

# The Committee of 100

on the Federal City



## Testimony before the Mayor’s Agent for Historic Preservation, concerning case HPA 23-379, proposed demolition of buildings 115 and 116 of the St. Elizabeth’s East Campus, Friday, March 22, 2024

I am Kirby Vining, Chair of the Historic Preservation Subcommittee of the Committee of 100 on the Federal City, testifying in opposition in case HPA 23-379, proposed demolition of two buildings at 1110 Oak Drive SE, part of the St. Elizabeth’s Hospital (East Campus) Historic District on behalf of the Committee of 100. The Committee of 100 celebrated its centennial in 2023, marking 100 years as an independent citizens’ planning advocacy group, advocating for sound decisions in planning, zoning, transportation, historic preservation, parks and open space conservation in support of the distinct beauty and community character of our Capital City.

The July 27, 2023 HPO Staff Report for this case states the following, with a footnote (emphasis added):

*A perpetuation of the “cottage” architecture commenced on the West Campus in the late nineteenth century, **these ((buildings 115 and 116)) are nonetheless major edifices.** They mark the end of the campus’s period of significance as established by the 1994 National Historic Landmark designation and confirmed by the 2005 local designation. The buildings have been long vacant, but they plainly retain their historic integrity, despite some deterioration and the removal of many of the original roof tiles.*

*<sup>1</sup> The slightly older Continuing Treatment Quadrangle has recently been rehabilitated for housing, suggesting that reuse is feasible from a practical and economic point of view.*

The Staff Report argues that these two buildings are significant in an important way to the meaning of the Historic Landmark and Historic District Protection Act of 1979 (HPA) and that a nearby historic structure has been rehabilitated for housing, suggesting that “*re-use is feasible from a practical and economic point of view*”. We believe that the same may be possible for these two buildings.

Yet nowhere in the applicant’s pre-hearing submission is this given any consideration or evaluation, leading us to believe that the sole argument before you today is that these two buildings are in the way of the proposed project. Arguments on page 16 of the pre-hearing submission selectively downplay the importance of these two buildings without acknowledging the Staff Report’s comments or making any argument for re-use of the buildings, that would avoid or minimize demolition of Buildings 115 and 116, and page 50 contains this statement: “***...the Applicant did not consider development alternatives...***”

*A beautiful and livable Washington, DC for all.*

These are not arguments consistent with the letter or spirit of the HPA. We believe that it is incumbent on the Mayor's Agent to ask that the applicant consider re-use, including of course evaluation of arguments for and against the re-use and adaptation of these buildings to fulfill proposed development goals, thus accommodating both the applicant's goals and satisfying the HPA.

We believe that the above statement contains arguments that the Mayor's Agent may consider useful in deliberation of the requested demolition permit for these two buildings and satisfying the letter and spirit of the HPA as well as the applicant's development goals.