

From: [Colin](#)
To: [Routman, Emily - Vendor](#)
Subject: Comments on Proposed New Construction at 509 N 28TH ST, File # COA-100315-2021,
Date: Tuesday, October 26, 2021 11:48:43 AM

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To the Members of the Commission of Architectural Review,
The following comments are provided in regard to an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness proposing to "Construct a new, two-story, detached, single-family residence on a vacant lot" at 509 N 28TH ST within the St. John's Church Old and Historic District (File # COA-100315-2021).

We are Jess Timmons and Colin Matthews, the owners and full-time residents of the historic home at 511 N 28TH ST which directly adjoins the property subject to the proposed new construction. Our objective is not to obstruct the proposed new construction but rather to express in good faith certain preliminary questions and concerns regarding this proposal which we have only just learned of via notice and which intimately affects us given the subject property's proximity. We have organized specific areas of concern below:

Proposed New Construction Specifications

Proposed Livable Area

At 2,576 sq.ft. of livable area, the proposed new construction appears to us inconsistent with detached row houses throughout the residential block, which by our research has an approximate median livable area of around 1900 sq. ft. In terms of the immediate segment of 28th St between E. Leigh and E. Clay, i.e. the street on which the proposed new construction will sit, the homes on both sides of N 28th have a median livable area of approximately 1560 sq.ft. And in terms of the two homes directly adjoining the property of the proposed new construction, 511 N 28th (our home) and 507 N 28th, these homes have a livable area of 1920 sq. ft. and 2166 sq. ft. respectively, or an average of 2043 sq. ft. The proposed new construction would exceed this average by 533 sq. ft.

Proposed Lot Coverage

At 2,576 sq.ft. of livable area within a 3,872 sq. ft. lot, plus a proposed 480 sq. ft. detached garage, the proposed new construction covers approximately 79% of its lot, exceeding the 65% maximum lot coverage regulation for our district, according to the City Code (Code 2004, § 114-413.16; Code 2015, § 30-413.16; Ord. No. 2010-18-30, § 3, 2-22-2010). We have concerns about the overall impact and inconsistency this may yield in contrast with existing homes in immediate proximity.

Proposed Front Setback

There is some discrepancy between the proposing applicant's recent survey and our own survey which was conducted weeks prior, in August of this year. Our survey indicates a 14.68 ft. front setback for 511 N 28th (our home), whereas the applicant's suggests that our setback is only 9.93 feet. This approximately 5-foot discrepancy could produce a notable visual impact, as the proposed new construction's setback is to be 11.66 feet, which, if our preceding

survey is correct, will place the new construction further forward than the structures on either adjoining property.

Furthermore, we would encourage additional verification of the proposed new construction's assessment of the front setback of the other adjoining property (507 N 28th), as we speculate based on visual observation that its front setback may in fact be less than our own, indicating the potential for further inconsistency with the proposal.

Proposed Home Length

As with our previously stated concerns, the proposed new construction's home length, at 56 ft. from front to back, exceeds that of at least one of the two adjoining properties by approximately 10 feet, as 511 (our home) is approximately 46 feet in length. This factor, coupled with previously stated uncertainty around the proposed front setback and lot coverage, is potentially a concern regarding the overall impact and scale of the new construction.

Foliage, Boundary Trees & Setting

A major point of care for us is that there is considerable mature foliage on the South side of 511 N 28th St (our home) which has in the past several decades come to overhang the vacant lot at 509 N 28th. Some of the trees stand within our property, while others are boundary trees, which by Virginia law are shared by both property owners. It is clear that the proposed new construction will require extensive trimming of this foliage, and we wish to express our urgent desire to work amicably with the applicant to preserve the health and aesthetic value of this landscape to the fullest extent possible prior to and during any new construction which may occur. We believe a concerted effort to maintain this foliage will be of value to the future owners of the proposed new construction, ourselves, and the neighborhood at large as it provides natural shade, cooling, and unique aesthetic appeal. We would like to specifically note that the proposed new construction's designs make no mention of this preexisting foliage, nor any mention of how our backyard fence, which will presumably become a shared fence, will be addressed given its existing custom-constructed cutout section which accommodates a fully mature Crepe Myrtle tree providing crucial shade to both our backyard and that of 509 N 28th.

Personal Notes

While we completely understand and respect the right of the new property owner at 509 N 28th to develop real estate at this location, the proposed new construction will inherently impact our lives to a significant extent. We not only purchased the historic home at 511 as our sole residence, but we are both remote workers who work full-time schedules from home. Our home offices are situated on the south, windowed side of our home, and our occupations entail conducting extensive conference calls throughout each day. Suffice it to say that we will be greatly disrupted by the lengthy process of a new construction, and we speculate that much of the surrounding homes will be similarly affected. We also speculate that a home of the proposed scale will likely yield a market value markedly disproportionate to that of the average throughout the neighborhood, exacerbating a recent and seemingly ongoing economic shift which displaces and disrupts the diverse social and economic character of the District.

Ultimately, we do not wish to obstruct the pursuit of a new construction, but rather to encourage its thoughtful consideration and verification, in terms of both physical specification and community context, by all involved and for the sake of our community members. We are deeply appreciative of this opportunity to have our voices heard, and we thank the Commission for its patience and consideration.

--Jess Timmons & Colin Matthews

From: [Reginald Tuck](#)
To: [Routman, Emily - Vendor](#)
Subject: Proposed Construction at 509 N 28th Street
Date: Monday, October 25, 2021 9:02:31 PM

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As the owners of 507 N 28th Street, we appreciate the opportunity to comment on the plans submitted for construction at 509 N 28th Street. We are grateful for the review process and we trust our comments may be helpful for that process.

On the proposed drawings, we have noted that the majority of windows for the proposed construction border our property which is only a little over three feet from our footprint. The proposed plans would place our large windows almost parallel which will create some awkwardness in terms of privacy. We would encourage the proposed project to consider the placement of some of the windows on the other side of the house where there is greater separation between the proposed construction and the existing housing. It is our impression that avoiding large windows in the same area will foster better relationships between eventual neighbors.

We also want to express some concern regarding existing trees and the implications of construction for those trees. We encourage plans that will attempt to maintain the trees which have obviously required decades of growth in order to achieve their current maturation.

We also recognize that the proposed footprint is much larger than houses contiguous with the property and will not conform to the existing houses in the block. While we recognize a desire to achieve maximum footage within the parameters of the property, the proposed project will be an obvious outlier and not in conformity with the purposes of maintaining a historical feel and look. We encourage a plan that represents greater conformity with the purposes of a historical neighborhood such as Church Hill.

Respectfully,

Reginald D. Tuck

Catherine G. McCollough