

November 26, 2019

Dear Land Use Committee Members,

We are writing in regards to the 145 Warren Street Project to reiterate the concerns that we expressed at the meeting on October 10, 2019, as well as to address some issues that came up after the public hearing portion of the meeting ended. We are opposed to this project for two main reasons: 1) it would dramatically change the nature of our neighborhood to add a 4-unit dwelling to this site and 2) the proposal greatly exceeds the current FAR guidelines.

The current proposal for 145 Warren Street not only requires multiple areas of zoning relief under the current zoning ordinances, it is also not compliant under the draft zoning ordinances released by the Zoning and Planning Committee in October 2018 in terms of number of units, lot coverage, and setbacks. This proposal is clearly one which tries to eschew current and future zoning ordinances, is incongruent with the city's stated zoning goals and will irrevocably change the character of our neighborhood as it gives a green light to others to pursue similar projects.

Exceeding Current 2-Unit Limit

The lots on Warren Street are zoned MR1 and are permitted to be two-family by right. We are particularly concerned with the precedent it sets for the rest of the street if zoning relief for a four-unit development is allowed under this special permit. There are five properties to the right and one to the left of 145 Warren that have large lots and would all be vulnerable to being developed as 4-family units, something that is out of context and does not currently exist on our street. The two properties immediately to the right are owned by a non-resident investor whose son spoke at your June meeting in support of this project, so our concerns are not abstract but rather very real. It is conceivable that the total number of units and cars on that side of our street would close to double through similar projects on these lots. This would exponentially exacerbate the already difficult parking situation, lead to increased traffic and the accompanying safety issues, and generate substantially more noise and light pollution – all of which will change the character of our street irrevocably.

When Councilor Laredo asked the Planning Department if their support of the project at 145 Warren suggests that they would also support future petitions for additional four-unit developments on Warren Street, their response was that the decision would be on a case-by-case basis, thus not ruling out the possibility of similar development in the future. In the describing the characteristics of our neighborhood in a Public Hearing Memorandum dated June 7, 2019 the Planning Department writes:

“Due to the immediate abutting multi-family residences, and Warren Street being largely multi-family residential uses, the Planning Department is unconcerned with the three additional units proposed for the site.”

It is misleading that the Planning Department continually used the term multi-family when two-family is more accurate. We have NO properties over two-family.

Exceeding Current FAR Requirements

The 145 Warren Street project plops a massive structure that is completely out of context with our neighborhood right in the middle of Warren Street. The proposed single-family attached design is massive and requires zoning relief of more than 50% for the current FAR guidelines. Adding housing density to Village Centers should not come at the expense of currently existing neighborhoods.

Councilor Lipof correctly pointed out that most of us equate increased density with smaller, more affordable housing – something that hardly describes these proposed units, which average over 3500 square feet. Warren Street is characterized by two-family homes of modest scale with a median size of 2,000 sq. ft. Building on such a large scale will lead to substantially less green space, reduce privacy for abutting units, interfere with the neighborhood’s diverse wildlife, and change the character of the street by cutting down large, well-established trees.

The Planning Department said they were willing to provide zoning relief out of a desire to preserve the historic home. We agree that historic preservation is a desirable goal but would press the developer to accomplish this while also adhering to the current zoning rules. We oppose the increased scale, massing and density as it would fundamentally change the character of our neighborhood and would encourage not just this committee but also the Planning Department to consider these quality of life issues.

We are heartened that the Councilors are asking the right questions about this project. We sincerely hope that you reject these special permits for the good of our street. The developer will still have the option to proceed by right with a two-unit development while preserving the historic house. This letter reflects the opinions and concerns of all of the co-signers.

Sincerely

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159 Warren Street

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150 Warren Street

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