

TESTIMONY OF COUNCILMEMBER HARRY THOMAS JR. (WARD 5)
BEFORE THE D.C. ZONING COMMISSION
REGARDING CASE NO. 08-06
(COMPREHENSIVE ZONING REGULATIONS REVIEW: CHAPTERS B-15, B-16 & B-17)
NOVEMBER 15, 2010

Good evening, Members of the Zoning Commission. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share with you my concerns regarding the proposed revisions to the Zoning Regulations relating to parking and loading. My concerns focus on the potential for an adverse economic impact to the District if some of these provisions are adopted.

I have recently spoken with representatives of several retailers who are interested in developing large, multi-tenant shopping centers in the District. Some of these projects have been announced in the press. Others are still in the early stages, and have not yet been announced. In addition, the U.S. government is actively searching for large blocks of office space for a number of federal agencies, including Homeland Security and the State Department, among others.

The proposed regulations, which would place a maximum on the number of parking spaces that could be provided in a new development, and a maximum on the number of parking spaces per thousand square feet in a development, will create a disincentive for these economic development opportunities to locate in the District. Parking limitations may make sense in a downtown location, or close to Metrorail. There are, however, a number of locations in Ward 5 and other outlying Wards with blocks of land large enough to accommodate these developments, but without convenient access to Metrorail. Placing a cap on parking citywide, in a one-size-fits-all approach, would limit the desirability of these locations and have an adverse economic impact on the District.

In these difficult economic times, all agencies of the District of Columbia government must be mindful of the ways in which their regulations, policies, and decisions may have either a positive or negative impact on economic development. All of us must work every day to maintain the District's rightful share of regional economic development opportunities, so that jobs and tax dollars can remain in the District. I thank you for your careful consideration of these concerns, and I thank you for your service to the District of Columbia.

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