

324 North Royal Street  
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

April 4, 2019

Mayor and Council Members  
City Hall  
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

Appeal of 619 South Lee Street  
Nos. 2018-410 and -411

Dear Mr. Mayor and Council Members:

I am writing to ask that you carefully review and then deny the application to demolish a historic portion of the Hugo Black house, and to erect large and unsuitable buildings in its garden area.

I have lived in Old Town since 1972. From 2002 to 2004 I was President of the Old Town Civic Association. For several years I was a member and chair of the Alexandria Social Services Advisory Committee. I also was appointed to the City's Task Force To Revise the Zoning Code of Alexandria. The Task Force worked hard for two years to prepare the Zoning Code that was adopted and is currently in effect. Therefore I am thoroughly familiar with the requirements and standards that the Code enacts to protect historic properties in the Old and Historic District.

One of the outstanding such historic properties is the Hugo L. Black home and garden at 619 South Lee Street, not only because it includes one of the City's oldest surviving great residences, but also because it was for much of the past century the home of Justice Black, one of the preeminent persons ever to serve on the Supreme Court.

The proposal in the appeal before you violates most of the standards enacted in the Zoning Code. It would destroy an architecturally significant feature of the historic building. It would destroy Justice Black's famous gardens and tennis court, where many national figures gathered. It would redevelop the open space with modern buildings that do not belong in Old Town. And it would prevent future generations of seeing in its historic setting the home one of the nation's greatest judges.

It is rare that a house is so significant that it is the subject of a book. This one is. I am enclosing a copy of The History of 619 South Lee Street by Ruth Lincoln Kaye (1987). I hope you will read it. Pages pertaining particularly to Justice Black are pp. 42-51. The historian points out that "By far the most important decision regarding the house occurred when Justice and Mrs. Black on December 26, 1969, made a Deed of Easement to the Virginia Historic Landmarks Corporation, protecting the historic property against subdivision or drastic changes."

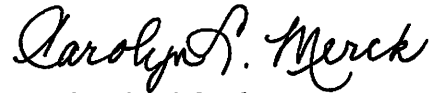
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This is a matter of much importance, not only for this appeal, but also as a precedent affecting the future of historic preservation in Alexandria. It deserves your deepest consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carolyn S. Merck". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Carolyn Merck