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Washington, DC 20011

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January 14, 2011

DC Zoning Commission

441 4th Street NW, Suite 200S

Washington, DC 20001

Dear Commission,

I have been the owner of a row house in an R-4 zoned district of 16th Street Heights since 2012

I am writing to express my support for the proposed text amendment changes to the DC zoning regulations to limit "pop-up" or "pop-out" developments in R-4 residential districts. I am deeply concerned about the recent increase in the conversion of single family row house dwellings into condominiums and apartment buildings. While I support the current construction projects of converting derelict structures into condominiums and mixed-use buildings, I question the necessity of upturning quiet residences of two story row houses into four story apartment buildings with no respect for the architecture of the neighborhood (Read: parking lots, roof-top decks, four story buildings, bright lights).

Many of these conversions have resulted in massive damage to the adjoining properties, many of which are owned by people who are neither prepared nor have the stamina to battle the construction companies which cause massive damage to the adjoining properties and then depart. Thanks to this much bandied "matter of right" issue regarding property, the DC Zoning commission can grant permits without any notification, input or oversight to/by the neighbors and neighborhood. Additionally, these permits are approved by the DC Zoning Commission without inspection of the actual property.

I am disturbed by the fact that the DC Zoning Commission granted Westend Development permits to build a seven unit apartment building at 1521 Varnum Street, NW, off of 16th Street, NW, a main street which has no apartment buildings on either side until after Military Road.

The proposed structure would be two stories higher than any residence, with proposed roof deck structures, which would not only be an eye sore to the beauty of the 16th Street NW, but a monstrosity in an established neighborhood of well maintained row houses. In a neighborhood which already has a good balance of rentals, Section-8 housing, half-way homes and multi-family homes, how does the DC Zoning Commission consider issuing permits to a developer to tear down a single family home, which was for sale by owner and purchased for far more than its worth, destroy the adjoining residence in the process, build out the entire lot into rentals or units for sale with inadequate parking, an improvement to the neighborhood?

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia

CASE NO.

14-11

EXHIBIT NO.

48

CASE NO. 14-11

EXHIBIT NO. 48

The current infrastructure of the neighborhood, which includes above-ground power lines, water and sewage, is inadequate to support a seven unit building. Construction of the proposed seven unit apartment building would severely strain the current telecommunications lines, power, water, storm water run-off and sewage for Varnum and Webster Streets NW.

The alley with the proposed four car parking is narrow, the location of the parking spaces in relation to public space may not be in compliance with the current zoning laws on the books. The alley is not properly maintained and was never designed to support a private parking lot of four cars.

Evening lighting of the property and parking would disturb the privacy of all neighbors facing the building as well as those on either side of 1521 Varnum Street, NW. The owner of 1519 Varnum Street, NW would be most severely affected.

The loss of privacy, quiet, and enjoyment of one's backyard for everyone who lives next to, or across from, 1521 Varnum Street NW would be a crime. I deliberately purchased a home in 16th Street Heights because there were no apartment buildings and because there were old trees. If I had wanted to be surrounded by noise, bright lights, condos and apartment buildings, I would have stayed in Mt. Pleasant.

Zoning Amendments

I strongly support the repeal of 330 5(e) to prevent residential structures in R-4 zoned areas from being converted into apartment houses and multi-family condominiums. It is time to stop developers who sweep into a residential neighborhood using the "matter of right" clause to buy properties for conversion into high rise buildings. It is time to change the DC zoning laws regarding "pop-ups" and "pop-outs" in R-4 zoned residential neighborhoods.

I do not support the proposed change in the zoning regulations regarding special exception relief of minimum square footage.

Amendment Pertaining to Maximum Height

While I support the amendment to reduce the maximum height in an R-4 zone from 40 feet to 35 feet, I would like to see it reduced to 30 feet. The construction of a building height should be in keeping with the rest of the architecture of the street/neighborhood.

Amendment Proposal

That any developer be required to place in escrow \$250,000 in the name of each adjoining residential property owner as part of the permit process and prior to demolition/renovation of the property in question. Too many homeowners have been severely inconvenienced with resulting property damage caused by demolition of adjoining property.

Special Exception Relief

I strongly recommend that any relief sought by special exception require input from neighboring property owners, the ANC and the community. The "matter of right" rule should not be permitted, such as in the case of permits being issued to convert a single family home at 1521 Varnum Street NW into an apartment building without notification to the neighbors and neighborhood.

I urge the DC Zoning Commission to consider these proposals seriously and to act without further delay to limit the recent rash of “pop-ups” and pop-outs” destroying the fabric and the beauty of our neighborhood

Thank you for your attention to this very serious matter

Sincerely,

Jane Bush

Emailed on January 14, 2015 to zcsubmissions@dc.gov

