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May 11, 2015

Anthony Hood, Chairman
D.C. Zoning Commission
441 4th Street NW
Washington, DC

Re: ZC 14-13 (Penthouse Development)

Dear Mr Hood and Members of the Commission,

I am responding to some of the questions and comments directed to witnesses at the April 30 hearing regarding whether we found was anything “good” about expanded penthouse uses in low-density zones, i e., 50 feet and low As uses, rooftop decks and recreation are at least benign and potentially desirable. The issue with such uses is design and intensity The amount of testimony received regarding rooftop monstrosities explains the hard line we have taken. Even when the Commission includes strict rules regarding compatibility, setbacks, non-encroachment, etc., these rules often go unenforced I still urge at least a 50-foot cutoff below which expanded penthouses will not be allowed.

Also, as noted by Mr. May, 50 feet may not be the most appropriate minimum Please give careful consideration to his suggestion that 65 feet may be better As a number of developer witnesses testified, they can’t feasibly do 10-foot penthouses – they want 12 to 15 feet. A 15-foot penthouse on a 50-foot building, is, as Mr May noted, totally out of scale.

Limiting expanded penthouse use to taller buildings will minimize their impact. Also, larger development projects are more likely to be financially able to add a visually appealing penthouse.

As testimony from both panels demonstrated, penthouse expansion cannot and will not result in any meaningful addition to the District’s affordable housing supply. As you are aware, the median income east of the Anacostia River is below 50 percent of AMI, it does not begin to approach the 80 percent AMI at which developers will add affordable units concomitant to penthouse expansion.

As you go forward, please protect low density neighborhoods.

Thank you for your consideration

/s/

Laura M Richards

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia

CASE NO 14-13

EXHIBIT NO. 116

District of Columbia
CASE NO.14-13
EXHIBIT NO.116