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**TO: Zoning Commission**  
441 4th Street, N W, Suite 200-S  
Washington, DC 20001

**FROM: Cecelia Waldeck**

**Date: 4/14/16**

**RE: Public Comment on Case No. 4-33G**

I am a resident and home-owner in 16<sup>th</sup> Street Heights and have observed conversions of row homes into multi-unit apartments in my neighborhood, which is zoned R-4.

Contrary to the underlying premise of the subject proposal, it may not actually increase affordable housing in my neighborhood for several reasons. First, row home conversion projects in my neighborhood are inflating property values in my neighborhood and making our properties unaffordable as single family homes. The inflated real estate values not only make it difficult for families to buy a row home but are significantly increasing the property taxes for existing home-owners, many of whom live on fixed incomes.

Second, the vast majority of row homes in my neighborhood are inhabited and in good condition. Some neighbors rent their basements, as a separate unit, to residents with very low incomes. These basement units generally do not have granite countertops, expensive appliances and the modern bathrooms found in the redeveloped units in recently converted multi-unit row homes. However, these units are affordable at monthly rents of \$1000 or less. Will the developers receiving the proposed height bonus for R-4 conversion projects build affordable units that will rent for \$1000 or less? I have my doubts. For example, one two-bedroom condominium unit in a recently converted row home at 1424 Buchanan St. NW is selling for \$549,900. (See, Redfin.com listing).

Third, recent news articles indicate that the Zoning Commission's efforts to create affordable housing through developer incentives have not been very successful. Before adopting yet another bonus to incent developers, the Zoning

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EXHIBIT NO. 179

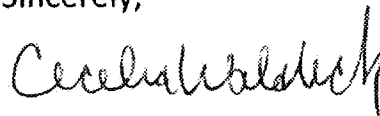
Commission should conduct a study on why its past incentives have not worked well and how to improve its efforts to increase affordable housing in the District of Columbia

Before adopting the incentive proposed in Case No. 4-33G for my neighborhood, I respectfully request that the Zoning Commission request an independent third party (*i.e.*, not the Office of Planning, which may be biased by the Mayor's Office) to publicly report on the following for 16<sup>th</sup> Street Heights and other neighborhoods likely affected by the subject proposal:

- What has been the impact of row home conversions on property values of homes in 16<sup>th</sup> Street Heights?
- How does the affordability of the units created by the row home conversions compare to the affordability of the pre-converted row homes?
- What is the income and demographic profile of new residents in 16<sup>th</sup> Street Heights who buy or rent units in recently converted row homes?

Like many residents in the District of Columbia, I am concerned about the loss of affordable housing and gentrification of our neighborhoods, but am very skeptical of zoning proposals that primarily benefit the profits of developers who are converting habitable row homes, which, in some cases, already house residents with very low incomes. Consequently, I respectfully request that the Zoning Commission reject the subject proposal until there is a robust, independent study of the likely impacts of row home conversions on neighborhood affordability.

Sincerely,



Cecelia Waldeck  
4517 – 15<sup>th</sup> Street NW  
Washington, D.C. 20011