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May 26, 2015

Zoning Commission
Office of Zoning
441 4th St. NW, Suite 200-S
Washington, DC 20001

RE: Case No. ZC 14-11

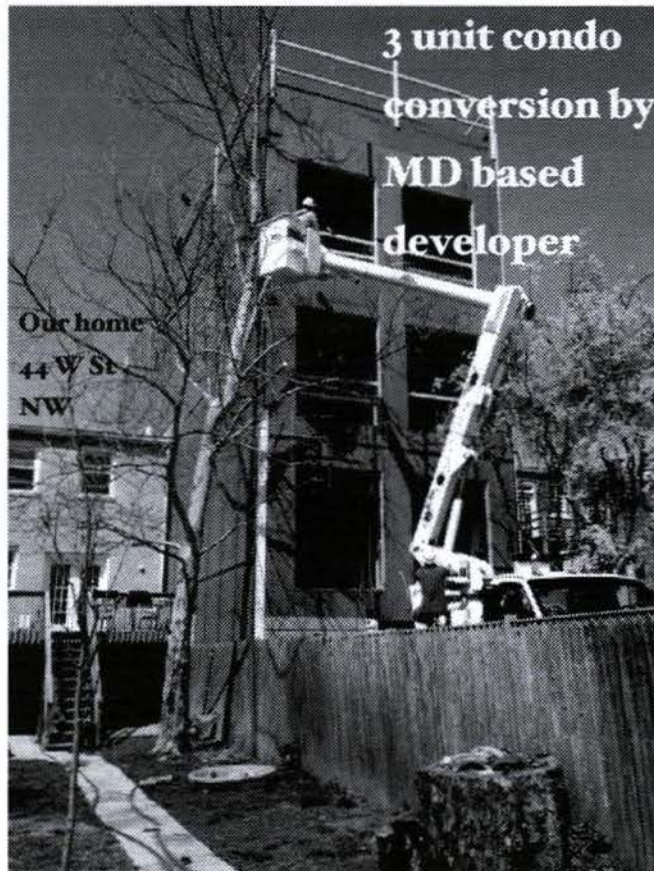
Dear Zoning Commissioners:

I thank you for this important opportunity to submit comments in strong support of the proposed rule for pop-up developments in R-4 Districts. The unit block of W street NW where we live has just experienced the first (42 W St) of at least five planned conversions of single family homes to multi-unit condominiums.

With this letter we show strong support for:

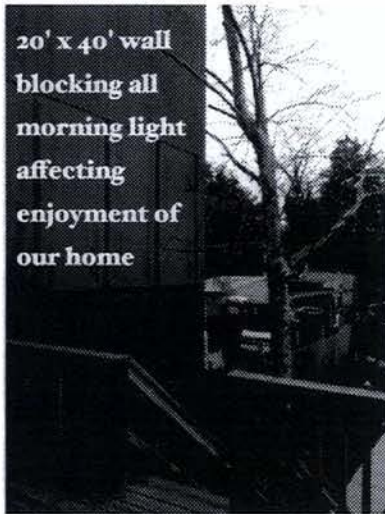
- Immediate implementation of the rule
- Support that no new building may extend more than 10 feet beyond either adjacent neighbor's rear wall
- Support for no structure exceeding 35' in height

We write from a specific experience and significant impact of a condo conversion adjoining our home at 44 W Street NW. I implore the Zoning Commission to act quickly on this rule making and make the final rule



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effective immediately. Many District homeowners in rowhouse neighborhoods are plagued by pop-ups and need help now.

Pop-ups have been a problem for at least 15 years, and change is overdue. **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 developers who do not care about D.C.'s rowhouse community residents. Developers are profiting on our communities in DC but are from outside DC and as such do not engage on or care about

the impact they are having.

