

**TESTIMONY OF WILLIAM CLARKSON  
CO-PRESIDENT, SPRING VALLEY NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION  
BEFORE  
THE ZONING COMMISSION OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
IN  
Z.C. CASE NO. 19-10  
  
OCTOBER 10, 2019**

Chairman Hood and Commissioners, my name is William Clarkson, and I am testifying on behalf of the Spring Valley Neighborhood Association (“SVNA”). SVNA is comprised of residents of Spring Valley, the neighborhood directly across Massachusetts Avenue from the proposed Lady Bird development, and we greatly appreciate the opportunity to participate as a party in this proceeding.

SVNA supports Valor Development’s planned unit development (“PUD”) application currently under consideration. We believe that the proposed project will have an overall beneficial impact on the community, especially with the return of a full-service grocery store to the former SuperFresh site. Furthermore, the proposed project would provide 29 affordable housing units under the District’s inclusionary zoning (“IZ”) regulations. I think all of the parties would agree that the District continues to face a severe affordable housing shortage and that more needs to be done to address this issue, especially in Ward 3. While one opposing party has argued that the Applicant’s proposal “would not remotely qualify as a significant contribution to the District’s stock of affordable housing,”<sup>1</sup> it is important to note that, since 2015, only 53 IZ units have been built in Ward 3.<sup>2</sup> None of those 53 units are located in ANC 3E or ANC 3D. In fact, according to the Office of Planning, there is not a single income-restricted affordable housing unit in

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<sup>1</sup> See Exhibit 118.

<sup>2</sup>D.C. Fiscal Policy Institute, “DC Affordable Housing Profile”:

<https://public.tableau.com/profile/dc.fiscal.policy.institute#!/vizhome/AffordableHousingPipeline/MapView>

all of ANC 3D.<sup>3</sup> While it is our hope that the Applicant will consider providing additional affordable housing units, a 50 percent increase in IZ units in Ward 3 cannot be dismissed as an insignificant contribution. Another opponent criticized the Applicant and affected ANCs for claiming that, “there was insufficient affordable housing in Ward 3,” and for failing to recognize the significant number of rent-controlled apartments in Ward 3.<sup>4</sup> We don’t believe that the Applicant or the ANCs are questioning the benefits of the District’s rent control statute, particularly with respect to seniors aging in place. In this case, however, affordable housing creation is the primary issue, not rent control. As stated in the recently passed Comprehensive Plan Framework Amendment Act of 2019, “The preservation of existing affordable housing and the production of new affordable housing, especially for low income and workforce households, are essential to avoid a deepening of racial and economic divides in the city, and must occur city-wide to achieve fair housing objectives.”<sup>5</sup>

It is our understanding that Valor or another developer could have chosen to pursue a matter-of-right, residential-only development project, which would have eliminated the need to work with the affected ANCs and the opportunity for the significant, meaningful community review and input that has occurred on this project since September 2015. While we understand and appreciate neighbors’ concerns about the potential negative impacts which could result from the current proposal, we believe that Valor has made a concerted, good faith effort to address issues and concerns raised by community stakeholders, the affected ANCs, and D.C. government agencies.

As a result of this engagement and outreach, Valor has made a number of revisions to address community concerns. Notably, while retaining the grocery store element, the

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<sup>3</sup> D.C. Office of Planning, “Income-Restricted Affordable Housing by ANC”, <https://public.tableau.com/profile/travis.pate#!/vizhome/DistrictofColumbiaIncome-RestrictedAffordableHousingbyANC/AffordableHousingANC> .

<sup>4</sup> See Exhibit 4.

<sup>5</sup> See: <http://chairmanmendelson.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/B23-1-Comp-Plan-Framework-ANS.pdf>

current proposal reduces the Building 1 height by 21 feet and the overall density by over 90,000 square feet. Valor's revised plans have been endorsed by the Office of Planning, and after analyzing the potential traffic and parking impacts of the project, the DC Department of Transportation has stated that it has no objection to the approval of Valor's application.

We also think it is important to highlight the continued efforts of our elected ANC representatives to keep neighborhood residents informed and for working tirelessly to foster meaningful dialogue among the various stakeholders and community interests. During its consideration of the Applicant's previous Voluntary Design Review Application (ZC 16-23) and in the current case, ANC 3D has actively solicited neighbors' input in their resolutions to the Zoning Commission, including the formal consideration of proposals offered by non-ANC 3D residents.

All of us are here tonight because we care deeply about our community and recognize the importance of participating in this process. We appreciate the Commission's consideration of our testimony and would be happy to answer any questions.