

BELLA VISTA NEIGHBORS ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 63955, Philadelphia, PA 19147
(215) 627-0057

www.bellavistaneighbors.org

Bella Vista Neighbors Association, formerly known as Bella Vista Town Watch, is an independent non-profit neighborhood organization. Our goal is to improve the quality of life for all residents of Bella Vista.

Hon. Frank DiCicco
Chair, Philadelphia Zoning Board of Adjustment
One Parkway Building, 1515 Arch Street, 18th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19102

August 17, 2018

Re: RCO Meeting Summary Form

ZBA Calendar No. 34254 Zoning Application No. 882226
1020-1024 Christian St./ ZBA hearing date: August 8, 2018, 2:00 pm
Applicant: Atiya Groomes, Christian Street Baptist Church

Dear Mr. DiCiccio:

Below is a summary of our public community meeting held regarding the above referenced zoning application.

Position:	Opposed
Date of Meeting:	August 7, 2018
Location of Meeting:	Palumbo Recreation Center, 10 th & Fitzwater Streets.
Participating RCO:	Bella Vista Neighbors Association (BVNA) Zoning Committee
Number of Attendees:	Approximately 22 excluding zoning committee members

Reason for Position:

The applicant wishes to erect upon a single RSA-5 designated through-lot, two separate four-story multi-family dwelling structures with roof top decks and pilot houses; with one structure fronting Salter Street, and one fronting Christian Street, separated by a shared east-west oriented driveway, and to be accessed by an adjoining two-lane wide (20'-4") north to south oriented driveway fronting Christian Street. The project intends to contain a total of 6 dwellings and 6 garages holding a total of 10 parking spaces. The application has been refused for the number of proposed dwelling units, more than one principal use, more than one principal building structure, and for off-street parking with access from a principal street.

Of note, BVNA feels that L & I erred in not issuing a refusal for multiple pilot houses, where only one is allowed in an RSA-5 zoning district. Furthermore, as the development fronts Christian Street, and proposes a structure to align with the rear property line, BVNA feels that L & I should have issued a refusal for lack of rear yard area and rear yard depth.

Though the applicant claimed that he could build this number of homes as-of-right if he sought a formal subdivision of the property, as well as a driveway with deeded shared access easements from Salter Street, this proposal maintains the existing single RSA-5 designated lot. The applicant further claimed that the development must have off-street parking to be financially profitable. **Neither of these declarations provided a necessary hardship for any zoning relief to be granted.** BVNA notes that there have been other recent infill housing projects in the community that have been built without off-street parking and that were apparently profitable for the developers.

There was moderate community and zoning committee opposition expressed at the meeting. Though the proposed structures conform to the height limit of the RSA-5 zoning district (38'), the district does not allow for two separate dwelling structures of that height. And thus, many neighbors were most concerned about the proposed height of the building to be situated at the rear, along Salter Street, where all existing homes are of a very modest size and scale. Such an imposition will significantly affect quality-of-life by greatly reducing access to light and views from these existing homes along this very narrow street (15' including sidewalks).

Many other neighbors were concerned about the issue of traffic and pedestrian safety should the proposed driveway front Christian Street. Christian Street, a two-way arterial roadway with a prominent history of vehicular and pedestrian hazards and accidents, is already a heavily trafficked thoroughfare and listed on the City's "high-injury network". The congestion is also exacerbated by additional cars and pedestrians moving to and from a large charter school, and nursery school, in the adjacent blocks, as well as another charter school just two blocks away. During weekday mornings and mid-afternoons, the street is jammed with cars, busses and parents dropping off or picking up their children. Adding an overly wide driveway with access to 10 cars could add to this congestion and present a greater hazard to pedestrians. Given the nature of Christian Street being a two-way thoroughfare, one can easily imagine a resident of this proposed development idling in their car upon the sidewalk for many minutes waiting to cross to the opposite travel lane, blocking the pathway of pedestrians and forcing them around and into the street.

Additional concerns regarded the nature of erecting a high density, high lot coverage "gated community" within Bella Vista. Meaning an auto-centric development of homes consumed by garages at their first floors, with no "eyes on the street" level, no actual private rear yards, and where residents cannot easily engage with their surrounding neighbors. Many felt that such a proposal is antithetical to the nature of our modestly scaled rowhouse environment of historically narrow and walkable streets; one that encourages an openness and sense of community. And though the applicant insisted that he would not install gates to the shared driveway, there is no way to prevent such an installation after the houses are sold and his ownership has been removed.

