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JAMES K. HARTMANN
City Manager

April 25, 2005

Residents of 1200 Block of Queen Street
c/o Colonel Daniel K. Koslov
1219 Queen Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

Re: Proposal for 1210 Queen Street

Dear Neighbors:

In response to your letter of March 23 outlining your opposition to a proposal to renovate the building at 1210 Queen Street, I have discussed the matter with the Department of Planning and Zoning and with the City Attorney's Office, and learned the following.

The project, which has been submitted to the Department of Planning and Zoning for conceptual review, would create eight condominium apartments in the currently vacant historic building. An additional story, which would be setback, will be added to the building, and the building would be completely renovated. The applicant does not intend to provide on-site parking, as the building was originally built without parking and there is no room on the parcel for parking. You are correct that Mr. William Cromley is the applicant.

The development proposal is now at the beginning of the review process, which will include public hearings before the Planning Commission and City Council for a special use permit, a parking reduction and an increase in floor area ratio. Also, as you point out, the property is within the Parker-Gray Historic District, and will require approval from the Board of Architectural Review. In addition to these formal public hearings, the planning staff intends to hold a series of community meetings to discuss the project with neighbors, and began with a meeting with the Inner City Civic Association just last week. I have asked Eileen Fogarty, Director of Planning and Zoning, to contact you directly about the upcoming schedule for additional meetings in the neighborhood.

With regard to its location in the Historic District, be aware that our historic preservation staff considers the building at 1210 Queen Street to be one of the most important contributing buildings to the District, and has been concerned about its poor maintenance and neglected condition over the last several years. A proposal to renovate the historic building is viewed favorably, in part, because it preserves and restores this notable building.

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Additional positive elements of the proposal include an affordable housing contribution, adding green space to the lot where there is now asphalt, providing contributions to the adjacent Helen Miller public park, and creating a green building elements, including LEED certifications.

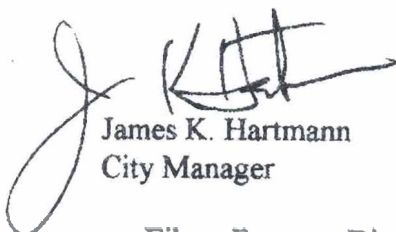
On the other hand, as you point out, the lack of parking is an issue of concern, which is one of the reasons that a special use permit is required for the project to go forward. The parking study that was submitted is from a professional engineering and transportation firm, and its findings about the availability of on-street parking are consistent with parking studies submitted recently with regard to other projects in the area. The applicant is willing to mitigate the lack of parking by providing incentives for residents to use transit, such as transit subsidies and pedestrian improvements. The City will have to take their findings into account when it balances the potential impacts of the proposal against its potential benefits. In addition, alternative approaches to parking may be required as part of the SUP process.

Finally, I note with concern your rendition of the history of the project, and have confirmed that John Rust did decide not to pursue it at one point. The City Attorney's office confirms that the conflict of interest rules in Virginia allow a member of a City board to be an applicant before his own board, as long as he does not participate in the consideration of the case or advocate on its behalf in any manner with the board or community. Thus, in this case, Mr. Cromley may bring a development application before the City, even one that requires approval of the Parker-Gray Board of Architectural Review. Ms. Fogarty had asked the City Attorney to review the facts of this case before responding to you and relayed that determination in a phone message and phone conversation. Your recent letter to me gave me an opportunity to review the issues with him. Thank you for bringing this matter to my attention. In addition, let me assure you, as Ms. Fogarty assures me, even though Mr. Cromley may proceed with this project, his status as a board chairman does not give him any special treatment as an applicant.

I hope this information responds to your questions, and encourage you to participate in all community and public meetings and hearings on this issue to make your views known to the decision makers.

If you have additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact my office, or Eileen Fogarty or Jeff Farner, the chief planner in charge of development, directly at 703-838-4666.

Sincerely,



James K. Hartmann
City Manager

cc: Eileen Fogarty, Director, Planning and Zoning