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**Testimony before the District of Columbia Zoning Commission as a
proponent of Zoning Case 14-11: Office of Planning, Text Amendments
to Chapters 1, 3, and 4 Definitions etc.**

My name is Kirby Vining, I am a resident of the R3 Stronghold community on North Capitol St. NE, a neighbor, across North Capitol Street, of the Bloomingdale neighborhood which is entirely R4 and directly affected by the proposed amendments and suffering from a rash of some rather hideous pop-ups with a few rather elegantly done exceptions.

Bloomingdale is not an historic district, and it is more and more seeing pop-up additions to its stately turn-of-the-century row houses, some of which I find ugly and infuriating. Such conversion now is matter of right. The question that I think the neighborhood, and the Office of Planning has, is: shouldn't a house buyer be able to do whatever he wants with his house, within existing zoning and Comprehensive Plan guidelines? Yes, he should. However, I don't think that either of these guidelines envisioned some of the more monstrous varieties of pop-up structures we're seeing now, probably because economic conditions didn't require or support that kind of thinking. And a second question is a matter of taste and design principals that cannot be part of a zoning solution short of declaring Bloomingdale a Historic District. That part we cannot touch. It's none of my business if my neighbor likes a stockade of aluminum siding atop his brick row house, and the fact that I find it grating must not legally deter such construction.

I support the proposed Office of Planning proposal as considerate of the neighborhood's wish to rein in extreme pop-up structure height so as to avoid destroying the character of our homes while reasonably accommodating owners' desired modifications to their houses short of the kinds of protection granted by historic district status. Historic District status would indeed curtail some of the most outrageous abuses of aesthetics involved in these pop-ups, but the neighborhood has not been supportive of such designation. There is an identifiable charm to the character of our neighborhood of row houses that was among the reasons so many of us purchased our homes, but there are severe limits on what can be given the force of law in this matter, short of historic designation. This is what the Office of Planning's consideration hinges on, and I think it offers the most that can be done under the circumstances to accommodate both sides of this issue. Variations within a certain degree are to be expected. But I don't think any of us expected to see additional stories erected on top of so many houses, and the character of the neighborhood so changed that on some blocks we don't see the houses for the pop-ups. The argument that the city needs more residential space I think is inappropriate to introduce in the context of this R4 zoning argument. Please leave my house out of any such utopian scheme, or offer to purchase my house for it.

ZONING COMMISSION
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