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May 25, 2015

Zoning Commission
441 4th ST NW #200
Washington, DC 20001
Phone: (202) 727-6311

RE ZC CASE # 14-11

To Whom It May Concern.

I understand the difficulty of trying to introduce new legislation with so many disparate groups voicing their opinions and appreciate the efforts of all who have labored to do so

I both live and work in the district, and as an Architect who works with many developers of the very typology in question I have a fair bit of insight of how these regulations do and will impact the community and admittedly a small amount of bias

First and foremost, DC is a growing city, R-4 is one of the largest districts where these folks can live, and if we do not allow people to maximize the density of this district as originally zoned there will be a shortage of housing for all. This housing shortage will even further increase the cost of housing inside the district, increase sprawl to the surrounding region, in term increasing regional transportation burdens and displacing the lowest income families to the farthest fringes of the DC metro region. The latest proposal effectively down zones R-4 to appease a noisy few and leaves the future of the District in jeopardy for all residents, business owners, and even DC employees themselves

The district needs more affordable housing and these small condos are not currently subject to IZ, but the language proposed is sloppy and cumbersome. Revise the existing IZ regulations and make them apply to all districts. Affordable housing should not be a "penalty"

The code must not be subjective. As written it leaves dangerous gaps for interpretation regarding chimneys, light, and air. The chimney language is already in DCMR 12 section 3307.6. It reads pretty clear that they need to be brought into compliance and never mentions requiring neighbor approval. If neighbor approval is to be required, then add it there so the ZA does not require a Mechanical Engineering degree. Similarly light and air are already addressed in the code and further burdening the ZA with this qualitative issue is counterproductive.

The restriction on projections to be capped at 10 feet from the adjacent property puts an undue hardship on only one building typology. I am not an attorney but it seems like discrimination. As an architect, it sounds like a ton of hardship cases for the BZA. Similarly the 30% GFA limitation is poorly defined, will be hard to enforce, and complicates the raze vs demo language already established.

Last but not least, while the more savvy property owners have been aware of these pending changes, I would

argue that the vast majority of R-4 residents have no clue the breadth of zoning changes being proposed as residents of this zone where never directly notified. If this proposal is to become law, there must be a vesting period to allow the average citizen time to digest the changes and take necessary actions to see that their applications get to issuance without burdening them with the cost of additional time and fees that redesign and resubmission would cost.

Again, I greatly appreciate your tireless work to date and hope that in the end the revisions that get implemented truly benefit the long term health of the district and are not a patchwork of reactionary language trying to appease a vocal few.

Thanks,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Michael Cross', with a stylized, flowing script.

R. Michael Cross
Principal Architect