU Building at the end of the street generates a ton of traffic and we're already having a difficult time keeping everyone safe without the addition of a massive building with a poorly designed and thought out traffic pattern. I could go on but I believe you and board are extremely familiar with most of our major concerns by this point.

I truly appreciate that you seem to care about the people who live in the neighborhood and the consequences such a development would have on our daily lives and community. Moreover, I truly appreciate that you and the Commissioners seem committed to development that makes sense for the long-term effective development of Washington D.C. I appreciate you allowing us all to come and testify to explain to you what our daily lives look like and why this development is so particularly scary to us. If this is developed as it currently is designed, I fear it will only be a matter of time before there is a casualty. Isn't Vision Zero just as important as increasing density?

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