We support the conditions in sections 330.7 and 330.8 even though we do not support matter-of-right conversions of rowhouses to apartments. The language in sections 330.7(h) and 330.8(d) should be clarified to prevent misinterpretation. **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. Flat conversion by developers is prevalent in R-4 and often include extensive rear additions. This obstructs the light, air and privacy of neighboring rowhouses and is out of character with these neighborhoods as shown in the photos in this letter. Thus, protection for homeowners is needed for conversions to two-units. As a result of the conversion next to us at 42 W Street NW, a twenty foot wide, forty foot+ high wall (including roof deck) was built from back behind the rear of our building along our yard.



- This wall completely blocks all morning light to our yard
- Impedes our view outdoors (see photo)
- Increases rain run off to our property that we have to manage in flood prone Bloomingdale
- Blocks all access to a ~10 foot section of our property wall which was accessible prior to construction and prevents any maintenance.

Further, we strongly support section 336.6. In addition to the impacts on us at 44 W St NW described above resulting from conversion of a small single family

home to a three-unit condo building. As a result, the light, privacy or use and enjoyment, have been unduly compromised (pertaining to 336 6, parts a and b), and the character scale and pattern of our block have been substantially changed (pertaining to 336.6, part c) We now

- Are overlooked by three balconies and a roof deck
- Have reduced solar power potential (pertaining to 336 4)
- Have lost shade and enjoyment of bushes and trees removed from the neighboring property and 1/3 of our mature sycamore tree removed contributing to increased runoff and decreased plant absorption (although permeable paving required, the entire rear 'yard' of 42 W Street NW has no plants on it where significant green space had been previously).
- Are dealing with a wet porch and entrance way every time it rains because removal of the porch roof at 42 W St NW enabled the developer to build farther out back Presence of the neighboring porch roof kept our porch dry as our porch roof kept the #42 porch dry. All 35 other homes on the south side of our block have porch roofs

We support reducing the height of buildings in R-4 to 35 feet This should not impact most homes in R-4 as the Office of Planning found that 94.4% of homes in R-4 are 35 feet or less. We do not support a maximum height of 40 feet for new construction of three or more adjoining rowhouses built concurrently This could entice developers to raze existing rowhouses to construct new buildings These also should be limited to 35 feet

We strongly disagree with the proposed rule permitting matter-of-right conversions of rowhouses to apartment houses 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, and 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 cash and can close with no contingencies In addition, rowhouse conversions to multi-family buildings reduces the availability of single-family homes and the number of families living in D C Matter-of-right conversions of rowhouses should be limited to two-units

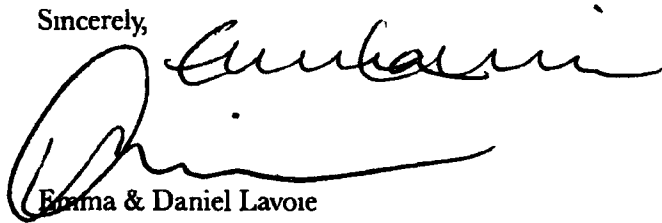
It is important to note that the owner of #40 W St NW, Mr Ted Thomas, had to resort to selling to the developer/owner of #42 W St because that developer caused damage to the party wall These situations favor the developer to get a good price and build more condos We will now be neighbors to six units where two once stood A dramatic change to our neighborhood and increased pressure on electrical, storm water infrastructure and increased parking burden (in a neighborhood where all three are already strained)

Because the properties on the unit blocks of W and V street NW are on large lots we are a target to developers Residents on these blocks buy for the large yards and adequate

single family homes Enabling profit oriented developers to drastically change our community reduces the value and enjoyment of the residents in the biggest financial investment of their lives, their home These developers are not our neighbors and do not respect us as neighbors These condo conversions do not assist in DC housing needs - families needs homes and yards, not 2 bedroom luxury \$600,000+ condos

Approving this proposal immediately is necessary to maintain the enjoyment an livability of our community and our investments

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Emma & Daniel Lavoie', with a large, stylized initial 'D' on the left.

Emma & Daniel Lavoie