

Barron, Ron (DCOZ)

From: Abigail McWhorter <info@email.actionnetwork.org>
Sent: Thursday, April 28, 2022 5:15 PM
To: DCOZ - ZC Submissions (DCOZ)
Subject: For ZC Case No. 21-18 — Support for Dance Loft/Heleos development project

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All Members of the Zoning Commission Members of the Zoning Commission,

Dear members of the Zoning Commission,

I am writing to express my strong support for Dance Loft on 14's Planned Unit Development and Zoning Map Amendment located at 4618 14th Street, NW (Z.C. Case No. 21-18). The District needs to preserve arts institutions and add affordable housing, and this project does both and should be approved.

DC's Comprehensive Plan sets out a vision of a city that is more affordable and inclusive, as well as better served by neighborhood-based arts and culture. We currently have a chance to move toward both of these goals with a single project, on a block recommended for increased density by the Comprehensive Plan and for both density and arts space by the Small Area Plan. I care about adding affordable housing in DC to ensure all our neighbors have a place to live, and I care about preserving the arts. On those two fronts alone, this project has tremendous benefits for our city.

As you know, the District is in dire need of more housing, particularly units affordable for families. This project expects to set aside at least two-thirds of the proposed 101 units for affordable, mixed-income housing, including many deeply affordable units (at 30%, 50%, and 60% MFI) as well as a significant number of 3-bedroom units, which are rare and badly needed for families wishing to stay in the District.

This project will also create a world-class arts and cultural space for the Dance Loft, and allow this creative non-profit to continue serving children, school groups, and artists from all over the region with one of the few dedicated neighborhood dance spaces in the District. There are only a handful of performing arts venues remaining in the District that provide both dance practice studios and theatre space for professional performing artists. This project fulfills a critical need in the District, particularly as at least eight dance and theater facilities have closed in the past decades, with more closings likely due to COVID-19.

This project will also support neighborhood businesses by bringing appropriate residential density to this commercial corridor. This area will soon also be home to new retail at the redeveloped Northern Bus Garage across the street, and additional density will be crucial to the success of both current business and the expected new businesses. I also appreciate that this project adds some, but not too much, parking.

This building is located on a major commercial and transportation corridor. I consider a 5-story building that scales back to 4-stories to be an appropriate size for this location, and especially considering that the building will be set back 60-75 feet from the row homes that surround it. Upper 14th Street is a burgeoning commercial district and this project fits in with my view of the neighborhood. In view of the affordable housing crisis facing the city, as well as the new Comprehensive Plan amendments enacted by our Councilmembers that demand more density and more equitable development, this project should be considered a model for appropriate development along all major commercial corridors in the District. If anything, it should add more units.

Lastly, the development team's commitment to constructing a LEED Gold certified building that targets net-zero energy performance is exceptional and will help make progress on the District's climate resiliency goals. This will be the first net-zero arts center in the District and one of an esteemed few nationally.

I strongly support this project's multiple benefits of more housing that is deeply affordable, a new home for an established neighborhood arts organization, support for local businesses in the neighborhood, and exceptional sustainability targets. I encourage the Zoning Commission to approve this request and support this project's potential to contribute to a healthy, inclusive, and thriving community.

Thank you for all your work and service, as well as your consideration of this matter.

CC: Councilmember Janeese Lewis George
Commissioners of ANC4C

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