



U.S. Department of Homeland Security
UNITED STATES SECRET SERVICE

Washington, D.C. 20223

April 30, 2015

Zoning Commission for the District of Columbia
c/o Secretary of the Zoning Commission
Office of Zoning
Suite 210
441 4th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Re: Zoning Case 14-13; Proposed Text Amendments Regarding Rooftop Penthouses

Dear Commission Members:

I write on behalf of the Office of Protective Operations (OPO), the United States Secret Service (Secret Service) office that supervises the protection of the President, First Family, and White House Complex. The Secret Service wishes to express concerns about proposed amendments to the District's zoning regulations that would affect the height and use of rooftop penthouses near the White House. In particular, the Secret Service opposes any such amendments that would allow rooftop penthouses in that area to be used as residences or to exceed 10 feet in height.

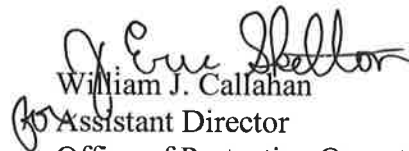
If allowed, these types of rooftop penthouses could adversely affect White House security. Unlike penthouses that are open to the public for commercial or recreational purposes, such as rooftop restaurants or swimming pools, residential penthouses can easily be used to shield an occupant's activities—to include activities intended to harm Secret Service protectees—from view. Similarly, penthouses that are high enough to provide a vantage point that offers unobstructed views of secluded areas of the White House (e.g., portions of the South Lawn used by the First Family) could also benefit potential assailants. While a few structures that offer this type of vantage point are already present in the area, the Secret Service does not want them to become prevalent.

I would appreciate the opportunity to provide the Commission with a more thorough explanation of these security risks, as it is difficult to discuss them in detail in an open forum. If it would help facilitate a better understanding of these issues, OPO representatives would gladly meet with Commission members or their staffs to deliver an in depth briefing on these matters.

For these reasons, the Secret Service urges the Commission to reject any proposal that would allow residential rooftop penthouses or penthouses over 10 feet in height in any areas near the White House. We appreciate the opportunity to share our concerns with the Commission, and will gladly answer any questions you may have.

We appreciate your assistance and understanding in this matter.

Sincerely,


William J. Callahan
Assistant Director
Office of Protective Operations