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2015 MAY 11 13:34
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May 11, 2015

Secretary of the Zoning Commission
Office of Zoning
441 4th St. NW, Suite 220-S
Washington, DC 20001

RE: ZC-14-13

Dear Commissioners:

I am an 11-year resident of the District and live in an R-4 zone. Protection of the District's rowhouses is becoming more critical to me as I witness developers who purchase rowhouses and convert them to multifamily properties to maximize profit. This is a prevalent problem in R-4 and R-5 zones. I plead with OP and ZC to protect our rowhouse neighborhoods with stronger zoning regulations to combat the destruction of our communities.

Penthouse Height §400.7

Limiting the height of penthouses to 10 feet maximum should apply to all residential zones. For this section, I believe alternative #2 would go further to protect our rowhouse neighborhoods. There are many examples in R-4 and R-5 of developers converting rowhouses to multifamily apartment buildings and adding offensive penthouses on the roof. No penthouses should be allowed on single-family dwellings or rowhouses as a matter of right. In addition, a penthouse structure in R-4 and R-5 zones should be limited to 10 feet with no special exception for higher structures. Higher penthouses would be an intrusion on the privacy of nearby properties because this allows snooping into the yards and even windows of neighboring homes.

Penthouse Number of Stories (§411.18)

The number of stories in a penthouse should be limited to one story, whether as a matter of right or by special exception. If penthouses are allowed to rise above existing rowhouses, especially by two stories, the result would be rooflines that are out of character with other rowhouses.

Uses Within a Penthouse (§§411.1 & 411.2)

I do not believe penthouse space should be habitable in any residential zone regardless of the height of the building. Allowing habitable space in penthouses will increase the density of rowhouse neighborhoods beyond what is contemplated under the Comprehensive Plan.

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Likewise, it would give the penthouse residents a prime viewing area into the homes and bedrooms of neighboring homes. We all are entitled to an expectation of privacy in our homes. Rowhome lots already are too close together, and those of us who live in them already sacrifice some privacy in our yards. Please do not exacerbate the lack of privacy by making it easier to have peeping toms, whether intentional or accidental, staring into our homes.

Exemption from FAR (§411.7)

It is imperative that penthouse space be included in calculating FAR. Although I strongly disagree with the proposal to allow habitable space in a penthouse, if ZC votes in favor of habitable space, 100% of the space should be subject to FAR. There should be no exemption.

Penthouse Setbacks (§400.7)

I support a 1:1 setback from adjoining side walls of rowhouses. I support OP's clarifications for setbacks except for items iii and iv. I believe the setback should be required even in instances where the adjoining rowhouse is lower than the roof on which the penthouse is located regardless of the matter of right height of the roof upon which the penthouse sits.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lyn Abrams". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lyn Abrams