

March 22, 2022

Dear Members of the Zoning Commission:

For the past 20 years, my husband and I have lived with our children at 4609 15th Street, NW. In that time, we have wanted to see thoughtful development of the property directly behind our home. That said, we write as interested and impacted homeowners living in ANC4C abutting the development in *Square 2704*. We write to express our **OPPOSITION** to the development plan and application of Dance Loft Ventures LLC that seeks a map amendment, a request to upzone from MU-3A to MU-5A, and additional density.

This development, as proposed, will overwhelm the community's RF-1 zoned two-story homes and residences. You have read the opposition of our neighbors; we stand with them. We ask the Commission to require the developers to right size the proposed building to front the density on 14th Street and reduce the height of the rear of the building to decrease the impact to the abutting homes and residences on Crittenden, Buchanan and 15th Streets, and reject the Comprehensive Plan amendments.

Over the last year, the **developers ignored** consistent and repeated concerns from neighbors about density and size. Indeed, and as a response, the developers maximized every inch of its property footprint, even increasing its density from an original plan of 99 units to 101. We have asked the developers to consider focusing the building's density on 14th Street where better access is available and the impact to abutting neighbors lessened. We have asked the developers to decrease the number of floors. Repeatedly, developers rejected the idea due to financial constraints, e.g. citing construction costs for steel and concrete. Financial incentives have hindered the capacity to find creative resolutions. We find the lack of financial transparency troubling.

Beyond the rejection of any meaningful compromise on size and scale, I would like to call your attention to **specifics in the proposal** that exemplify how the developers have given lip service to neighbors' shared concerns and have not engaged meaningfully with abutting neighbors.

First, the **alleyways** surrounding the proposed development are not equal, ranging from 10' on the south side of the development and almost 12' on the north side with access points on 15th Street. As a response to concerns, the developers offered to increase the primary alley serving its garage on 14th Street. That concession ignores narrow accessibility to the alleys on 15th Street. During construction and for future health and safety reasons, these alleys will likely be access points. With the addition of 101 new units to this small parcel, it is difficult to imagine how construction vehicles will access the lot and how vehicles will easily access the back of the building during an emergency.

Second, **parking** remains an issue. The developers note that they have increased parking from 20 to 40 spaces as a concession. These spaces will be sold/leased separately from the planned units. It is more than likely that renters from these 101 units will choose to park on the street if

they do not rent a parking space in the building, thus adding to the continual congestion in the neighborhood. Families seeking these apartments will need cars. We raised children in the city and, while we rely on public transportation, trips to the grocery store and doctor's appointments and school usually required a car. To date, the developers have delayed sharing their expert's report on impacts on traffic and nearby on-street parking. We can only infer from this delay that there are negative impacts. DDOT has not responded to neighbor's requests for information.

Third, the developers note the number of **public meetings** they have hosted and attended as evidence of their meaningful outreach. We have attended a majority of them. Without exception, we have been lectured about their plans with little regard or empathy for how the development will affect neighbors. For example, neighbors created a model of the building from publicly available information to understand the impact of the proposal. When the developers questioned the model's dimensions in a public meeting, they refused requests by community members to build one of their own, citing it would not matter. We took that to mean that our model was not substantially different from what they proposed. Indeed, the model showed visually how the building will overwhelm the community. It would be a gross mischaracterization of the meetings to describe them as engaging with neighbors meaningfully or that conversations occurred in good faith.

As longtime homeowners, we care deeply about this city and neighborhood and the goals of increased affordable housing and commercial vitality. We have raised our children in this neighborhood. Regularly, we walk along the corridor and eat at the restaurants, get our shoes fixed and clothes dry-cleaned in our neighborhood. We hosted a 50th birthday party at the Dance Loft. We chose this neighborhood for the neighbors, its architecture and community. We are better for living here. Our dispute is not with the goals themselves but with the undue burden placed on abutting neighbors to support them. **Supporters of this building will cause great harm in an effort to do good. We would ask that they first do no harm.**

Thank you for your consideration. In sum, we oppose amending the existing MU-3A zone height maximum of 40'0 to allow for a building that would almost double the existing height limits, along with the size and density proposed in the application. We ask that you require the project to focus its design height on the 14th Street commercial corridor and reduce the impact to abutting homes, along with density and size.

Sincerely,

Peter Bouma + Katherine B. Milikin
4609 15th Street, NW