

From:
To: [PlanComm](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL]Proposed Rezoning: Adjacent Resident Deeply Concerned by #2024-00001
Date: Monday, June 3, 2024 11:42:56 AM
Attachments: [image.png](#)

Members of the Planning Commission, I am writing to you as a near-neighbor to the proposed eating establishment. My house is just below the words “Figure 1” in the caption in the Staff Report. I would have attended and spoken in person Tuesday night, but I teach a class at that time — so I am writing you now to express my **STRONG OPPOSITION** to this zoning change.

My reasons for this opposition are as follows:

- The proffer was placed there for a number of reasons originally. Those reasons (as outlined below) have not changed; nothing has transpired since it was enacted that would change the rationale for the proffer. Invalidating the proffer now can only be justified if conditions for the proffer changed — and they have not.
- As you read in the Staff Report, this area is problematic for businesses that attract a large group. It is suitable for professional offices that might serve one or two clients at a time — a far cry from an eatery
- All around that block of buildings (to the north, west, and south) are residential units — people’s homes. An establishment with heavy foot traffic would adversely affect the character of the neighborhood.
- Pendleton Street is a bus artery, and the additional traffic — not to mention parking (or double-parked cars for people “just dashing in”) would complicate an already challenging bus situation.
- Case in point: just this weekend there was an “incident” involving a bus near the corner of N Columbus and Pendleton that caused significant delay. A restaurant at that location would have significantly complicated the situation

REFRESH (UPDATED 1:32:33 PM)

Route:

10B HUNTING POINT-BALLSTON

Service Advisory:

**10B Alert: Incident delays southbound Route 10B at Pendleton St & N Columbus St.
Check where your bus is by visiting
<https://buseta.wmata.com/#10B>**

- Because Pendleton is a main causeway to the Metro station, there is a lot

of commuter-time traffic on the street – at just the time of day when a coffee shop would have its peak business.

- The alley adjacent to the property is a main ingress/egress route for the underground parking garage of the NARFE building on N Washington, so there is no extra space for dumpsters, delivery of food supplies, or customer parking
- The Fire Station, just a few blocks north on N Columbus St., depends on a clear passageway through the N Columbus/Pendleton Street intersection, and the increased traffic and associated congestion poses a serious risk to unencumbered passage for emergency vehicles
- There is VERY limited parking in the area. This is an inherently residential area, and there are few suitable places for the customers of this would-be restaurant to park. They own no property for a lot, and on-street parking is very limited.
- A restaurant would generate quite a bit of waste — far more than the professional offices do now. The alley is already congested, and the dumpsters already there frequently overflow. Where is the additional trash and food waste that a restaurant would generate go? How would it be collected?
- Moreover, the area already has a problem with rodents (rats!), and the addition of an eating establishment would only make it worse.

Reading the Staff Report, one would come away with the impression that approving the removal of the proffer would be no big deal because it doesn't break any rule or regulation, including consistency with the Small Area Plan. That ignores a few important facts, including that the SAP was written with the proffer in place (and with the assumption that it would remain so). Moreover, the suggestion that the restaurant would be "compatible with surrounding uses" ignores the fact that on three sides of the property it is residential. The Staff Report should have said that it is one quarter compatible with surrounding uses. It is **not** "compatible with surrounding uses" at all.

And where will it stop? The units making this petition are two of four on the block. Lifting the proffer would set a dangerous precedent which will be hard to contain, resulting in a "What about me?" domino effect.

The Staff Report seems to have limited itself to the consideration of whether or not lifting the proffer would break a rule — essentially concluding that one can do so. As a result, the Staff Report ignores the impacts to the adjacent community. The question that needs to be asked by you, the Planning Commission, is this:

Just because we can [lift the proffer], does that mean that we should?

Put another way, would lifting this be in the best interests of the neighborhood and the citizens of Alexandria? I would argue that it would not. The incremental value of yet one more coffee shop in Alexandria — at that location — cannot justify the impact on the neighborhood that surrounds that location. And if this is just the first step in a multi-step approval process, then let's save us all (including the City Staff, who have

enough to do to keep up with growth and limited staffing budgets) lots of time and effort by nipping this in the bud right now.

Thank you for your attention.

Steve Davidson
535 N Columbus St.
