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Sent: Monday, March 14, 2022 1:51 PM
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Subject: OPPOSITION TO Zoning Case 21-18 DANCE LOFT VENTURES, LLC PUD

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March 14, 2022

Dear Members of the DC Zoning Commission:

RE: OPPOSITION TO Zoning Case 21-18 DANCE LOFT VENTURES, LLC PUD

My name is Ted Hallinan, I am an interested and impacted homeowner living in ANC4C I live at 1418 Crittenden Street NW in Square 2704. I am writing to express my opposition to the development plan and application of Dance Loft Ventures LLC seeking: (1) a Map Amendment; (2) a PUD ZC 21-18 to up-zone the site from MU-3A to MU-5A. As proposed, the Dance Loft Ventures PUD is inconsistent with the attendant neighborhood development in this part of the city. I oppose the size, height, and density of the Dance Loft Ventures PUD 101-unit project in a residential neighborhood where the RF-1 zoned two-story town houses in Square 2704 will be dwarfed by the proposed building.

The Dance Loft Ventures PUD application for 4618 14th Street NW (Lots 64 & 828, and 830-832 and 823 in square 2704) proposes an increased height plus penthouse and rooftop screen enclosure totaling 81'10"! If approved, this would double the existing MU-3A zone height maximum of 40'0." Moreover, the Dance Loft Ventures PUD seeks to extend the entire mass of the proposed building and its height from the eastern lot boundary 295'0" to the west into the alley areas directly behind single- and two-family row houses, overshadowing the existing 100 year-old residential development. The topography of the site trends to 20 feet above the measuring point on 14th Street at the western end of the development resulting in a development that, at its lowest point, tops out at 64'6", significantly taller than the adjacent row houses, typically only 22'0" to 25'0" at their highest elevation in the rear yards facing the proposed Dance Loft Ventures PUD.

Dance Loft Ventures has held a number of meetings with the 4C03 SMD that have been largely one-sided affairs where we have been subjected to lectures from the Applicant on how their proposed project provides our neighborhood with significant benefit. I have attended sixteen of these meetings to date. Many of these virtual meetings were conducted in a way that did not permit participants to: 1.) know who was on the virtual call other than the SMD Rep. and the Applicant's Team. 2.) unmute ourselves without permission from the host (typically the SMD Representative). 3.) The virtual panel, typically comprised of the Dance Loft team and their counsel, was able to speak freely and speak amongst themselves without allowing other neighborhood attendees to

challenge them. We voiced these concerns to the ANC as well as our council member's office without any intervention on their part.

It is important to characterize these meetings in a proper context. The number of meetings is an effort on the part of the applicant to “paper the file;” and demonstrate, albeit in a patronizing and condescending way, that they have engaged with the neighborhood. Our concerns have not been addressed, in fact most of them have been set aside and mischaracterized inside of the actual Application. ANC 4C has not engaged with the applicant since the project was first proposed in March 2021, there are only two mentions of the project in the meeting minutes with no action from the ANC to date. ANC 4C appears to be unwilling to work with the Applicant to obtain any additional public benefit like 1.) CBE participation, 2.) a construction management plan that may help to protect the houses and public facilities surrounding the site. 3.) a method to assist displaced or impacted retail or business in the area adjacent to the site. Or any other measurable public benefit to the surrounding community.

In the PUD application there are several points of concern that appear in various ways in different sections throughout the application. The following citation from the Intro to the Application.

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§I.A. *In addition, the Applicant has made significant revisions to the Project in response to neighborhood concerns raised prior to this filing.*

§ IV.B.1.c. *Alternative Plans: In addition, over the course of several community meetings with adjacent neighbors, the Applicant proposed alternative massings, including a proposal that reduced the height of the Project a full story in the rear of the building, but also reduced setbacks (i.e., reduced the separation from the Project to nearby houses). However, those alternatives were generally regarded as not acceptable to many of the abutters so the applicant did not develop such alternatives further.*

This representation is inaccurate. During the presentation that I attended, the Applicant showed us a sketch of a proposal and simply put it aside without any opportunity for conversation and debate. Clearly, Hobson’s choice. The abutters would prefer that the mass of the building be scaled back considerably.

Neighbor concerns about privacy have been addressed by claiming that set-backs, “considerably mitigate these concerns.” Over the course of our meetings with the Applicant there was a lack of transparency regarding privacy to the extent that when questioned about balconies and their design the Applicant team did not answer the question and our neighborhood was unable to ascertain the design or number of balconies until the design was shown in the Application. In fact, early renderings did not detail balconies projecting from the bulk of the building towards the surrounding alley, they became readily apparent in the Application and showed them to be an open picket and rail design.

In early presentations beginning in March 2021 the Applicant proposed 20 parking spaces to serve 99 units, since upped to 101 units and 13,165 SF of retail/entertainment space, over the course of the project the Applicant offering increased to 40 spaces, when in fact the DCMR requires 55 spaces. The Applicant is requesting zoning flexibility to seek a reduction in parking from 55 spaces to 40 spaces. I oppose the project as a whole, but I oppose any requested relief from the DCMR baseline requirements related to unit count and other use group considerations.

The expanded width of the alley from 10’0” wide in an early was increased to 15’0” serving the Project’s parking area from 14th Street is a requirement imposed on the project through the DCMR and not a concession to the Community, as stated in the application.

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The Application has several paragraphs outlining the political imperative to provide affordable housing with citations from OP studies, various newspaper articles and recent DC court rulings. Another citation refers to

challenges faced by developers because of “NIMBYISM.” This kind of uninspired proforma recitation of the political consideration will not stop me from opposing the Project because at its most fundamental, the design is poor. The affordable housing matter is not at issue for me – the Project is too tall and too big. The Applicant squandered an opportunity to engage our neighborhood in a good faith effort to design a contextually sensitive and interesting project that could be a model for alley development in DC.

The proposed Project not only dominates the surrounding square because of its excessive height and bulk; it has been “dropped into” the site without any engagement with the surrounding alleys, in favor of a solid wall. The Applicant also provides photos of recently developed (2 – 5 years) multi-family projects further south on 14th Street in support of their Project, these blatantly ignore the underlying condition that leads to my objection. Not one of these projects extends back into the residential zones to dominate the surrounding neighborhood. They are separated from the houses in the RF zones by an alley. The project ignores even basic design principles to consider context.

I am asking the Zoning Commission to vote against the Dance Loft Ventures PUD Application and related Map Amendment as it stands and ask the Zoning Commission to:

1. Compel the Applicant to return the neighborhood and engage, primarily those living in Square 2704, in a good faith effort to arrive at a mutually beneficial design and or response.
2. Request that the Ward 4 Commissioner provide guidance to ANC 4C or to lead and manage an ongoing process when the ANC 4C has not fully engaged either the Applicant or the neighborhood.
3. Review the names and addresses of letters of support that are included on the ZC 21-18 website. The majority of these are from outside of the neighborhood, Ward 4 or even DC. The letters of support ignore the physical imposition of this project and relate solely to the arts component.
4. Review the underlying zoning of this area and consider that it is not consistent with other squares where the MU or C zones do not penetrate deeply into the adjacent R zones.

I am not opposed to affordable housing or community-based arts organizations, but I am opposed to this project in its current form. I think our community and our city deserve better, please do what you can to help ensure that this happens.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely

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