

Good Morning. My name is Karen Cruse. I live on 35th Street, one block south of Call Your Mother. While I am not within 200 feet of the establishment, I am very much in the same neighborhood. I have lived here for fifty years, I love the neighborhood, and so I am very protective of it. To that end, I participate in a Town/Gown committee with the University; I chair the Citizen Associations of Georgetown's ABC committee, and I have been involved with various zoning issues, including Call Your Mother's three repeated attempts at zoning relief. Which is why I am alarmed by the changes in the neighborhood since Call More Mother opened, and why I oppose their request for a zoning variance, ironically from the very regulation which specifically mentions Georgetown. I also oppose a special exception from the corner store regulations.

It is the corner store regulations that I want to address, from a slightly different perspective.

When the zoning experts drafted the regulations for a corner store in a residential neighborhood, they obviously first considered the size of the area to be covered. What they chose was a circle of 500 feet surrounding a potential operation, in this case Call Your Mother. They then determined the number of establishments that would be appropriate in that area. They decided that where more than three properties with corner store-use establishments already exist, there shouldn't be any more, that additional stores would impact negatively on the neighborhood.

The more I thought about this, it hit me that rather than focusing on a 500 foot radius, you really have to consider a thousand foot diameter. A thousand feet is about one fifth of a mile and encompasses the equivalent of three blocks. So, three blocks on 35th Street; three along O, a block of N, and parts of 36th and 34th. That's six to nine linear blocks, covering a considerably large area, and the stores can be located along any of them. But that's not what we're dealing with here. The 1300 block of 35th Street currently has five corner store-use establishments, not including Call Your Mother. We are already at the number of stores the zoning experts sought to discourage in a large area, yet here they're clustered together, within yards of each other.

We've been fortunate that these businesses with grandfathered special exceptions for nonconforming uses fit seamlessly into the neighborhood. They don't generate much pedestrian traffic or have negative impacts. On the other hand, Call Your Mother does draw crowds (it is common to see as many as fifty people milling in the area) contributing to the problems you've heard ad nauseam. They are turning a 100% residentially-zoned block into a commercial one.

We always look at the specifics of a regulation. However, I believe it is equally important to consider the spirit of the law: what was behind it, why was it written the way it was. In that regard, it is clear that the intent driving the corner store regulations was to ensure that corner stores do not completely overwhelm residential neighborhoods. Unfortunately, the existence of Call Your Mother on O Street is doing just that. They have completely changed the character of the neighborhood.

When people buy their homes, they rely on zoning to have confidence that what they're buying will be what they will have in the future. By not adhering to zoning regulations and guidelines, you destroy that confidence. Without zoning, you have nothing.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Cruse

