

Date: July 14, 2015
To: BZA Chairman Lloyd Jordan
From: Sheryl Segal and Richard Frankel
1366 East Capitol St NE
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About: Zip Car Parking in Alley

Our house is at the "dog leg" in the alley north of the 1300 block of East Capitol Street, NE. There is a lot catty-corner from my backyard. During all the time we've lived there, there was a row of garages facing the side alley, and a fenced in open lot in back of the garages. The fence had a gate the width and height of a regular door, so cars were not able to drive into the lot. There is also a stand-alone garage perpendicular to the row of garages and open lot. We have lived in our home since 1987. During this time, the lot was either empty or used as a garden area. It was never used for parking or car storage.

When we moved in, about 27 years ago, the open lot opposite my backyard was fenced in with a tall wire fence and there was a working gate. The lot was full of junk, trash, and debris, and was not used for any function by its owners or anyone else. About 22 years ago, a group of neighbors suggested to the owner that we clean it up, and turn it into an urban garden. The owner agreed, and many of the neighbors spent quite a bit of time gathering trash and building debris, and hauling it away.

We divided the space into 5 plots, and each participants was responsible for maintaining his or her plot as well as planting and cultivating the plot. Most of the participants dug out a considerable amount of broken up cement, stones, and building debris as the gardening efforts went on. The person with the plot at the end furthest away from the large garage ended up by making a raised garden.

We only participated in gardening for a few years, as we could not keep up with the amount of labor needed to keep up the gardening effort, and let another neighbor have the space.

About 7 years ago, there was an incident of a police chase down the alley, which resulted in a car running into the fence, and crushing the fence supports. The side of the fence was removed, leaving only the short end and gate standing. However the gardening continued, until very recently, when the property was sold, and the new owner decided to turn the plot into either a garage or parking lot.

While the current owner says that he lives locally and is not an "absentee landlord", he does not live across from the lot, now being used as Zip car parking for four cars. Bright lights have been installed, and there is noticeably more traffic and noise in the alley as a result of this new activity.

We believe this is an improper new use of this space, and should be, at the least, limited to fewer cars.

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