

SUZANE REATIG ARCHITECTURE, P L L C

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June 1, 2015

(via Email only)
Ms Sharon Schellin
Secretary to the Zoning Commission
Office of Zoning
441 4th Street, NW
Suite 200-S
Washington, DC 20001

RE Comment on Proposed Rulemaking Zoning Commission Case No 14-11

Dear Ms Schellin

This letter is to serve as our formal comment in opposition to the proposed Rulemaking on Zoning Commission Case No 14-11, Text Amendment 11 DCMR, Amendments to the Maximum Height and Minimum Lot Dimension requirements and Use Permissions in the R-4 District

Downzoning based on atypical situations, (i.e. the irregularly large R-4 lots in Bloomingdale), sets a dangerous precedent for our city that will negatively effect and burden future inhabitants of positive compatible building. To change the zoning of the past few decades based on a short-lived current trend will not create a solution to the issue of bad design. It seems more relevant to create a zoning overlay for a minority of exceptional case areas rather than an overhaul to working existing regulations that would apply to an entire city, without even a study on negative implications.

Pop-ups have become controversial in areas where typical housing stock exists on unusually long lots. For example, in Bloomingdale, many R-4 lots are 20' x 150' deep, whereas, the typical R-4 lot in the District is 18' x 100' or smaller. Different historic districts contain varied housing typologies and the proposed rulemaking imposes a blanket approach that is not relevant to many typical housing types with typical lot sizes.

We design and build primarily in R-4 historic districts and build new construction, by-right. We have completed over twenty projects in the past twenty-five years in the Shaw neighborhood alone, most in R-4 zones. In our work in the historic areas of Shaw, Mt Vernon Square, and others, it has been considered by the HPRB to be compatible with the surrounding context to build to the 40'-0" height limit and the maximum 60% lot occupancy. Requiring a trip to the BZA for a special exception to build an additional five feet higher creates an unnecessary burden to develop and is a waste of tax dollars, legal fees and time.

Under the proposed height restriction, in order for a typical two-unit flat to be constructed with a 35'-0" height limit, we would have to limit floor to floor heights, creating more cramped, dark spaces for residents. To decrease the allowable five feet of height will lower the quality of life for inhabitants of future buildings by creating spaces with lower ceilings with less access to light and air.

Many R-4 districts are located in areas that are highly desirable places to live—near metro stations where there is a demand for housing. Cities do not downsize near major transit corridors—they increase density. The District already has a housing crisis due to the inability to increase density due to

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the Height Act This rule will only exacerbate that and force DC taxpayers to find better housing outside of the District, in Maryland and Virginia

Cities are diverse and constantly evolving There is no city with one monotonous or equal height to all of its buildings Two-story buildings exist next to twenty-story buildings throughout The proposed rule is brash, vague and ill-conceived In the Zoning Commission's effort to put a stop to a few bad designs, they are restricting development in many areas of the city, which will have a disastrous effect for the future of the District

We urge the Zoning Commission to vote "no" on the proposed rule in the interest of all R-4 zones

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Suzane Reatig', with a stylized, flowing script.

Suzane Reatig, FAIA