

Cochran, Patricia (DCOZ)

From: Chris Jamieson <jamieson@alum.wpi.edu>
Sent: Sunday, October 2, 2022 9:56 PM
To: DCOZ - ZC Submissions (DCOZ)
Subject: Letter in Opposition - ZC Case # 22-06

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Dear Members of the Zoning Commission,

My name is Chris Jamieson, and along with my wife, have owned our Southwest DC home for over a decade, and we are also parents of a child attending a Jefferson Middle School feeder elementary (Amidon-Bowen Elementary School). We are submitting this statement in opposition to 899 Maine Ave SW (ZC 22-06).

We are residents of the Capitol Square at the Waterfront a community of 93 single family townhomes built in 2001. Our community spans a two block by one block area of Southwest, bounded by 9th Street SW to the West, 7th Street SW to the East, G Street SW to the South, and I-395 to the North. While our townhomes are individually owned, but community collectively owns the common areas and private roadways, which includes Capitol Square Place SW running east to west from 7th to 9th, and alleyways that which provide ingress and egress to our garages. The community has curb cuts to our internal private roadways on 7th Street, 9th Street, and towards the western side of our property at G Street SW. It is of note that these curb cuts cannot be gated or blocked, and as such already attract a significant number of cars cutting through our land to the Wharf, for parking on G Street, etc. many of which speed or try to park in our limited permit only parking spaces.

In addition to our private roads, our community-owned common areas include the fenced yards and grassy areas between the District sidewalks and the townhomes on 9th, 7th, and G Streets, as well as two large fenced and landscaped courtyards and internal sidewalks. Portions of our community-owned property, such as the yards and grassy areas on 9th and G Streets, as well as our G Street entrance/exit alley are within the 200 ft radius of Jair Lynch's proposed 899 Maine Ave project. Since learning of Jair Lynch's intent to redevelop 800 9th Street SW around a year ago, I have been one of the owners made available to Jair Lynch for community input. In surveys of our community members I know that the majority of our homeowners would prefer to see the site redeveloped into residential, including affordable units, and were expecting something closer to the scale of the existing building at approximately 45 feet, or marginally taller.

We hoped that in the redevelopment process we might realize improvements to 9th Street and G Street SW, which currently experiences very serious traffic and safety issues. We hoped the residential units would add significantly more neighbors, especially community workers like teachers and first responders and their families, who would become longtime residents and be invested in our vibrant, diverse community.

Southwest is a very special part of the city, as evidenced by the Small Area Plan and its emphasis on maintaining the neighborhood character as well as housing residents that are diverse on intergenerational, racial, religious, and socioeconomic levels; his proposal is antithesis to that plan.

We care deeply about our neighborhood school, Jefferson Middle School Academy, which will also suffer the impact of construction and a towering building such as the proposed. The shadow impact of the development on the surrounding areas, including Jefferson Field, which as you know is used as the Jefferson Middle School's athletic field, and on some of our Association members' homes is non-trivial and has not been adequately addressed by the applicant.

When faced with this initial proposal of a building well over 120 feet on average, made up of 500 mostly smaller, mostly market rate rental units, and the suggestion of a grocery store on the ground floor, we were very disappointed. It is important that you know while we have supported and enjoyed the nearby Wharf development, the site in question is undeniably NOT part of the Wharf. It's also not a transitional zone as the applicant would have one think ~~It is part of Southwest~~

- also known as SWDC or "the little quadrant that could." The anchor of the block is not District Square, the Anthem, the Capitol Yacht Club, or the Fish Market. It is the historic, beautiful, vital neighborhood institution of Jefferson Middle School Academy, a low/moderate rise building in which children of the Southwest neighborhood and beyond are educated. This proposed building, especially if it is built along with the other proposed building at 807 Maine Ave SW, which we also oppose, would literally overshadow the school and forever alter the feel of the block, the experience and safety of the students, as well as set a dangerous precedent for other underutilized or vacant parts of our neighborhood.

And, while again, we enjoy and supported the building of the Wharf, it already contains expensive rental buildings as well as retail and restaurant tenants that many of our neighbors in Southwest find unaffordable. Building the Wharf meant dealing with the multiple years construction and related annoyances. We are not opposed to the trade off of such inconveniences for 899 Maine, when the development benefits the community and when we know we will have a voice in not only what goes there via the ANC and our Homeowners Associations party status, but also be party to any construction management agreements for the duration of that phase.

Despite voicing our many important, rational concerns to Jair Lynch and their team about what they have proposed, I feel like we (the owners of Capitol Square) might as well have not have engaged with them at all. At each conversation, they set the agenda and dominated the discussion, promised changes or access to documents that never materialized to our satisfaction, and they generally minimized our concerns or gave us reasons why it basically wasn't their problem. And now, as evidenced by their Zoning Case filing, they have attempted to completely silence our community by opposing our Homeowners Associations application for Party Status.

We want to emphasize that specifically to those who might call us "NIMBYs," our opposition is not to the redevelopment of the site. Our opposition is to certain aspects of the proposed building that are at odds with the Small Area Plan including those for inclusionary housing; the lack of consideration or even acknowledgment of the impact of the building and its construction on the middle school and the on traffic and safety of G Street; and of course, we also oppose Jair Lynch's attempts to silence our community through the zoning party status process.

In closing we strongly oppose the requested change in zoning regulation and PUD application for case 22-06.

Thank you,

Chris Jamieson
819 Capitol Square Place SW
Washington, DC 20024
(Member of Capitol Square at the Waterfront Homeowners Association)