

Anthony J. Hood
Chairman, DC Zoning Commission
Suite 210
441 4th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Support for ZC 14-11 ~~11~~ 11 January 15, 2015

Dear Chairman Hood,

My name is Elizabeth Nelson. I support the proposed text amendment because it would discourage “pop ups” and I endorse the testimony given by Ms. Purcell of the CHRS (at bottom).

I would like to add the following:

I am the Chair of the North Lincoln Park Neighborhood Association (NLPNA) and I have lived in my present home for 30 years, just off Lincoln Park in the last block of the Capitol Hill Historic District. When I first moved there, rampant drug trafficking was the biggest threat to the livability and family-friendly feel of the neighborhood. Now, it's the loss of suitable family housing and the visual blight of the pop ups. My neighbors fought hard to reduce crime and improve the schools and have been very gratified to see the influx of young families. The homes may be smallish and not as inexpensive as they once were, but they are still manageable for many. But now developers are moving in and “popping up” the modest family homes, turning them into either much larger and extremely expensive homes – out of the reach of even well-to-do families – or into a series of very small units, unsuitable for families and often as expensive as the original house.

I am especially concerned that the foundations won't support the increased height and will fail, dragging their neighbors' homes down with them. I am not satisfied that enough attention is paid to this during the permitting process and believe that, if the permits were for new construction, the foundations would be deemed inadequate for the larger structures.

I fondly and sadly remember the way the neighborhood looked when I first moved in – a bit dilapidated perhaps, but full of charm and a delight to the eye, built on a human scale, reflecting the pride and craftsmanship of the original builders and radiating the warmth of the generations who have lived in them. Now the visual landscape is interrupted by outrageously ugly popups that reflect only the love of money and a complete disdain for design and responsible construction techniques. Small yards and solar panels are shaded by towering additions whose message is clear “my wishes are more important than the comfort of my neighbors.” I thank my lucky stars every day that my home is within the Historic District but others are not so fortunate. This text amendment would go a long way toward offering my friends and neighbors some of the protections by block currently enjoys.

Although, as noted above, I am strongly in support of the text amendment I am

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 14-11
ZONING COMMISSION
EXHIBIT NO. 118
CASE NO. 14-11
EXHIBIT NO. 118

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concerned that C-1 and C-2-A zones should be treated the same as the R-1 to R-4 zones. Both of these C Zones are meant to be located in low and medium density residential areas. They abut residential zones and often abut row house neighborhoods such as mine. The proposed regulations will permit too much height and density when compared to the adjacent neighborhoods and will detract from the quality of life (air, light, quiet) that my neighbors and I currently enjoy.

Ms. Purcell's testimony on behalf of CHRS, which I endorse:

I support the proposed text amendment because it would discourage "pop ups" thereby addressing several issues that are of particular concern on Capitol Hill, especially in the areas just outside the boundaries of the Capitol Hill Historic District.

- 1) In this part of Capitol Hill, pop-ups are not creating affordable family housing – they are destroying it. The existing row houses are modest and may be a "tight fit" but it is possible to raise a family in them. They may not be cheap but they are relatively affordable. When they are expanded to include additional stories, their price increases dramatically, putting them out of reach of most families. In many cases, the additional stories are leveraged to create multiple housing units, none of which are large enough to accommodate a family and yet each of which is priced similarly to the original house. They are suited to the needs of well-to-do singles or couples but not families with children. An example is 1701 Independence Avenue, SE, a rowhouse sharing a hip roof with the adjacent house. Last year it was assessed at \$487,460. Later, it was purchased and greatly enlarged, the hip roof was split, and this now-oversize house is for sale for \$1.555 million, listed by Berkshire Hathaway Home Services. The "after" photographs, included with my testimony, speak for themselves.
- 2) In many areas of the city, irregular rooflines are not unusual. However, this is not the case in much of the Capitol Hill area, just outside the boundaries of the Capitol Hill Historic District. In Hill East, for example, blocks of modest homes were constructed as a single continuous row with well-considered variations among them and individual units creating a harmonious whole. The charm of the streetscape is dependent on the uniformity. "Popups" on these blocks are jarring and detract from the sense of scale. They also adversely affect the light and air of their neighbors. Where yards and homes are typically small, it's discomfiting to have a large structure looming next door.

Respectfully,
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