

Testimony Before the
HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD

Historic Landmark Case No 17 – 16

Good Afternoon. My name is Tad Baldwin and I reside at 3507 Morrison St., NW. I'm representing the Ward 3 Vision organization, a smart growth oriented group based in Ward 3.

We are opposing this historical designation for the following main reasons:

1. The links to the Sanitary Housing Movement are coincidental, not direct. The same architect used plans that built such housing elsewhere in the city but this was never part of that program. Unlike other sanitary housing units, the rents here were market driven and carried restrictive covenants.
2. Although architect Appleton P. Clark did design many fine buildings in DC, these are not among his best work. Truly, they are rather ordinary, boxy, and unattractive.
3. Far better examples of this era's garden flats, which include attractive central court yards, exist elsewhere in the city. I've driven past these flats for almost 60 years and thought they were townhouses. I've also been a developer of affordable garden apartments in Montgomery County over the past 45 years and would never have considered these garden apartments.
4. In response to the strict zoning which did not allow construction of apartments except along Wisconsin, these units were an attempt at some multifamily housing in a block that already had some commercial and semi-industrial uses (the bus garage and dry cleaning plant). There were other multifamily units at 44th and Jennifer. But the Harrison St. Apts. do not meet the criteria of economic forces to **alter** the development of the city or the Friendship Heights area. Ward 3 residents have had a well-documented opposition to modest cost housing of this type by means of restrictive zoning that continues to this day.
5. The alteration of one of the units in the block destroys the integrity of the block. The remodeling of the one unit with an attractive, more modern design and greater density demonstrates a higher and better use of the site. It also raises the question of fairness if one property owner is allowed to improve his unit while others with identical units are denied.
6. This designation disrupts the provision of greater density housing in Friendship Heights. We need more residential development to encourage both local and regional retail in one of the Districts few retail activity hubs. If enough of these units were rebuilt as a single project, the city would be rewarded with a small number of legally required and "affordable" inclusionary zoning units.

In summary, Ward3Vision believes that this nomination is completely without merit. In fact, we believe it is essentially frivolous, and a wholly transparent attempt to limit re-development of this and adjacent blocks for transit-oriented development that would bring denser, more diverse types of residential mixed-use buildings to this neighborhood.

The idea that a structure has historic value merely because it was built in the past is not only silly, but it ignores the fact that cities are dynamic organisms and change is essential to healthy growth. In fact, change is part of what makes city life so enriching. To take the position that a place like Friendship Heights should be frozen in a time – a time when the negative impact of sprawl and the automobile was not yet understood, mind you – does not make sense to Ward3Vision, nor should it to HBRB.

Thank You