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Diane McDougall  
1504 Upshur St NW  
Washington DC 20011  
May 28, 2015

Zoning Commission  
441 4<sup>th</sup> St NW, Suite 200-S  
Washington, DC 20001

RE Case No ZC 14-11

Dear Zoning Commissioners

Thank you for inviting comments from the public about this important zoning case. Democracy depends on the participation of the citizens and the openness of the government to hear and respond to the genuine concerns of the people.

I am writing to comment on the proposed rule for pop-up conversions in R-4 districts.

#### Height of Buildings

I am in favor of reducing the height of buildings to 35 feet. I am opposed to a maximum height of 40 feet for new construction of three or more adjoining row houses built concurrently. I fear that a limit of 40 feet will encourage the developers to destroy the standing rowhouses so they can build new developments and make even greater profits. Please keep the height limit at 35 feet.

#### Conversions

I am wholeheartedly opposed to the proposed rule, which allows matter-of-right conversions of rowhouses to apartment houses. I moved into my home 30 years ago because of the character of the neighborhood and the aesthetic appeal of the historic homes lined up neatly in rows. Having apartment houses in the middle of rowhouses changes the physical nature of the environment on the block as well as the relational and social environment from one of family interactions to single people who may not care as much about the neighborhood and relationships. I know there are plenty of places in DC where apartment buildings do well and people thrive in them. Developers should build in those areas zoned for apartment buildings. But neighborhoods with single-family homes where people have raised their children should not have apartment buildings in them. Thus, under no circumstances should a rowhouse be converted to an apartment building as a matter-of-right.

Many adjoining homes have been damaged from these conversions. My neighbor's home next to a conversion, by the most unscrupulous developer Insun Hofgard, has been damaged by the demolition at 1419 Upshur Street. Two homes adjoining the conversion at 3803 10 Street NW had gaping holes in their basement walls from the construction.

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The contractor sent to repair them wasn't even sure about how to fix them so they would be structurally sound. The issue of unlicensed contractors and shoddy work is another issue. (But I know that is not within your charge. That's for DCRA to address.) The home next to a conversion on the 1400 block of Shepherd St NW has serious structural damage in the basement. I know that damages to neighboring properties will not end if conversions are allowed to continue unabated. Conversions drive up the price of single-family homes because families are competing with developers who have so much cash and can close easily with no contingencies.

In addition, a rowhouse conversion to apartment buildings reduces the amount of single-family homes available to families and thus, the number of families living in D C. The Comprehensive Plan for the District of Columbia promotes the addition and retention of families. It states "Make necessary changes to preserve row houses as single family units to conserve the city's inventory of housing for larger households." The zoning rules should not be inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan. A matter-of-right conversion of single-family rowhouses to apartment buildings goes against the Comprehensive Plan's goal of retaining single-family homes for families. Matter-of-right conversions of rowhouses should be limited to two-units.

#### Conditions on Conversions

I support a limit of 10 feet as the maximum for any rear addition to a conversion. The language in section 330 7(h) could suggest the addition could extend 10 feet past the furthest rear wall of any rowhouse. It should be clear that an addition must not extend any more than 10 feet past the rear wall of any adjoining rowhouse. These conditions also must apply to conversions of a rowhouse to a two-unit. My neighbors were facing the prospect of no sunlight, no sunsets, no air and no privacy as the developer was planning to build far out into the rear of the property. Destroying the resident's access to the delights and rights of nature that they have always enjoyed in their home is uncivil, unethical and immoral. Rear extensions should not go beyond 10 feet. Homeowners need protection.

#### Urgency

The time is NOW to act on these proposed rules. I strongly urge the Zoning Commission to make the final rule effective immediately to protect the people in rowhouse neighborhoods and to protect people who live in homes next door to construction. Too many people in too many rowhouse neighborhoods across DC have suffered and been abused by the greedy developers who have set upon our sweet city like a plague. They smell an easy buck to be made by flipping homes. They don't care about the people who live here and they don't even want to live here and be part of our community.

It is time for the Zoning Commission to stand UP for what is right for the residents of our city. Please make the final rule effective when published and do not grant any exceptions for permit applications that have not been approved. Those applications should be reviewed under the new R-4 zoning rules. Otherwise, D C homeowners will suffer even

longer at the hands of opportunistic, greedy, unethical developers who are heartless when it comes to caring about the people in D.C.'s rowhouse communities I know that you, who are on the Zoning Commission, do care about us – the people you serve well

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Diane McDougall". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Diane" and last name "McDougall" clearly legible.

Diane McDougall  
diane mcdougall@verizon net