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TESTIMONY - ZONING COMMISSION CASE NO. 14-11
JANUARY 15, 2014

Jenna Jacobson
Development Manager - S2 Development LLC

My name is Jenna Jacobson. I work for S2 Development, a residential real estate development company in Washington, DC, I am an attorney and member of the Bar of the District of Columbia, and I live in the District of Columbia. I **oppose the Office of Planning's proposed amendment** to the zoning regulations for the R-4 district.

First, let me say how truly sorry I am to hear of these terrifying stories that homeowners have had with a few developers. It is awful that their homes were damaged and that the developers did not even notify them that they were beginning construction. However, amending the zoning regulations will not retroactively fix these problems, nor will it prevent them in the future. These are issues to be handled through the **legal system and through DCRA enforcement**. Most developers take pride in their work. When we start a new project, we meet with the neighbors, we design the residence in an aesthetically pleasing way, and we use quality and long-lasting construction methods. Through improved DCRA enforcement, we can stop these few developers who are causing damage to residents' homes.

Second, I want to briefly explain the **economics of a deal** so that you can see how passing this amendment will effect property values. If we must build one fewer unit because of the amendment, the property is worth significantly less to us, meaning that we will pay the homeowner less for it. Additionally, in order to make the deal viable with one less unit, we have to sell the condos for more to new homeowners. Therefore, parties on both sides of the transaction are hurt financially by this proposal. I am truly worried for homeowners of single family homes in R-4 districts who may not even realize how significantly their home value will decrease if this proposal is passed. In fact, we have completely stopped looking at R-4 properties because of this proposed amendment.

Third, from an **affordable housing** perspective, if you decrease the supply of multifamily homes, demand increases, which moves prices of multifamily housing upwards. DC is seeing an influx of new people, why downzone amidst this growing demand for housing. This is a surefire way to see an increase in condo prices. When you spread an IZ unit amongst a fifteen-unit building, the loss you take on the unit is absorbed. But if you spread it amongst a three-unit building, the entire job becomes a loss. While I admire OP's attempt to improve affordable housing, the current proposal will actually raise prices of new condos. I agree that we need more access to affordable housing, but that needs to be a more sweeping change with greater emphasis on land zoned for more units.

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EXHIBIT NO. 148
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EXHIBIT NO. 148

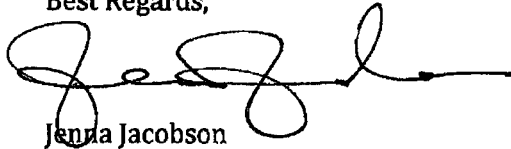


Fourth, R-4 developers are important. They go into neighborhoods that the bigger developers won't. They make an **appreciably positive impact on neighborhoods** and DC as a whole. If you slow this down, or even stop it completely, the result is more blighted properties, and the revitalization going on in many neighborhoods is stopped. This slows the incredible renaissance that DC is currently experiencing.

Fifth, should you decide to pass this amendment, I beg you to put in place a **transition period** for those developers currently undergoing the permitting process. It can take more than six months to obtain a building permit and to not have a transition period in place could have life-changing, job-ending, company-altering results. There must be a transition plan in place that protects those who purchased property and began the design and subsequent permitting process in reliance on the regulations as currently written.

I thank you for your time and consideration to this important matter.

Best Regards,



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