

January 15, 2015

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Chairman Anthony Hood
District of Columbia Zoning Commission
441-4th Street, NW, Suite 210 South
Washington, DC 20001
In Re: Zoning Commission Case No. 14-11, Response to Proposed Text
Amendment Application

Dear Chairman Hood:

We are Sherrill Berger and Robert Robinson, longtime homeowners in the Mt. Pleasant neighborhood of Washington, DC.

We are members of Historic Mt. Pleasant and have circulated petitions among our neighbors to urge the Zoning Commission to remove the sections of the zoning code that permit the conversion of pre-1958 housing into apartments and condominiums.

They are anxious to support this, if skeptical that the Zoning Commission has renounced its adversarial policies towards DC's residential neighborhoods.

For that reason, we are optimistic that your leadership will introduce a new era in which it is not okay for Zoning Commission members to sneer at the concerns of residents and rubber-stamp efforts by the development community to bust our neighborhoods.

Since November, 2013 we have petitioned the Zoning Commission NOT TO CARRY OVER into the new zoning code the provisions that permit the conversion of pre-1958 housing into apartment houses of three or more of three or more units based on lot size NOT be carried over into the new zoning code.

We urge you to approve the text amendments to the zoning regulations proposed by the DC Office of Planning in June, 2014.

Similarly, we do not support allowing conversions of single-family dwellings to apartment houses if such conversions are made subject to the requirements of inclusionary zoning (IZ).

We have houses throughout the neighborhood that have been converted to more units than allowed under the 1958 code.

In addition, actual apartment buildings have been constructed in the R-4 area of Mount Pleasant since 1958 — even though such structures were not permitted under the zoning code. As a result, the single family residential character of our neighborhood and historic district has already been compromised by the introduction of apartment dwellings on each and every block.

Consequently, we do not favor allowing continued conversions of houses to 3 or more units as a “special exception.” There are already too many exceptions and outright violations, to the established rules in Mount Pleasant.

We need to protect all remaining single family dwellings and discourage further conversions. Many of our houses were built with basement apartments and/or in-law suites, and such accessory dwellings have been incorporated into many more of our houses over the years. We are comfortable with two units per dwelling, but we wish to ensure that any further conversions of houses to more than that are scrutinized under the variance test that has been and remains in place for other medium density residence zones.

Similarly, we do not support allowing conversions of single-family dwellings to apartment houses if such conversions are made subject to the requirements of inclusionary zoning (IZ).

To close, we would point out the city’s policies permitting the conversion of single family homes to apartments have not created affordable housing. They have not increased the single-family housing stock. And they have artificially driven up the cost of housing in DC, overall.

The failed policies that have made Washington, DC the US’s most expensive city to live in have created destruction. They have swallowed our wonderful vistas, our neighborhood architecture, our skylines. We have made DC congested, ugly, nasty, dirty and dangerous.

In many ways, we are becoming the ciuty described in the Bertolt Brecht-Kurt Weill opera, *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*, where anything and everything is permitted — but only to those who are rich enough to pay for it. ‘

We urge you to grant us relief in the form of new Zoning Regulations that will prevent the conversion of our existing single family housing stock to multifamily properties as a matter of right.

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