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11-13-21

The Neighbors of 2406 Terrett Ave  
The Neighborhood of Del Ray  
Alexandria, VA 22301

Re: The Permitting for Plans and Construction of the proposed property located on 2046 Terrett Ave

To the Mayor and City Council of Alexandria, VA:

We have followed with great interest the sale and subsequent upkeep or more precisely the lack thereof, plans and meetings around the aforementioned property. Many of us, I would say a majority of us who live on the same street, adjoining streets, and even those streets not in the direct line of sight are alarmed at the ease for which a property can be approved on a substandard lot that overtakes the lot and its neighbors so easily. We have watched what has been mostly a rubber stamp approval by two the bodies that reviewed and approved plans before getting to the City Council for the vote; the DRCA and Planning and Zoning at the City of Alexandria. Besides some mostly cosmetic changes, there has been no critical input or questions asked of the project as it relates to the impact of this home on such a small street or the city services impacted in our already old sewer system for example.

For context, a good example of the out-of-control nature of this project and others like it is another home built recently on Terrett Ave. As we have come to understand it originally the project started as a more modest 1 ½ story home. Something changed after plan approval and instead, we found a home built and completed that is 3 stories built within inches of the allowable FAR and setbacks for the lot. It is a home that we see built on lots twice the size that homes like this sit on. You need only look around other streets to see other examples of homes that have grown to be supersized towering over their neighbors' homes.

Complicating this are the faux features many of the homes being built are approved for. A driveway is going to be put in to alleviate parking congestion on the street; only the driveway is not much wider than a sidewalk and goes unused for any automobile. Basements dug deeper but were careful not to go over the height requirements to not upset the above grade FAR however built with egress windows and separate access so they can be easily finished afterward to be an unpermitted ADU after completion.

No one on this list is against improving your home or even building a new one. Collectively we all have a problem allowing these oversized homes to become the new norm and the problems they are creating. Your privacy, space between homes and even jockeying for a spot to park by your own home daily is not what Del Ray was ever about. This is the village within the city. Want a home that belongs on a 10,000 square foot lot you have unfortunately come to the wrong neighborhood, or at least that is what it used to be.

Pivoting to the application of 2406 Terrett Avenue, the home has a rich history. Its previous owner a fixture in the neighborhood, she would host friends and neighbors constantly. She was not without her quirks, as we all are, but the upkeep of her home was continuous. Fast forward to the sale by the estate to the highest bidder, a developer based in Maryland ([https://www.washingtonpost.com/realestate/a-meeting-of-minds-and-spaces-in-bethesda-md/2021/06/24/0ab6cf7e-d2c2-11eb-ae54-515e2f63d37d\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/realestate/a-meeting-of-minds-and-spaces-in-bethesda-md/2021/06/24/0ab6cf7e-d2c2-11eb-ae54-515e2f63d37d_story.html)). Using this article as a guide we neighbors wondered if this is another project for their team? Almost two years of ownership, no upkeep of the property to speak of, a track record of building non-conforming homes in other neighborhoods, is this to be

a quick flip, with plans supporting a 5-bedroom home above grade with an easily convertible 2-bedroom, 2 bath accessory dwelling unit in the basement? After viewing the first set of plans it was a home that did not fit into the neighborhood look and appeal. Fortunately, DRCA and Zoning and Planning discouraged the original design like the wrap-around driveway and garage placement and contemporary look of the first drawings, and overnight a new set of drawings emerged moving the driveway and garage (garage? On a lot this big?) to the other side of the home with a look somewhat closer to other visual aspects of the neighborhood. What did not go away was the above-mentioned 5-bedroom above grade, 2-bedroom ADU that is almost 4000 square feet not including the garage but including the very usable basement. If the driveway being built is nothing more than a walkway to the garage, good luck parking on your block let alone near your home for those of us who already live here.

Unfortunately, the track record with the new owner/developers is less than good with those of us who live around this home. The house was left to rot and decay since it was purchased. No upkeep was performed, no maintenance to maintain even the appearance of a home befitting the neighborhood. Simply, the house became a blight. In any other municipality, the owner is fined by the city, contractors are hired and the owners are charged by the city for what they pay for upkeep. In Alexandria, we congratulate the owner for cutting the grass after over 16 months of ownership despite multiple complaints to the city before that time. The home became a used car lot for a foreign plated vehicle. When the complaints came in more frequently the car moved to the back of the home. There has been little to no outreach by the new owners, mostly impersonal certified letters to some of us on the street.

At the Zoning meeting on November 4th, there were congratulations all around. The commission praised the owner for making changes to the plan of the home so quickly. For moving the garage and the driveway. These changes occurred so fast I have to wonder if they were nothing more than misdirection. Look, we made these changes, just don't look closely at anything else.

When advice was offered by one of the planning commissioners on building it was far from what many of us thought would be helpful. The suggestion by the commissioner was to have their builder go over to an adjoining neighbor and request to eradicate their green fence of sustainable bamboo that they have painstakingly maintained for years both on their side of the property (as well as for the previous owner who planted the bamboo originally). All congratulated each other on such a wonderful idea.

After the lovefest that was the Zoning Meeting and the owners 15 minutes of fame, they achieved in it by anyone who witnessed the spectacle, it was very apparent that any objection to this property would fall on deaf ears. Substandard lot or not, the plans checked all the other boxes and would be approved.

We, the neighbors of 2406 Terrett Ave, would like to offer some advice to the new owner(s) that is more practical. While you develop this property, make sure you are here as often as possible. Instruct your contractors and their subs to be mindful of those who live on Terrett and the surrounding streets. Don't speed, block the street and be respectful of their properties and cars that have been parked on the street before them and will be after they leave. Keep a clean worksite with no overgrowth, no nails left in the street, and proper treatment of stormwater to not turn Terrett Ave into a brown river of silt each time we have even a modest rainfall. Obey the noise ordinance and building codes as it relates to starting and finishing times and days allowed to work on the home. And please do not send your contractor out to be an ambassador to this project.

If you are making this your home, and we hope that you are, be a good neighbor by making sure you have weekly trips to keep the peace and are the face of the project.

Respectfully, the neighbors of 2406 Terrett Avenue.