

Chairman Hood and Commissioners,

I am Milton Buchler II, the owner of 4713 Windom Place, a one-and-one-half storey cape cod, directly across 48th Street from the site which Valor Development L.L.C. seeks to redevelop, usually referred to as the SuperFresh site.

I still strongly oppose the proposal by Valor Development due to their insistence in constructing a huge building, topping 58½ feet in height above Valor’s chosen 48th Street building height measuring point, the high point of their property.

At my previous reading, not only did I not finish listing my reasons for opposition, but I believe I managed to induce a stupor in at least several of you. In that light, I will list them now:

- this proposal is incompatible with the amended Comprehensive Plan; clearly not in keeping with Thomas Jefferson’s vision for a Washington where “the houses [are] low & convenient, and the streets light and airy.”
- there is no attempt in this development to respect continuity with the surrounding neighborhood of single-family houses and the low-rise commercial shopping center; an undulating wall does not continuity make
- excessive new traffic-- commercial, residential and visitor
- decreased pedestrian safety for both adults and children due to increased traffic
- lack of adequate off-street parking for prospective residents and their guests, heretofore unaddressed
- increased pollution– air, liquid, noise, etc.
- an ill-conceived traffic pattern
- funneling bicyclists and pedestrians of all ages into the too-narrow alley traffic with inadequate protections
- enticing pedestrians across Massachusetts Avenue, to cross a busy parking lot, then into the too-narrow alley
- the increase in school population leading to further overcrowding
- the overtaxing of already strained emergency services
- no discernible benefit to the surrounding neighborhood
- the western sky forever blocked and blotted from view at my house
- the loss of any sense of privacy.

If these seem familiar, it is because the proposal is familiar. Too familiar.

The current design has the large, yellow brick building 6½ feet lower than the previous effort. This lower height is not due to any effort to respond to neighborhood concerns, rather it is in response to D.C I.Z. regulations which magically do not count apartments below grade. By lowering the building, the amount of I.Z space, so desired by this commission, is thereby reduced. [~6 units]

The height reduction will not be readily apparent to the casual passerby. Looking up at the parapet from across 48th Street or Yuma Street, the observer’s head will tilt at 35.5° angle on average. Just ~3° difference. The change in income to Valor, considerable since 18 apartments are now below grade.

Should this proposal be built, when I look out my west-facing windows, I will no longer see the sky. I will see a towering, yellow, windowed mesa. Sunsets will be forever blocked. And as Valor

shows, my “sunsets” will come considerably sooner than those of others. What “amenity” could replace my westward view? Certainly not Valor’s 0.04 acre “Windom Park” nestled amongst the masonry.

Indeed the much denigrated near-empty SuperFresh parking lot appears to me to be a greater “amenity” to the neighborhood than any offered, as I have observed the neighborhood children riding their bicycles in the vacant parking lot and watched drivers attempting to learn to parallel park there.

I listened earlier when there was a discussion of traffic due to the varying size of the grocer’s in addition to that of residents. One unmentioned aspect is that the emissions from the residents’ vehicles will be concentrated at certain times of the day due to commuting. In the mornings, the effects will be exacerbated by the fact the engines are cold and therefore produce more pollutants. The idling delivery truck engines will add to the mix. The closer residences will obviously receive a greater dose.

I also heard Mr. Kravitz comments about the Massachusetts Avenue Parking Shops being something of a memorial to suburban sprawl. And that’s the point: A.U. Park is like a *sub*-urban area. That sprawl, to which he appears to object, in this case, is completely urban-- this being in the District of Columbia. This large building is totally unsuited to this neighborhood. It needs a more urban setting. How C. H. Hillegeist got it so right over 80 years ago and Valor so wrong now-- despite all the advantages of computer modeling, G.P.S. positioning, laser transits and the like-- is beyond me.

His other comment concerning the quality of schools is, in this instance, pitch-perfect. All children in D.C., and this country for that matter, need and require a quality education at all levels. I admit I am straying from the areas which concern my house directly, but it is important to emphasize. The local schools are already over capacity. This project will add to that. One of the hallmarks of effective teaching is a low student to teacher ratio. How will this come to be before Valor completes their handiwork? While I’m certain this is beyond the commission’s purview, I would feel much more sanguine had there been *some* discussion. I’m certain those who live in this neighborhood, including Mr. Kravitz, would too.

As a child, some of my earliest memories are of walking across 48th Street with my parents to do the weekly shopping and up Windom a couple of blocks with my mother to visit my grandmother. Her back porch trellis was covered by a climbing red rose. Early on, the house was even fronted by the proverbial white picket fence. Of course, there was little traffic. Well, the fence, the trellis and the rose are long gone. What neighborhood memories does this commission foresee now?