

NEIGHBORS AGAINST DOWNZONING

YOUR NEWSLETTER for HOME OWNER RIGHTS
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STOP DOWNZONING NOW
WWW.NADZ.ORG
Sign the ONLINE PETITION

35,000+ D.C. Homes Face Downzoning *R-4 Districts City Wide Included in Zoning Proposal.*

According to the Office of Planning, there are 37,600 property lots in the District's residential neighborhoods zoned R-4. After excluding larger non-residential structures within these zones, such as schools, churches, fire houses and similar buildings, there remain more than 35,000 so-called "DSA" lots, short for "detached, semi-detached and attached," also known as *stand-alone*, *duplex* or *end-unit row houses*, and *attached row houses*.

R-4 zoning rules for these "DSA" lots give home owners the right to remodel or make additions to their homes by building up to the 40 foot height limit. These lots are allowed two dwelling units by right, and three or more dwelling units if the lots are exceptionally large. They are limited to three stories in height, but that does not count cellars or rooftop structures.

While R-4 zones are not apartment house zones, they fill an in-between category separating the low-density R-1, R-2 and R-3 zones and high-density R-5 apartment house zones.

That in-between status has created controversy as some R-4 homes have been developed to provide more housing.

The District finds itself in a "perfect storm" of a housing shortage, a generational shift in demographics, lifestyles and household size, a strong and growing economy, and the first comprehensive revision to the city's zoning code since 1958.

Renovation, development and conversion of a few lots into multi-unit dwellings in response to the high demand for housing has brought concern and anxiety to some long-time residents of these R-4 zoned neighborhoods. Although the total number of conversions in recent years represents only a small percentage of these 35,000 homes, protests have been loud and continuous. In response, the Office of Planning has proposed to reduce the limits for by-right development in R-4 zones: they call it a "*diminution of certain uses*."

Opponents of the proposal call it downzoning.

The proposal before the Zoning Commission (Case 14-11) calls for a maximum height limit of 35 feet and a maximum of two-dwelling units per lot in R-4 zones.

The R-1, R-2 and R-3 zones make up 55% of homes in D.C. while the R-4 zones account for another 15%. The R-5 apartment zones total just 30%. [\[Read more online\]](#)

Lanier Heights Family Moving Out *Application for minor addition to row house blocked. Public Documents Show Home Owners Cannot Always Get Needed Variance.*

Downzoning is always pushed as a way to stop "greedy" developers from converting single family row homes into apartments or condos. Home owners, we are implicitly assured, can always obtain a zoning variance if they need to make additions to their house for the good of their family.

But that is not always true.

An Ontario Road family spent \$1,000 in application fees (plus the cost of architectural drawings) for minor additions to the rear of their three story row house in Lanier Heights: additions to enlarge the kitchen and add a little space for their growing family.

Public documents online for Board of Zoning Adjustment Case #18910 show that months of planning, thousands of dollars spent and pleas to ANC1C to keep a growing family in the neighborhood were not enough.

Even though the proposed additions would not be visible from the street, even with support from neighbors, the ANC felt compelled to pass a resolution opposing the request for a variance. The ANC advised the home owner he could still go before the BZA, just in case the ANC was wrong about the zoning rules. But the home owner withdrew the application and stated his intention to move instead. [\[Read more online\]](#)

[Read More at the Neighbors Against Downzoning website: www.nadz.org](http://www.nadz.org)