

## Oppose Case 14-11

RECEIVED  
D.C. OFFICE OF ZONING

2015 JAN 28 PM 4:27

Michael Hamilton  
1625 E Street NE  
Washington, DC 20002

R-4 zones should not be redefined I oppose the new proposal in 14-11

Changing the definition of R-4 zones would be a mistake, mainly because it would stop so-called pop-ups. Rather than eroding family housing, the pop-ups create more opportunities for families to live here. Approximately 57% of D.C. households consist of a solitary person occupying a unit or home. However, our current housing stock doesn't reflect our demographics. This is one reason so many young people live together in single family homes, even though many would prefer to live in their own apartment if it were an affordable option. When individuals or couples move into pop-up unit, they're freeing up their former place of residence for someone else.

This process, where people with higher incomes move into newer housing, and someone with slightly lower income moves into their old digs, is called filtering. A single unit of new housing can cause along chain of several moves, where people with lower and lower incomes move into units formerly occupied by someone with more income. Filtering, and the older buildings people move into, is the way that most affordable housing is created.

This process is good for homeowners and renters alike. Converting a rowhouse into a taller condo building can more than double the value of the real estate, while lowering per unit housing prices. For example, a developer can purchase a rowhouse for \$1 million, add two stories, increase the value to \$2.5 million, and sell four condo units for an average of \$625,000 each.

As Malpezzi and Green put it in their 1996 paper, "A necessary condition for filtering to work is that new units, which are mostly at or near the top of the quality level of the stock, do not simply displace low-quality units, at the same price per unit of housing services." The lesson for D.C. is that it isn't enough to maintain our current housing stock. If we allow greater density through processes like pop-ups and new apartment buildings we can create affordable housing when those with higher incomes move into new, dense units, freeing up their old homes for others to rent or purchase. The alternative is to ban new development and have the rich to move into neighborhoods like Lanier Heights and turn run-of-the-mill

RECEIVED  
D.C. OFFICE OF ZONING  
EXHIBIT NO. 153  
CASE NO. 14-11  
EXHIBIT NO. 153

rowhouses into million-dollar residences

Some neighbors are happy with their neighborhood the way it is, and would rather just sit on the equity. But they also don't want to look at pop-ups or deal with the new neighbors they bring. They also complain that taller buildings provide shade for their yards, and that the wrong types of people will move in.

Most property owners in R-4 zones have always had the legal right to expand their homes, build taller additions, and convert them to multi-unit structures. Without any right to veto construction, NIMBYs would have to negotiate with their neighbors to prevent construction and likely have to pay each person wanting to build a pop-up handsomely.

But a much cheaper option is to lobby the Office of Planning to revoke their neighbors' development rights at the expense of everyone else.

Downzoning large parts of the District because rich residents don't want new neighbors is a bad policy. It breaks the chain of filtering that provides for affordable housing in the future, it makes it harder for people to live in popular neighborhoods, but it is also deeply unfair. It preserves neighborhood character to meet the preferences of the relatively wealthy at the expense of everyone else.

To create affordable housing, the Office of Planning shouldn't downzone any other part of the District. R-4 zones should not be redefined.

Michael Hamilton

*Michael Hamilton*

1/28/2015