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Baltimore City Planning Commission
417 E. Fayette Street
Baltimore, MD 21202

***Re: Bill 24-0583 - Request to Amend Land Use Map to
Designate 200+ Row Homes in Remington as Residential instead of Commercial***

Dear Chair and Commissioners:

The Proposed Land Use Map carves out two Commercial Corridors from the heart of Residential Remington. **The map re-designates as Commercial more than 200 of Remington's Residentially zoned row homes.** The re-designated structures occupy 15 block faces along Huntingdon Avenue, 28th Street and Remington Avenue, in both the 12th and 14th Council Districts.

This unprecedented proposal for Remington's future has not been explained by Planning, nor has Planning notified the affected homeowners. Through individual conversations I have confirmed that homeowners are unaware of what Planning is proposing, and its consequences. Needless to say, the proposal has not been vetted in the neighborhood.

The proposal does not represent rational planning.

- These row homes were built as houses, not shops or restaurants. Most have pedestrian entrances at a level well above the sidewalk. If those buildings were converted to retail use, they would not offer equitable access to visiting patrons.
- The neighborhood has prior experience of two block faces that had been assigned Commercial zoning instead of Residential. We worked with our 14th District City Council member to have the zoning changed to Residential, to match the rest of the neighborhood. Those row house blocks are doing much better today.
- There is no need to cannibalize Remington's row house blocks to add Commercial space. The rezoning of numerous corner properties from Residential to C-1, in the 2017 Comprehensive Rezoning, has not resulted in a significant increase in corner Commercial establishments. Recently developed commercial spaces have struggled to achieve and maintain occupancy; meanwhile, more commercial spaces are being developed on the ground floor of new high-rises.
- The demand for bricks-and-mortar retail has changed. The impact of the pandemic and the rise of online shopping cannot be ignored.

The proposal is destabilizing.

- Designating these homes now as Commercial on the Land Use Map will send a message to real estate speculators. Purchasers will plan and expect to convert properties under future C-1 zoning, which not only allows Commercial use, it doubles the number of dwelling units allowed, nearly doubles building height, and eliminates the rear yard requirement (allowing lots to be built out to the alley). That is a far cry from these properties as they are today.
- These blocks will lose family-sized homes and homeownership opportunities.
- When the next rezoning is introduced, what will be considered is C-1 or even C-2, not Residential. Homeowners will be told that the loss of their Residential zoning was already pre-determined by the 2024 Land Use Map.
- The effects of actual rezoning to C-1 or C-2 will be destabilizing for these blocks and for the homeowners. At the very least, rear yards will be boxed in by the expansion of neighboring structures all the way to the alley.
- Build-outs and height expansions will also have impacts on neighboring Residential blocks.
- Demolitions and consolidations for redevelopment become a possibility under this scheme.

Planning's proposal for these 200+ row homes looks very much like a scheme to facilitate real estate speculation. Homeowners are already barraged with unsolicited offers to buy their properties. The speculators must be salivating over this Proposed Land Use Map.

Meanwhile, the homeowners are unaware of what is being proposed. This is not what they could have anticipated or expected.

The City should be facilitating preservation of these modest family-sized homes and the homeownership opportunities they represent. Planning should not be promoting and facilitating a scheme that will accomplish the very opposite.

If Planning truly believes the correct future for the row houses on these particular blocks is to transition away from being family homes, and instead be built up and out and divided into units under Commercial zoning, then Planning should have informed each property owner of that plan. By the time postcards are sent out informing individual homeowners of a proposed rezoning based on the Land Use Map, it will be too late.

It is too late now for Planning to do what is necessary to inform the 200+ property owners and explain this proposal and its consequences to them, and to the neighborhood.

The equitable and correct thing to do is to drop this proposal and designate all of these homes as Residential on the Proposed Land Use Map.

Sincerely,

Joan L. Floyd