Upon scrutiny of the presented design site plan, BVNA noted that the layout and width of the driveways and turning radiuses into and out from the garages just does not physically work for all the housing units unless the homeowners mostly own sub-compact sized cars. And thus, should these homeowners have larger SUVs and trucks, that they would likely have to park them on the streets surrounding this development, further exacerbating a shortage of on-street parking spaces in the vicinity. Given the inadequate parking and driveway plan reviews offered by the Streets Department, and with respect to their antiquated parking space and driveway dimensions and rules that do not account for the much larger vehicles of today, this driveway and parking design plan should not be approved.

A clear majority of neighbors flyer'd with official notice within 250' opposed the application (10-4). An additional 8 residents from the general neighborhood beyond the 250' radius was evenly split, with 4 opposed and 4 not-opposed to the application. All members of BVNA's zoning committee were opposed to the application as presented.

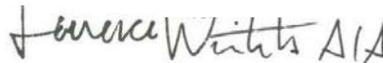
Given the way that this applicant has presented this private "planned community" design concept to BVNA over two RCO meetings, with limited alterations to the bulk and layout of the original and since withdrawn zoning application (presented to BVNA May 8, 2018, with driveway access from Salter Street); BVNA feels that with a more carefully considered design, and with a more thoughtful community negotiated design process, that perhaps BVNA could support an alternative design that does not seek so many zoning variances and that could better fit within the immediate context. We believe that the site could still achieve up to 6 dwellings by employing a more palatable form of off-street parking and access, and with a massing that puts a taller dwelling structure along the wider Christian Street and a more modestly scaled dwelling structure along Salter Street.

However, regarding the current design proposal, the committee shares many of the concerns of the neighbors, including the excessive scale and bulk of the Salter Street dwelling structure and the hazardous imposition of an overly wide driveway accessing Christian Street. The committee also sympathizes with the opinion that a proposed project that produces a self-contained community is not consistent with the character of the neighborhood.

Therefore, BVNA is Opposed to this application. As always, we thank you for considering our report of the meeting discussion and of our opinion in the matter.

Respectfully submitted,

Bella Vista Neighbors Association, Inc.



By: _____

Lawrence Weintraub AIA
Co-Chair, BVNA Zoning Committee

cc: *The Hon. Mark Squilla* c/o (Marie.Beren@phila.gov), *BVNA Zoning Committee*, rco.notification@phila.gov, wardleader@philadelphia2ndwardgop.com, ZBA: Kariyma.Quintana@phila.gov,
For Applicant: perryliss20@gmail.com, ori@ocfrealty.com.

encl: Zoning Meeting Agenda Poster, Zoning Meeting Sign-in Sheets

RCO Meeting Summary Form to Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA)

Bella Vista Neighbors Association Zoning Committee

PO Box 63955
Philadelphia, PA 19147

August 17, 2018

Hon. Frank DiCicco
Chair, Zoning Board of Adjustment
One Parkway Building, 1515 Arch Street, 18th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19102

Re: RCO Meeting Summary Form

ZBA Appeal Number: 34254
Zoning Application Number: 882226
1020-1024 Christian Street
August 8, 2018, 2 p.m.

Dear Mr. DiCicco:

Below is summary of a public community meeting held regarding the above-referenced zoning application.

Final Position Taken by Coordinating RCO is one of:

- Support
- Oppose**
- Non-Opposition
- Did not reach agreement on the application

Vote Counts:

	RCO Board/ Committee:	All Meeting Attendees:	Immediate neighbors: (flyered within 250')
<i>Support</i>			
<i>Oppose</i>	7	14	10
<i>Non-Opposition</i>	0	8	4

Date of Meeting: August 7, 2018

Location of Meeting: Palumbo Recreation Center, NEC 10th & Fitzwater Streets.

Participating RCO: Bella Vista Neighbors Association Zoning Committee (BVNA)

Total Number of Attendees: Approximately 22 (Excluding BVNA Zoning Committee members)

Letter with Explanation of/Rationale for Position Attached.

Sincerely,

Bella Vista Neighbors Association, Inc.



By: _____

Lawrence Weintraub AIA
Co-Chair, BVNA Zoning Committee

cc: *The Hon. Mark Squilla c/o Marie.Beren@phila.gov*
Planning Commission - rco.notification@phila.gov
ZBA Kariyma.Quintana@phila.gov,
For Applicant: perryliss20@gmail.com, ori@ocfrealty.com