



AIA Washington DC

The Washington Chapter of the American Institute of Architects

January 14, 2015

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Anthony Hood
Chairman
DC Zoning Commission
441 4th Street NW, Suite 200 South
Washington, DC 20001

Re: Zoning Case No. 14-11

Dear Chairman Hood and the D.C. Zoning Commission:

The Washington Chapter of the American Institute of Architect represents more than 2200 architects and designers in Washington DC. We are grateful to the Commission for addressing the issue of pop-ups in such a timely manner. We strongly believe that these pop-ups are a result of builders not taking into account the character and massing of neighborhoods in which they are building. R-4 districts generally have the smallest lot areas in the city, yet provisions of the code permit additions that are clearly out of scale with the neighborhood.

We have reviewed the proposed changes and generally agree with three of the recommendations included in the Office of Planning Report:

#1 & 2: Change maximum matter of right height in R-4 to 35 feet and a maximum of 40 feet by special exception. We understand that homeowners would still be able to build to the currently allowed 40-foot height by special exception. We find the standards, as outlined in proposed Section 400.23, are not restrictive in terms of building style or design character and therefore find them acceptable.

#4 Limit roof structures to 10 feet. This seems completely reasonable within the context of a low-scale residential neighborhood.

We do not support **Recommendation #3 which would count a mezzanine as a story.** We believe that the real issue here is the height, which has been addressed in recommendations 1, 2 & 4. Adding recommendation #3 might preclude an innovative spacing arrangement *within* a building that might have no effect on the overall height of the building. The problem is essentially solved with 1, 2 & 4 – there is no need to add #3.

Finally, we do not support **Recommendations 5 & 6** which limit multifamily conversions only to the reuse of non-residential buildings (Section 401.12). With sensitive design, residential structures may be converted in a manner that respects the character and scale of surrounding neighborhood. If the Zoning Commission feels it

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ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO.14-11
EXHIBIT NO.32

needs to limit conversions with such a provision then we would suggest that it be modified to allow residential buildings by special exception. Doing so would not remove any property rights that homeowners currently have, but will also address the concerns of neighbors for another level of review. In this way, changes will not adversely affect current property values but will require more work on the part of would-be developers to prove that their multifamily dwelling will fit into the character and scale of the neighborhood.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important issue for DC neighborhoods.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mary Fitch", with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Mary Fitch, AICP, Hon. AIA
Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven White", with a stylized, cursive script.

Steven White, AIA
President