

SWBID

April 29, 2015

Zoning Commission for the District of Columbia
441 4th Street NW Suite 220-S
Washington, D.C. 20001

Case No. 14-13 Definitions, Use Permissions and Size Restrictions for Rooftop Penthouses

Dear Commission Members:

We are writing to you on behalf of the Southwest Business Improvement District to offer, for your consideration, our suggestions for text amendments for the above referenced Case No.14-13 the Definitions, Use Permissions and Size Restrictions for Rooftop Penthouses.

We are a new Business Improvement District formally authorized by the District of Columbia late last year and we are now in the process of launching our initial work program. The Southwest BID encompasses most of the near Southwest quadrant of the District. Our borders are Independence Ave to the north, Maine Ave/M Street SW and the Waterfront to the South, and 12th Street SW to the west.

This is a rapidly growing quadrant of the District and the design and utilization of rooftop penthouses is a matter of great importance to us.

As we worked to form the SWBID, we have been closely following the discussion of the Height Act. We are writing at this time in support of those that amendments that encourage innovative design, allow for the full utilization of the penthouse and ensure a PUD process that is expeditious. We offer our suggestions to five specific amendments as follows...

1. Section 411.6, to allow penthouse walls of varying heights, which would come under Alternative 2 of the Office of Planning draft. The ability to have sloping roof structures, so long as they are set back 1-to-1 from the exterior wall, should support innovative design and there is no reason to limit them to a 20% deviation from vertical.
2. Section 411.8, Alternative 1, which is consistent with present practice that the floor area of penthouses is not counted in the overall FAR of a building.
3. Section 411.18, Alternative 1, which allows for two stories of penthouse use, allows full utilization of the penthouses but continues the protections afforded by the 1910 Height Act as amended.

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4. Section 411.20, the PUD process should be structured as to make utilization of the roof structures and penthouses for alternative uses as expeditious as possible.

5. Sections 537.2; 639.2; 777.2; 936.2; 1811.2 - We also support the adoption of Alternative 1 because penthouse floor area should not be included in parking calculations in order to avoid negative impacts on existing buildings that may wish to beautify and occupy their penthouse space but have practical restrictions on expanding parking capacity.

We feel that these 6 sections, amended as we have suggested, will more strongly encourage utilization of these rooftop spaces, ensure the highest design standard and maximize the benefits of this new opportunity as envisioned in the Office of Planning Height Act petition.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Stephen J. Moore
Executive Director

Geoffrey Griffis
Chairman