

RECEIVED  
D.C. OFFICE OF ZONING

January 27, 2015

2015 JAN 28 PM 4:21

Re 14-11 zoning regulation proposal

Dear Zoning Commission:

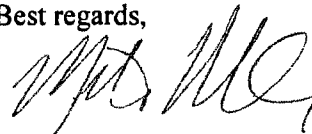
I write in opposition to the proposed zoning regulation changes contained in 14-11, specifically the decrease in allowable height from 40' to 35' as a matter of right. After attending the public meeting on January 15, 2015, I am certain that these regulations do not address the very valid concerns of the citizens that shared their stories at the meeting.

The stories centered around either poorly designed additions that neighbors believe do not fit visually among the neighborhood, or poorly carried out construction that left a neighbor's house damaged. Neither of these issues can be addressed through zoning. Every horror story of a bad project also accompanied statements like, "I've seen a few of these projects done well, but that is not the norm." In other words, it's not the idea of the development that people have a problem with, it's projects that are designed ugly or constructed poorly that people oppose. Instead of zoning, DC could keep the right to develop to 40' as a matter of right, but add a design review component to make sure that the addition fits the surrounding style of the neighborhood (a lighter version of Historic review, perhaps). Also instead of zoning changes, DC should insist that DCRA inspections ensure that projects are being built well and not damaging neighbors' homes. The proposed zoning changes decrease the height of R-4 homes from 40' to 35', but the fact remains that one can design a shorter house to be just as ugly as a taller house, height has nothing to do with ugly. Likewise, one can construct a shorter house just as poorly as a taller house, or be just as likely to damage a neighbor's home in both sized houses. In fact, it could be a project that doesn't involve an addition at all, yet it could be done ugly or constructed poorly, in which case those that support this zoning change would be no better off in this zoning change.

I heard all of the complaints of those that support this zoning change. They are VERY valid complaints. But zoning is not where DC should be focusing to address those complaints. DC is better served by using the existing zoning regulations on the books, instead ensuring that projects are designed with the neighborhood's design in mind, and constructed as every building in DC should be constructed – safely and without damage to a neighbor's property.

Finally, if the Commission decides to adopt these new R-4 restrictions, I strongly suggest that the new regulations be applied starting on a future date. To ask DCRA to re-review hundreds of projects is irresponsible, not to mention that many projects in review would need to be re-designed or pulled out of review, causing lawsuits over the thousands of dollars paid for the permit review process and design components of projects. In other words, there are a ton of sunk costs in many of these homes that are currently under permit review. Should the Commission adopt new zoning regulations, they should adopt them to go into effect at a date at least six months out from voting to approve the new regulations.

Best regards,



Michael Welch  
1606 15<sup>th</sup> St, NW

ZONING COMMISSION  
District of Columbia  
EXHIBIT NO. 155  
EXHIBIT NO. 155