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D.C. OFFICE OF ZONING

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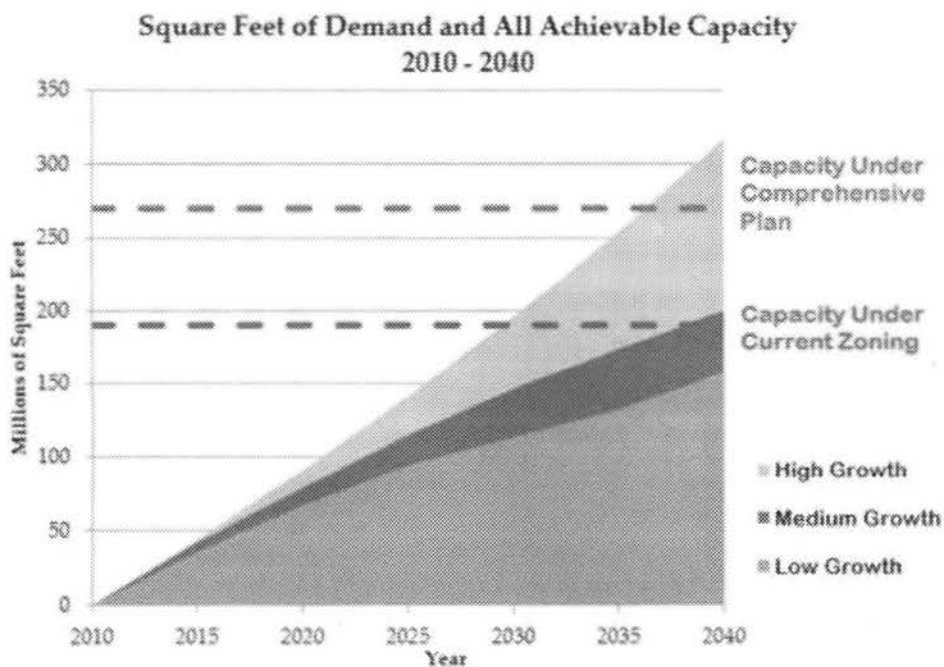
Zoning Commission for the District of Columbia
441 4th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001
July 1, 2014

Re: Case #14-11

Dear Chairman Hood and members of the Zoning Commission,

I am writing concerning to the Office of Planning's proposed revisions to R-4 zones, case #14-11. I encourage you to delay any action on this proposal until the Office of Planning can perform a comprehensive analysis of the District's housing needs, either as part of the upcoming Comprehensive Plan revision or as a separate process.

The District of Columbia has a significant constraint on its housing supply. OP's recent report in the Height Master Plan process found that under current zoning and historic preservation laws, existing places to build new housing would hit a limit in about 25 years, or sooner if DC experiences a high level of growth.



Graph from the DC Office of Planning, Height Master Plan report (page 39)

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 14-11
EXHIBIT NO. 53

Twenty-five years is not a lot of time to find opportunities for more housing. Yet OP now proposes to limit opportunities to add housing in many zones.

These changes don't just affect one neighborhood. They affect the whole city. They affect people in neighborhoods who fear being priced out of their homes. They affect future residents who want to be a part of these wonderful places but do not have the opportunity.

OP needs to update and flesh out the analysis with more detail than what's in the height report. It should really analyze what types of housing we need, in what sizes and areas, and how that compares to current supply. Then we can have a real conversation about different ways to meet the demand.

However, it doesn't make sense to have a scattershot, neighborhood-by-neighborhood process tweaking one rule at a time in the absence of a larger vision. That vision is absent right now.

Once that vision exists, it might be reasonable to decide that one type of land use is the best area for more housing while another is not, and agree to increase zoning in one area while decreasing it in another. The District could decide that the row houses are right to reserve for family-sized housing and add opportunities on other land near the R-4 zones for the one- and two-bedroom units we need. On the other hand, it might be that adding housing to existing row houses is a better and/or more desirable approach than some other.

Maybe this particular proposal would be an element of that larger strategy. Maybe not. One thing the Office of Planning is not doing here, is planning. We need a plan. I encourage the Zoning Commission to delay any action on this specific set of changes until OP can put this proposal into a context of the city's overall housing need.

Thank you for your time and attention to these issues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Alpert". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letters of "David" and "Alpert" being capitalized and prominent.

David Alpert