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1429 Taylor Street NW

Washington, DC 20011

11 May 2015

Zoning Commission

441 4th Street NW, Suite 200-South

Washington, DC 20011

In re ZC 14-11

Dear Commissioner.

I am writing to express my concerns with the proposals contained within ZC14-11. I do not feel that the proposed changes are in keeping with the spirit of the Comprehensive Plan, and I feel that the proposed changes allow too many loopholes for unwanted development. I also feel that some of the previously discussed changes, which would have given significant relief to homeowners, have been mysteriously dropped. Specifically

- Action Item H-1 3 A of the Comprehensive Plan as approved in 2006 called for making the “necessary changes [during revision of the city’s zoning regulations] to preserve row houses as single-family units to conserve the city’s inventory of housing for larger households.” During public hearings, a provision was on the table to do just this to limit “matter of right” conversions to only two units. This provision seems to have been withdrawn, despite being the item most consistent with adhering to the Comprehensive Plan. I urge you to incorporate a maximum of two units as matter-of-right conversion.
- There continue to be too many references to special permitting exemptions with no definition as to what a qualified exemption would be. This places the burden squarely on DCRA, whose track record shows that they are at best over-worked and under-staffed. There should be no special exception allowed to the lot-to-unit square footage ratio or maximum height allowances.
- While I applaud the Commission for incorporating some consideration for solar installations and chimney protections, I do not feel these steps go far enough to protect existing homeowners from loss of light or fresh air, nor do they protect a homeowner from the expense and stress of damages caused by negligent construction practices.
- The restriction of not expanding more than 10 feet past the back wall of the adjacent structure is a good starting point but there should be further considerations against blocking existing windows, doors or other features. The language in this clause should be made clear to prevent any exploitation.

As long as there is an opportunity to develop and divide, potential owner-occupants will continue to be priced out of the marketplace. The owner-occupant generally cannot win a bidding war with a deep-pocketed, profit-driven developer. This creates an artificial inflation of property values—a bubble that

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 14-13
ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
EXHIBIT NO. 200
CASE NO. 14-11
EXHIBIT NO. 201

will surely be quite ugly when it bursts, leaving owners holding the bag while the developers disappear with their profits.

In short, while the changes in ZC 14-11 are a good start, I feel they are quite diluted from the original proposals and still allow too many opportunities for development in neighborhoods where development is not wanted and was never intended. I urge you to enact the strongest legislation possible to protect the integrity of the District's neighborhoods. Popping up is not "smart growth" and it is past time that the government step in and protect the residents.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MPR' followed by a long horizontal stroke.

Mary Patricia Rodgers

Patti.rodgers@gmail.com

Owner-Occupant, 1429 Taylor Street, NW (14 years)