04-16

March 1, 2005

Carol J. Mitten, Chairperson,
District of Columbia Zoning Commission, 441 4th Street, N.W.,
Suite 210 - South,
Washington, D.C. 20001

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Dear Ms Mitten,

I would like to recommend a small amendment to the Takoma Overlay Proposal which the Commission is about to consider. As Planning Director Altman noted, the impetus for this Overlay is the Takoma Central District Plan. That Plan recommended a limitation to "2 – 4 stories" in this district. The Overlay allows a height increase from 50 to 55 feet, which some fear will allow five story buildings, in contravention of the Plan.

The Overlay Proposal specifies that the height increase shall only apply to portions of buildings with 14 foot ground floor (for retail), so it appears to imply that there is no intention of using it for an extra story, but if one is not aware of the Plan, this is probably not clear.

I therefore request that the section instituting the 55 foot height, 1310.10, be amended by adding the five words "not to exceed four stories." The amended section would read "Those portions of buildings with a minimum clear floor-to-ceiling height of fourteen feet (14 ft.) on the ground floor level shall be permitted a total building height of fifty-five feet (55 ft.), **not to exceed four (4) stories.**"

I would note that there are other places in the zoning regulations where limits are given in both feet and stories. One example, referring to the CAP Overlay District, is Title 11, 1203.1, which includes the phrase "shall not exceed forty feet (40 ft.) or three (3) stories in height."

Even if this change is redundant (perhaps especially in this case), it is worth doing for at least two reasons. One is that it will reassure those in my neighborhood who fear that this height change is a surreptitious way to change the Plan. The other is that it will avoid future confusion by developers who might assume that the point of the change is to allow five stories.

Respectfully,

Richard Holzsager

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ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 04-16
EXHIBIT NO. 42

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