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1429 Taylor St NW
Washington, D.C. 20011
January 28, 2015

Zoning Commission
441 4th Street NW,
Washington, D.C. 20001
RE: ZC 14-11

To whom it may concern,

My name is Alex Allen-Turl from 1429 Taylor St NW, Washington D.C and wish to register my support FOR the zoning changes currently under review from the board. Having attended the public meeting on Thursday January 15th for the full four hours, I wanted to register my concern about a number of points.

Housing Affordability

Key words I kept hearing from Developers, Realtors and legal firms that represent the both was Affordability. If we stop the development against row houses, this will apparently decrease the value of homes. If we continue development of houses, it will make housing more affordable.

Ignoring the fact that the statements are diametrically opposite from each other, this argument makes the least sense. For them it's an emotional argument that distances themselves from a profit driven argument, but still makes no sense.

For instance a house on our street, 1444 Taylor St NW, 1,500 sq ft sold to developers at \$550k. There will be four 900 square foot condos targeted to be \$425k each. This staggers the price from \$350 per square foot to \$472 per square foot.

What concerns me is this behavior actually makes it harder for young couples to buy affordable houses. The demand feels like it's being artificially created by the developers. So a young couple wants to buy a 1,700 square foot home for \$500k, they're outbid by the developer who has the resources to over buy. The couple then can't move in to that much sought after neighborhood.

The developers and realtors solution would be to come back in a year, buy a house at 60% capacity for 90% of the cost.

Sue The Developer!

One frequent suggestion I heard from the legal side was, there are bad developers, you should sue the developers! However if you're an elder resident who draws a pension, what money do you realistically have to pursue legal action?

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Unprecedented Growth

Another argument I heard a lot was that DC is growing rapidly, and that current development restrictions already hinder the accommodation of all these people. However, as was pointed out by the board, there are bigger properties that could have a much greater impact with many condominiums being created, as opposed to a single row house that can make up to 4 units.

Also I believe that D.C. is a long way off from having to convert row houses in order to sustain growth. However the developers and realtors all appear to concentrate on the NW quadrant, Petworth, Columbia Heights etc. These neighborhoods are deemed desirable, and I assume this is where they base their "Demand" for housing coming from. But the truth is the other quadrants have a lot of room for growth, and investment in these areas would make them desirable as well.

That being said, a city that does not grow responsibly could be in danger of creating derelict and abandoned buildings if another recession were to hit. So the population maybe steadily rising now, but it can just as easily go down. Meaning that buildings that were expecting high occupancy now can't sell their condominiums and apartments etc.

Also it should not be forgotten that the District of Columbia was close to one million residents spread over the city, though if you listen to how the developers state this, it would almost be impossible for the city to support this many people without having every row home popped up two stories.

Infrastructure not suited for pop-up developments.

As stated before, the house on our road being Popped up is 1444 Taylor St NW. A house that will be developed in to four condominiums right next to Rock Creek Parkway. Because we intersect with Arkansas, we're frequently the first road people turn on to after they come from the Park, or in the morning we have large backlogs of cars attempting to turn on to the parkway.

There is always traffic and always contention for parking spaces, especially when it comes street cleaning and such. IF we converted all the houses similar to what 1444 Taylor St NW is doing, then we could double the number of cars, where there just isn't space.

I suppose you could park on Arkansas or 14th St NW, but then you create problems for them and a knock on effect occurs. Couple this with the trash problems the park already has, the developer has only provisioned enough trash collection and garbage bins for two condo's, it cannot support the average persons' amount of trash adequately. This means more trash going in to the park, attracting other wildlife etc.

Solar Panels

Within the last few years we paid a large amount of money to have Solar Panels installed on our rooftop, and were given a grant by the DC Government and Federal Government. This is peoples tax payer money that is being thrown away because of a "By-right" law, stating that they can pop their houses up X amount of feet.

There have been cases where popups have occurred both sides of solar panels rendering them entirely useless.

The Zoning Change won't affect anything!

This argument kept being made and contradicted. Even if you make these changes, it won't stop us from doing these projects! Yet they argued vehemently against a zoning change that wouldn't make a difference? But it will also have long lasting repercussions that will forever damage the district?

What is it? Rulings that will make no difference or a devastating change?

One thing I did want to mention was that there was an idea about let's have a board of developers, lawyers, realtors and the zoning commission and let's find some solutions. Yet there was no mention from that particular advocate about home owners, the main proponents for this change.

This is my right!

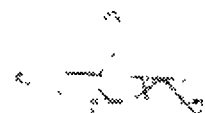
Other arguments that I heard were quite blunt "This is my right" – which is technically correct, they as the owners of the building do have the rights to perform the pop-ups, however there are no rights for those who actually live around the building. So the owner of a house, who does not live in the area, has more rights than those of long term residents.

I understand we can't restrict everything, but the same By Rights laws also permits me to build a Sanitarium if I was determined, and I would expect the neighbors would be incredibly upset to hear that an asylum is being built right next to their house.

So should my right to house insane people, override those of the neighbors and an entire street and entire neighborhood? Because at this point, we're talking about community. A community which adds more to a city than a pop-up, pop-back for profit development ever could.

We're a smaller city, with specific bounds, limited growth opportunities, the focus should be on smart growth, as opposed to growth for profits sake. We are the District of Columbia, not New York, Philadelphia, Los Angeles or Chicago

Thank you for taking the time to read my arguments



Alex Allen-Turl