

Anthony J. Hood
Chairman, DC Zoning Commission
Suite 210
441 4th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

January 15, 2015

Support for ZC 14-11

Dear Chairman Hood,

I support the proposed text amendment because it would discourage “pop ups” thereby addressing several issues that are of particular concern on Capitol Hill, especially in the areas just outside the boundaries of the Capitol Hill Historic District.

- 1) In this part of Capitol Hill, pop-ups are not creating affordable family housing – they are destroying it. The existing row houses are modest and may be a “tight fit” but it is possible to raise a family in them. They may not be cheap but they are relatively affordable. When they are expanded to include additional stories, their price increases dramatically, putting them out of reach of most families. In many cases, the additional stories are leveraged to create multiple housing units, none of which are large enough to accommodate a family and yet each of which is priced similarly to the original house. They are suited to the needs of well-to-do singles or couples but not families with children. An example is 1701 Independence Avenue, SE, a rowhouse sharing a hip roof with the adjacent house. Last year it was assessed at \$487,460. Later, it was purchased and greatly enlarged, the hip roof was split, and this now-oversize house is for sale for \$1.555 million, listed by Berkshire Hathaway Home Services. The “after” photographs, included with my testimony, speak for themselves.
- 2) In many areas of the city, irregular rooflines are not unusual. However, this is not the case in much of the Capitol Hill area, just outside the boundaries of the Capitol Hill Historic District. In Hill East, for example, blocks of modest homes were constructed as a single continuous row with well-considered variations among them and individual units creating a harmonious whole. The charm of the streetscape is dependent on the uniformity. “Popups” on these blocks are jarring and detract from the sense of scale. They also adversely affect the light and air of their neighbors. Where yards and homes are typically small, it’s discomfiting to have a large structure looming next door.

Respectfully,
Beth Purcell
Chair, Historic Preservation Committee
Beyond the Boundaries Chair
Capitol Hill Restoration Society
420 10th Street, SE
Washington, DC 20003

1701 Independence Ave SE (front elevation)



1701 Independence Ave SE (side view)