

Franz Jantzen
1410 Allison Street, NW
Washington, DC 20011
ANC-4C03

March 6, 2022

Dear Members of the DC Zoning Commission,

As a longtime homeowner and resident of 16th Street Heights, I want to express my opposition to the Heleos / Dance Loft Ventures' project as it is now proposed (Case No. 21-18), and am strongly against amending the existing MU-3A maximum height in this case.

While the adjoining neighbors are, I think, justifiably alarmed at its size, my home is several blocks away. I would like to express additional concerns about this project's potential impact on the 4600-4700 commercial blocks of 14th Street and the larger neighborhood. For me, this has nothing to do with affordable housing—I support more affordable housing in DC and our neighborhood—and has everything to do with scale.

This project is massively out of scale for this location and this neighborhood. This is a 7-story building adjacent to 1-story commercial buildings and surrounded by 2-story homes! There are also no other tall buildings anywhere nearby. (The closest 7-story building is at Georgia and Taylor, NW, half a mile away.) in addition to its impact on the surrounding neighbors, a project of this scale would negatively impact the larger neighborhood in several ways.

It would likely add to our parking challenges. This project calls for 99 new units, and there is no way to tell how many of the new residents would have one or more cars. While I understand the project includes some market-rate parking, it would likely accommodate a fraction and the rest would spill over onto the surrounding streets where parking can already be difficult.

It would destroy the architectural character and integrity of this commercial stretch. While some might consider it elitist or out of touch to be concerned about the city's architecture when DC residents face a housing shortage, I think solving the affordable housing crisis should not be at the expense of what makes DC work well and preserving what is good. I think doing both is proper stewardship of a city we all love.

Long before my wife and I moved to 16th Street Heights in 1998, I liked driving past this particular stretch of 14th Street, and occasionally shopping there, precisely because it was a vibrant little strip with a great thrift store and funky restaurants. There were always people shopping or walking around. I remember thinking, "this is what the center of a neighborhood should look like." I think the same thing can be said today.

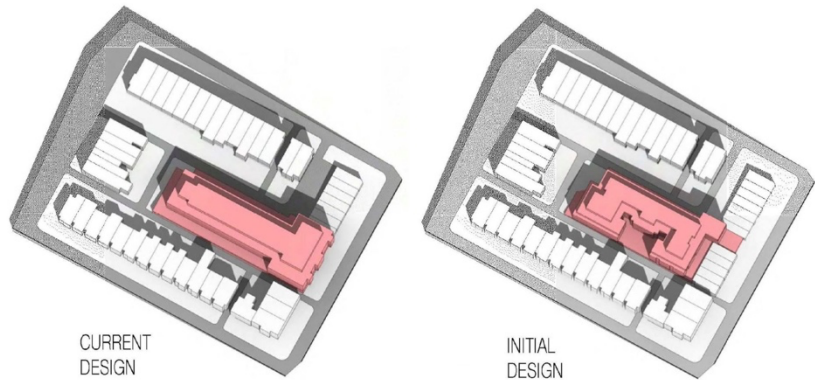
This is by design, not by accident. Both commercial blocks were built by the same developer, Charles Wire, between 1920-22 and most of the homes in this and the surrounding blocks were also built by him a few years earlier. The scale is intentional,

and the result is intimate and cohesive. Over 100 years later, it all still works, and active commercial strips which serve the surrounding community are an example of the kind of thing cities should nurture.

Demolishing the one-story businesses and allowing a 7-story building would overwhelm this stretch and everything that makes it a busy, vibrant and enjoyable place to be. I think something **smaller in scale**, and incorporating two ideas from Heleos' initial design, would be more appropriate—**prevent demolition of the five 1-story businesses, and push the mass**

back away from the street and toward the center of the block.

I also fear that allowing this exemption would encourage other developers to propose similar-sized developments on these two blocks, and it would soon all be gone.



The block is now 100% occupied by small businesses which already serve the community. If this proceeds, six small businesses that many people use regularly would be displaced.

The Dance Loft is already there, so this project is not introducing a new arts component. They would simply have a larger space.

Affordable housing is indeed an important part of an equitable DC and I welcome it at this location, but not at this scale. The developers say they must propose a building this big so it can include enough affordable housing to make it financially feasible. If that is true, then I suggest the bigger problem is the inability to propose a smaller project that is financially feasible. Of course the developers should be able to build something new on this site, and something a bit bigger with an affordable housing component is laudable—just not this big. A development half this size, for instance, still provides new affordable housing for over 30 families—and such a building would thus further the goal of an equitable DC while being a far better fit for this commercial stretch and the surrounding community.

Sincerely,



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