

3266 Worthington St., NW
Washington, DC 20015
January 15, 20015

VIA FACSIMILE

Chairman Anthony Hood
District of Columbia Zoning Commission
Suite 2105
441 Fourth Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Re: ZC Case No. 14-11: **SUPPORT** for Proposed Text Amendments

Dear Chairman Hood and Members of the Commission:

The proposed text amendments to the Zoning Regulations for residential structures in the R-4 zone go to the heart of the zoning function. The purpose of zoning is to impose order and predictability on the Wild West of real estate speculation, in order to achieve a stable, salubrious, harmonious built environment. Zoning should help ensure that people may enjoy their homes and neighborhoods without fear of losing their investment, or worse, displacement. The proposed text amendments offer some protection.

Speculative builders are exploiting a back door in the present zoning code to deface and **rezone** rowhouse neighborhoods *as their business model*. Like weeds popping up in a garden after the hot season sets in, these disfiguring multi-unit eyesores provoke plenty of hostility both in and out of the neighborhoods where they are multiplying. Inevitably they are absurdly out of scale with their neighbors and even out of proportion with themselves. By undermining the R-4 zoning designation--the intent of which is to maintain a neighborhood of single-family ^{and duplex} residences--multi-family pop-ups at once express disregard for their neighbors and subvert the character of Washington's beloved rowhouse neighborhoods.

But the pop-up creates hardships beyond ugliness. It casts shadows on adjoining properties, reducing light, air, and privacy. An unanticipated side-effect of pop-ups is the loss of potential to install climate-saving solar panels on neighboring roofs; and where solar panels have already been installed, pop-ups interfere with residents' ability to utilize their investments. I hope that requiring property owners to obtain a special exception build to a height of 40 feet will afford adjoining property owners the opportunity to argue before the BZA regarding the adverse impacts on them of building to such a height. *However I would prefer a firm cap of 35' without possibility of special exception or variance.*

Furthermore, the proliferation of mini-apartment buildings in R-4 neighborhoods reduces the availability of housing suitable for families. A zoning code that allows

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the unregulated growth in small units at the expense of family dwellings runs counter to the city's goal of retaining residents into their child-bearing years.

The proliferation of multi-unit buildings does nothing to add to the stock of affordable housing, because these conversions remove homes in the \$500,000-\$1,000,000+ range from the market, and introduce three to six ^{\$500,000-}\$1,000,000+ units in their place. The greater assessed value of the gutted and reconfigured building exerts upward pressure on the valuations of the remaining single-family ^{and duplex} homes, which raises property taxes. Invariably, long-time residents are now priced-out of their homes because they can't afford the property taxes.

In addition, no consideration has been given by planning and zoning to the stress exerted on the already overtaxed infrastructure by repeatedly inserting three to six residential units where once there was one residence. Along with the proliferation of apartments in what were originally single-family-home neighborhoods comes a proliferation of toilets, sinks, garbage disposals, dumpsters, traffic, and higher demand for utilities and parking spaces.

I would like to see the text amendments go further to regulate not just "pop-ups," but "pop-outs," and "pop-backs." Pop-outs and pop-backs bring with them many of the intrusions of pop-ups. Additionally, covering ever-greater ratios of building lots with impermeable materials leads to more storm-water runoff, something the city says it urgently needs to reduce. I am not alone in requesting that the city learn how to align its stated goals with land-use policies.

Thank you for considering this Washingtonian's comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrea E. Rosen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Andrea" being the most prominent part.

Andrea Rosen