

Franz Jantzen  
Member, Friends of 14<sup>th</sup> Street  
1410 Allison Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20011  
ANC-4C03

**To: Members of the DC Zoning Commission**  
**Re. Dance Loft LLC PUD Application ZC 21-18**

May 4, 2022

Dear Members of the DC Zoning Commission,

As an alarmed neighborhood resident, I write in opposition to the Dance Loft Venture's project for the 4600 block of 14<sup>th</sup> Street as it is currently proposed. I am strongly opposed to up-zoning the existing MU-3A maximum height for this project.

My wife and I have lived in the neighborhood two blocks away since 1998. While the neighbors living in the same block are justifiably alarmed by such a massive project, I have additional concerns about its impact on the 4600-4700 blocks of 14<sup>th</sup> Street and the larger neighborhood. This has nothing to do with affordable housing—this city needs more affordable housing and I fully support that goal—and has everything to do with scale.

**This project is massively out of scale for this location and this neighborhood.** The 2012 14<sup>th</sup> Street Vision Plan calls for contextual sensitivity, yet we are being asked to consider a 7-story building next to 1-story commercial buildings and surrounded by 2-story homes! There are no other tall buildings of comparable size anywhere nearby. It is far too large for its proposed location.

**It would destroy the character and integrity of this commercial stretch.** While the Dance Loft is asking us to consider the ephemeral cultural benefits of an enlarged arts space, they are pitting that goal against the existing nature and character of the neighborhood as it exists.

Long before my wife and I moved to the neighborhood, I enjoyed this exact stretch of 14<sup>th</sup> Street. I would occasionally go there to shop or eat out 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 be like."

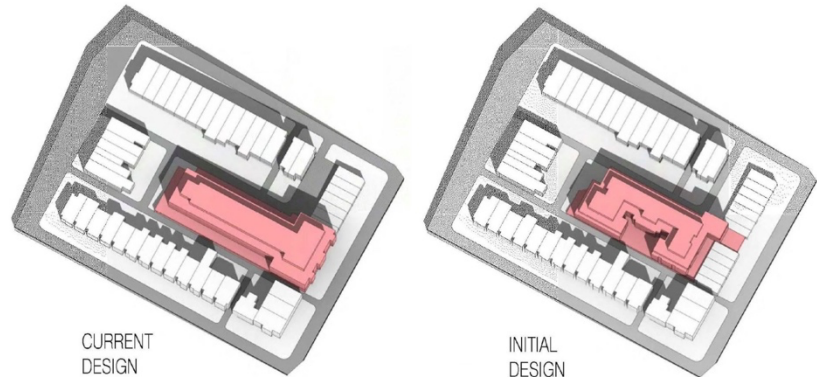
The same can be said today, and that is by design. Both commercial blocks were built by the same developer between 1920-22, and most of the homes in this and the surrounding blocks were also built by him a few years earlier. Because he played a strong role in defining the scale of what exists, the result was intentionally intimate and cohesive, and over 100 years later, it all still works. It is 100% occupied active commercial strip which serves the surrounding community. A thriving commercial strip is a positive asset that should be nurtured, not

destroyed. 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 fully support a new Dance Loft studio with new affordable housing.** But it should be something **smaller in scale**. Additionally, I support two ideas from their initial design—**protect the five 1-story businesses and leave the buildings intact, and push the mass back away from the street and toward the center of the block.**

**If this building is allowed, the rest of the two blocks are endangered.** If Dance Loft Ventures is allowed to build what they propose without

scaling it down, that will become precedent for the rest of the two block strip. I fear that if this goes as proposed, soon the rest of the two blocks will fall to oversize development as well.



**This would add to the neighborhood's current parking challenges.** This project calls for 101 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.

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

**The Dance Loft has been unfair and un-neighborly in its interaction with the neighboring community.** They have refused to compromise when faced with eminently reasonable opposition to the size and scale of their proposed building, they have stifled public debate at neighborhood meetings, and have mis-characterized the opposition as variously being anti-affordable housing and even racist. Additionally, their presentation graphics overly romanticize it and, I suggest, carefully under-represent the actual size visually. As a photographer, I have made my own versions of approximately what it would look like, based on measurements taken at the site and from the developers during public meetings, and I include them below.

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DC residents face a housing shortage, but solving the affordable housing crisis should not be at the expense of what makes this city work well and preserving what is good. Finding the best balance of both is proper stewardship of a city we all love.

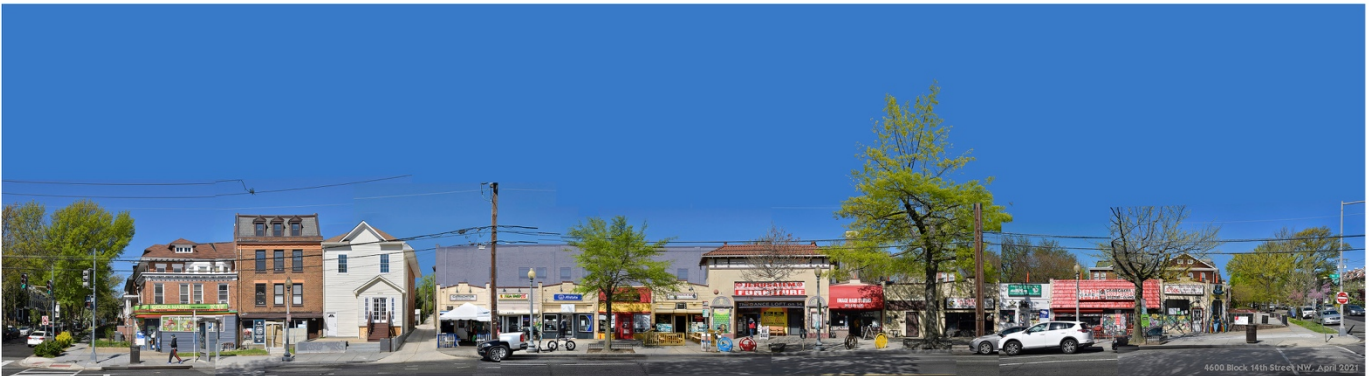
Affordable housing is indeed an important part of an equitable DC and I welcome it at this location, but not at this scale. Building something with an affordable housing component is laudable—just not this big. Something half this size, for instance, still provides new affordable

housing for over 30 families—and such a building would thus further the goal of an equitable DC while being a far more contextually sensitive fit for this commercial stretch and the surrounding community.

Sincerely,



Franz Jantzen  
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4600 block 14th Street NW, April 2021



4600 block 14th Street NW with Heleos' proposed development

(c) Franz Jantzen (202) 904-0282



The 4600 block of 14<sup>th</sup> Street as it currently exists (April 2021)



4600 block of 14<sup>th</sup> Street with the proposed Dance Loft / Heleos development