

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Board of Zoning Adjustment



Public Roundtable on

PR24-0021, the “Board of Zoning Adjustment Carl Blake Confirmation Resolution of 2020.”

**Testimony of
Carl Blake**

Before the
Committee of the Whole
Council of the District of Columbia
The Honorable Phil Mendelson, Chairman

Virtual Meeting Platform
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

February 4, 2021
10:00 AM

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee. My name is Carl Blake, and I would like to thank you for providing this opportunity to appear before you today. I would also like to express my gratitude to Mayor Bowser for nominating me to the Board of Zoning Adjustment (BZA). I am honored to be considered to serve on a board that is so vital to the character and development of our city.

I was raised in Newark, New Jersey. I obtained my undergraduate degree in Economics from Bowdoin College and a master's degree from The Darden School of Business at the University of Virginia. I was a Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) Charterholder between 1992 and 2009.

I accepted the nomination to serve on this Board because it provides an excellent opportunity to use my skills and training to benefit and serve my community. I worked in the financial services sector for more than 25 years, serving in a variety of roles with increasing levels of responsibility for major investment and commercial banking institutions. As a securities analyst I provided in-depth fundamental analysis to institutional investors, such as mutual funds and insurance companies. Over the years, I developed subject matter expertise in several industries, including telecommunications, oil and gas, and financial services. As part of my work, I analyzed complex capital structures, performed detailed examinations of covenants in corporate bond indentures, deciphered diffuse regulatory frameworks and parsed an assortment of multi-layered business models. This work was often done under tight time frames and in highly pressurized situations, where speed and accuracy were critically important. In conducting my work as an analyst, I would interview company management teams, consult with customers, competitors, suppliers and other sources of knowledge in the industry to develop an unbiased investment opinion.

I expect to approach this role with the same rigor, applying my training and professional experience as a securities analyst to identify the critical issues and relevant facts of each case and evaluate them relative to the zoning regulations. I am aware of, and committed to the many hours needed for preparation, study and review of cases for the weekly BZA public meetings.

I moved to the District of Columbia in 2003, and I currently reside in Ward 4's Crestwood neighborhood. I first took up residence in Dupont Circle, but have lived in the neighborhoods of Brookland and Bloomingdale as well. My family currently owns a small portfolio of missing middle housing rental properties in Wards 4, 5 and 7 and, over the years, have held interests in properties in six of the District's eight wards.

Although I have done renovations to my personal property and provided financial support for development projects, I have never functioned as a developer nor have I ever had direct dealings with the BZA. As such, I approach this appointment with an open-mind, without an agenda, and unbiased by past hurts or harm.

I have witnessed the rapid growth that has taken place in the District since I have been here. I recognize the importance of the District's zoning laws and regulations in sustaining

viable residential and commercial neighborhoods. I have come to appreciate the BZA's role in promoting careful and healthy development, hearing requests for variances, special exceptions and appeals from administrative orders.

Through my research of previous public hearings, I have seen the BZA review both large and small cases; I have observed matter-of-fact discussions as well as some very emotionally charged testimonies from both applicants and community members.

If confirmed, I will work diligently to quickly develop a practical understanding of the zoning regulations, consulting with the technical experts who serve on, or support, the Board. I believe my perspective as a homeowner, a resident of the District of Columbia, an investor, and missing middle housing property owner, will enable me to empathize with both the applicants and community members as they appear before the BZA to present their concerns.

I am confident that my background and perspective have prepared me to be a fair, impartial and an effective member of the Board of Zoning Adjustment.

I appreciate this opportunity and I thank you for your consideration of my appointment. I am available to answer any questions.