

Chairman Anthony Hood

District of Columbia Zoning Commission

441 4th Street, NW Suite 2105

Washington, DC 20001

2015
MAY 28

11:31 AM

Dear Chairman Hood and Members of the Commission,

I am writing regarding the proposed R4 zoning changes

Why I bought my house

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1) I bought my house in November of 1999. It had been used by the DC Department of Corrections for many years, and was completely trashed. The property was on the market for three years. I moved to the same square in 1985, and had often thought it would be nice if the main house was restored and the adjoining property rehabbed to something more appropriate to the original architecture of the block. At the time that I decided to buy the property, I was a single parent of a six year old, and felt that it would be beneficial to have more yard space for my daughter as she got older, and my previous home had back yard space only large enough for a car. The property consisted of a 1885 row house, and an adjoining building that had been added and used originally as hotel rooms. My intention was to get my daughter thru school, and then to restructure the adjoining building. I did research and know what the city zoning requirements would allow before I purchased the property.

2) Developing a plan

In August of 2014, with my daughter now being on her own, I was in a position to develop the attached building. It was built on two lots joined together and is 42.5 feet wide, and 156 feet deep. Not the standard R4 lot size. I put together a plan to salvage as much of the exterior structure as feasibly possible, proposing six apartments, with the reconstituted structure designed to look like a single family home so as to blend into the current architecture on the block and restore the original streetscape. I presented my plan to the Department of Historic Preservation in August 2014, and received verbal approval of my final plans. I imagined what I had presented. With their verbal approval, I hired an architect, and presented the plans to the Department of Zoning. I received preliminary approval so long as my final plans preserved the percentage of the building as we discussed at our meeting. They were especially favorable to the restoration of the streetscape, and to the amount of green space that I was saving.

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3) Proposed change in Zoning


To date I have invested numerous hours, and over 20,000 00 dollars to present a plan that would meet my needs and that was also acceptable to the city. It seems unfair, and frankly unethical to me that mid way thru the process, the Office of Zoning has proposed changing the rules. I am staunchly opposed to the Inclusionary Zoning that is proposed, and feel that it places an unfair burden small home owners with less than 10 units to basically build and basically provide subsidized housing. The plan that I have verbal approval for would create a façade that is the same forty foot height as my home and the home on the other side of the proposed building. The proposed zoning changes would reduce my project to 35 feet interrupting the roofline flow of the structures in my portion of the block and it would also remove a floor from the project which I enjoy in my home as do my neighbors on the other side of my proposed project. As a result of the loss of one floor and the requirement that I provide for inclusionary zoning units, the financial institution that I have been working with has declined to finance my project if the proposed zoning changes are approved.

4) Recommendations

I would like for you to consider instituting a design review board for R4 zones taking into consideration the individual property and the potential affect a redevelopment might have. There is a vast difference in the size of R4 properties, and I don't see any way that the proposed changes could possibly address redevelopment in a fair way. The design review board would also be quite able to prevent the pop-up problem that has brought this issue to the forefront. I live in a historic district, and the review of my proposal has insured that my project is appropriate for the block that I live on. Having said that, I have included two photographs of structures that could be considered pop-ups, but thanks to the design review that they had to go thru, being in a historic district, they are quite appropriate. The first photograph gradually increases in height, and the effect is that the structure anchors the block. The second photograph was built with two story structures on one side, and a four story structure on the other, and again act as a transition between the drastic height difference between the original structures.

Thanks you for your time and consideration

Sincerely,



Gary Hyde

1827 13th Street, NW

Washington, DC 20009

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