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TO DC Zoning Commission

RE: Opposition to Zoning Reform Case #14-11

FROM: Lou Capannelli (Ward 1 ANC 1C "Lanier Heights" Row House owner)

I attended the recent 1/15/15 hearing and had registered to speak in opposition to the proposed "zoning reform" associated with the above case. I unfortunately had to depart before my name was called to attend to a personal emergency.

I was pleased to see the amount of public involvement. I think it's clear there is a significant divide among many residents. And though those who support 14-11 have to date been the most proactive, and I feel hysterical based on the facts, those who oppose changing the zoning (which has been in place and serving the City well for 57 years) are now realizing that they too need to be heard and properly weighted.

60+ row home owners in our ANC alone are very comfortable with the current zoning and are not concerned with the result of an occasional expansion/redevelopment consistent with the current regulations.

The examples and numbers of modified and or redeveloped single family homes used by the proponents of 14-11 is extremely small relative to the existing stock of single family homes in my ward and the City. We have not experienced any degradation of our "air" as the fear monger reformist suggest will or has happened. In addition 99.9% of these modified homes have been designed and constructed in a manner which has in fact improved the neighborhood and offered new options to those who like our neighborhood. I believe in our ANC the number of redevelopments has been less than 3% of the row houses over the past 57 years! The facts are there hasn't been a tsunami of undesirable redevelopment destroying our Ward, our air, or our families.

My reason for communicating with the Commission at this time is based on the fact that a significant number of row house owners in the Lanier Heights neighborhood who oppose reform are very concerned with what could quickly be a trend to down zone other residential zones such as the R5B which we have enjoyed and paid taxes on for decades.

I have owned my house in Lanier Heights for approximately 25 years. I was born in DC, as was my father. I mentioned this because via direct conversations and observations with many reformers in my ANC, I have noticed many have not lived in the City very long, and supported by surveys many will likely not stay in the City, especially if they chose to have children. Since part of the reformers rationale for downzoning properties "is to preserve single family" homes

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CASE NO. 14-11
EXHIBIT NO. 134

for new families" I think its relevant to point out that in our neighborhood the average value of a single family row house "as-is" is \$850k to \$1.2m. This is 2x to 3x the average price of a single family home in the Metro DC area. Our row homes are not "affordable" and are functionally obsolete to the vast majority of two income, college educated middle class younger prospective families which I assume the reformers are referencing. My observation in our Ward is that many of the current owners of row houses are well beyond child bearing age and do not have any children living in their houses. Combine this with the fact that many of the row homes, if not enlarged and/or modernized, also suffer from an early 1900's interior design. (Small bedrooms, small baths, small kitchens and an inadequate number and size of closets for families.) So for most prospective younger "families" the existing row houses (which many want to preserve) are not functional or desirable for contemporary middle income families.

I think it's prudent to remind some that I believe we are both referencing the potential to attract and retain an "urban family", not a suburban family. My point is I believe those who have lived in older Cities (or desire to live in the city) understand and accept that they will have less sq. ft. of livable space and that their "green space needs" (which I assume some reformers may suggest will be their backyards? That virtually no one actually uses) are served by the many City "pocket parks" and other public areas such as Rock Creek. Younger families (who desire to live in the City) are motivated by convenience and would much rather have less sq. ft. and a modern efficient design and finishes at a lower price than an old big expensive inefficient home that doesn't work for them. Other surveys are predicting that many current "family age" residents of DC (22-40 year olds, which has been the largest demographic to move into the City in recent years) will leave the City once they chose to have children. So the perceived need to preserve larger single family row houses is likely much less than reformers suggest. (For this conversation I am assuming DC's public schools, a critical decision factor in where "families live", will be on par or better than its neighbors in MD & VA.)

I am very pleased and proud of the City's return to prosperity and growth, as I am one of the locals who remembers the decades long trend of lost population and businesses which give the City life, diversity and generates tax revenue to support the City. Our City has billions of dollars of existing infrastructure (road, utilities, buses, commuter rail...) which can, and supported by contemporary land planning practice, should be utilized. Facilitating growth (via leaving the current zoning unchanged) will help to increase the pool of tax payers who will support our neighborhood businesses, attract new businesses and fund the DC's Government. I believe the City's vision to adapt and grow (which is supported by the current 1957 Zoning Regulations and a review of photos over the past 80 years) confirms the redevelopment of single family townhomes over the past 100 years is not unique and has not damaged the City. Quite the opposite, it's the evolution of a healthy competitive City!

Modern day urban development strives to provide a variety of competitive choices which support a place to live, work and play. Maintaining property owners current zoning rights to

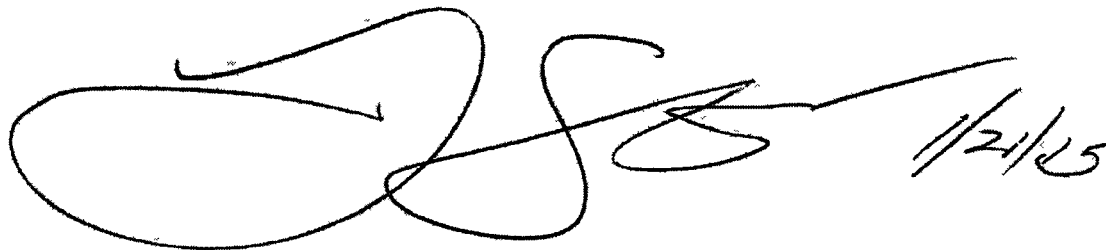
permit further development (as dictated by the market), where existing infrastructure and services are present, is in the City's best interest.

In my case I understood that Lanier Height's current zoning (R5B), which isn't the primary focus of the above case, may be part of a future Zoning Commission review (map amendment). If this is correct this concerns me and dozens of other row home owners. I don't think those who may be supporting reform, especially those who do not own their property, understand real property rights. Owners have been paying property taxes for decades based on our properties current "zoning/value/potential". For some these taxes have been an investment in the future should they chose to modify their homes consistent with existing zoning. I also don't think supporters of 14-11 understand that their proposal could negatively affect many neighborhoods for decades and cause many properties to be homes which are only attainable and attractive to affluent persons likely without children. The City has a plentiful supply of \$1m+ single family residences. Approval of 14-11 would just create more of them.

Since one primary method for valuing real property (land & building) is how much can be built on it (or is already built on it), any reduction in permitted sq. ft. from the current zoning could logically reduce our properties values. It is a well-known fact that for many home owners their home is their greatest asset. For those of us who include our homes as an integral part of our retirement planning, zoning reform would be another recent reduction to the prospect of having adequate reserves for our future.

Current zoning gives more individuals and families the potential opportunity to live in a more affordable medium density urban neighborhood and preserves current row house owner's property rights. Living in a medium density residential neighborhood may be very attractive to those who do not want or can't afford to live in the numerous new high rises buildings such as those that have and are being constructed in "NoMa", the "Ball Park", and "Navy Yard" ...).

For the above reasons in addition to the testimony of other opponents to Case 14-11 I hope the Zoning Commission will reject any modifications to the current R4 and if applicable R5B zoning.

A handwritten signature in black ink, followed by the date "1/21/15" written in a similar cursive style.