

Tarra Jolly

Subject: FW: [EXTERNAL] Letter from residents regarding Case #: W 3505
Attachments: Zoning concerns 500 Wachovia 12-7-21.pdf

From: bentley.dpb@gmail.com <bentley.dpb@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 7, 2021 8:59 PM
To: Elizabeth R. Colyer <elizabethrc@cityofws.org>; Tarra Jolly <tarraj@cityofws.org>
Cc: John Larson <John.Larson@cityofws.org>; Vernetta DeVane <vernettad@cityofws.org>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Letter from residents regarding Case #: W 3505

Elizabeth and Tarra,

Thank you so much for your help and insight regarding the proposed rezoning of 500 Wachovia Street. Attached please find a letter from the residents of the neighborhood expressing some concerns we have about this proposed rezoning. We appreciate you sharing this with the Planning Board.

We are excited that this long-vacant building will be renovated, and hope that it can be done in a way that will not only be beneficial to the developer, but also to the community.

Warmly,

Paige

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December 7, 2021

Case: # W-3505

Address: 500 Wachovia Street

City of Winston-Salem Zoning Board:

We are residents of the Wachovia and Poplar Street neighborhood. We are writing to express our concerns about the plan to rezone the former grocery store at 500 Wachovia Street, Case # W-3505.

We are very excited that this building will be renovated after sitting vacant for decades and understand that change and growth are part of living in a downtown community. The building has the potential to house luxury apartments and/or condos with on-site parking. Just as the Indera Mills project at the corner of Wachovia and Marshall set the stage for positive growth in our area, a thoughtful approach to developing this building could not only positively impact our neighborhood, but also reflect well on the larger downtown community.

Currently, the proposed rezoning from RM-5 to PB-L would allow for a relatively high-density development with on-street parking as the only parking option. As we will outline below, our neighborhood is already experiencing significant traffic flow and congestion issues. We have serious concerns about the impact a residential building with only on-street parking will have on our already overloaded streets. We are hopeful that the city will consider our concerns and work toward a solution that will be beneficial not only to the developer, but also to our community.

Context

For context, our neighborhood was developed at the turn of the century with craftsman style homes that reflect an important era in Winston-Salem's history when the textile and tobacco industries were thriving. The residents in this neighborhood have long been instrumental in helping preserve this historic area. For example, when drugs, crime and prostitution became an issue over two decades ago, the residents worked hard to clean up the neighborhood, returning the area to its peaceful roots. We enjoy the vibrancy and sense of community that living in a mixed-use neighborhood affords.

Our streets are narrow, and our homes are built close to the street. Most all homes have off-street parking. Some residents, however, do park on the street (more so on Poplar than on Wachovia).

In the past three years, our neighborhood experienced a sudden and dramatic change in traffic patterns due to Salem Parkway construction and growth at Salem Baptist Church school. This resulted in significant issues with traffic flow and congestion.

- During the Salem Parkway construction project, Wachovia Street between Broad and Marshall became a "cut-through" for a high volume of cars, large delivery trucks, tour buses, and 18-wheeler semi-trucks. Though the parkway construction is complete, we continue to experience a high volume of cars and large trucks using Wachovia Street as a pass-through between Broad and Marshall streets, despite the weight limit restrictions on this road. (Of note, the historic bridge on Wachovia Street is literally cracking under the weight.)

- We have heavy morning and afternoon traffic associated with student drop-off and pick up at Salem Baptist Church school. Twice daily, the cars on Wachovia are at a standstill -- often all the way from Spring to Marshall streets.
- With Salem Baptist Church's planned expansion, both Poplar and Wachovia will experience even more increases in traffic flow and congestion.
- With the increase in traffic flow, we are also experiencing increased rates of traffic violations, including speeding and/or ignoring stop signs.

In addition to changes in motor traffic, pedestrian traffic (e.g., young adults to retirees, families with baby strollers, dog walkers, and runners), bicyclists, skateboarders, and scooters also increased significantly in recent years, possibly due to such amenities as the greenway and baseball stadium. We believe this is a positive change and a sign of growth for our community. However, it also presents additional risk if traffic issues, including traffic violations, continue to multiply.

Concerns about proposed re-zoning

Again, we are excited about growth and renovation in our community. However, given the issues that our neighborhood is already facing, as stated above, we are concerned that:

- Rezoning the building to allow for relatively high-density living (4 apartments with 2 bedrooms and 1 "office" is proposed) with on-street parking as the only parking option will increase the number of cars on Wachovia and Poplar streets, potentially by as many as 12 cars or more.
- The corner of Poplar and Wachovia is already a traffic hazard as the building itself makes it difficult to see around the corner. If cars are parked close to that corner, it will be even more dangerous.
- Just three cars parked around a current residential driveway (two cars on either side of the driveway and one across the street) will make it difficult to impossible (as in the case of 502 Wachovia Street) for residents to enter or leave their driveways. This will render the driveways unusable and result in residents having to park on the street despite having driveways. Ultimately, this will add even more challenge to the already overburdened streets.

We are asking both the city and developer to consider ways to minimize any negative impact to our neighborhood that could arise from all future residents of this property parking their vehicles on the street. For example:

- Is it possible to build this with fewer units and on-site parking?
- Is it possible to have some on-site parking for a select number of units?
- Is it possible to protect the driveway access of current residents of the neighborhood (e.g., marked parking spaces)?
- Has the city conducted a review of the current traffic conditions or some equivalent of an "impact study" to determine how the currently proposed PB-L re-zoning would affect the residents of Wachovia and Poplar streets?

We appreciate the city considering our concerns and hope that a solution can be reached that will be beneficial not only to the developer, but also to the neighborhood. If done well, this can stand as an example for how mixed-use neighborhoods can flourish in Winston-Salem community.

Sincerely,
The residents of Wachovia & Poplar Street Community

Jeff Ayers, 600 S. Broad St.
Paige Bentley, 502 Wachovia St.
Lillie Bocanegra, 513 S. Poplar St.
Carol Faley, 415 S. Poplar St.
Debbie Harrell, 507 Wachovia St.
Bryan & Christy Hottinger, 443 Wachovia St.
Bequer Josue, 513 Wachovia St.
Heather Lorenz, 529 S. Poplar St.
Suzi Moore, 507 Wachovia St.
Judith Ruff, 631 S. Poplar St.
Jennifer Ruff, 510 W. Academy St.
Jann Sheehy, 508 W. Academy St.