January 20, 2019

Ms. Marnique Heath
Chair, Historic Preservation Review Board
1100 4th Street, SW, Suite E650
Washington, DC 20024

Re: 634 Lexington Pl. NE (HPA 19-097)

Dear Ms. Heath:

On January 9, 2019, at a duly noticed and regularly scheduled monthly meeting, with a quorum of six out of six commissioners and the public present, this case came before ANC 6C. The commissioners voted 6-0 to support the application (with two items of concern noted) and to authorize Commissioner Mark Eckenwiler (6C04) to present our views before the Board.

The applicant seeks permission to raise the roof line and create a new basement entrance. As the Board is undoubtedly aware, numerous owners on this block—which has unique architectural consistency owing to the square’s original development by a single owner—have sought permission to make similar alterations and typically received support from ANC 6C and approval from the Board.

In the main, ANC 6C supports this application for the same reasons as its predecessors. However, based on our extensive experience, we are also keenly aware of the potential for future problems to slip through at the concept-approval stage, especially as many projects are a matter of right under DC zoning law and thus do not come before the ANC again.

Accordingly, we note two areas of concern with this application. First, the drawings we reviewed suggest that the proposed changes will not be visible from the street. However, applicants sometimes fail to account for the practical challenges of constructing a new roof with an insulating layer, resulting in the metal strip at the top of the façade being removed or replaced and the structure’s apparent height increasing by several inches. The drawings here did not make clear that the top of the façade will remain intact with no displacement.

Second, our subcommittee’s review of the original drawings found that although the applicant showed a planned areaway at the new basement entrance, there was no depiction of the above-grade guardrail(s) that will be required under the building code. The updated drawings provided to the full ANC sought to cure this omission, but provided only minimal information about the exact location and profile of these mandatory guardrail(s), which will be clearly visible from the public right of way.
We therefore urge the Board to require that these omissions be cured in consultation with staff prior to final concept approval.

Thank you for giving great weight to the views of ANC 6C.

Sincerely,

Karen Wirt
Chair, ANC 6C