

**The District of Columbia Zoning Commission
Public Hearing on Case No. 08-06-2: Proposed Amendments to the
Parking Regulations**

**Testimony of Gary M. Peterson, Ward 6 Member
of the Zoning Review Taskforce
July 31, 2008**

I am Gary Peterson and I am a member of the Zoning Review Taskforce.¹ I generally support the Parking Subject Area Report, which is the purview of tonight's meeting. I have a few simple outcomes that I would like to obtain from this meeting. 1. I want to hear the views of people and organizations not on the Taskforce;² 2. I want to hear the additional views of my fellow Taskforce members; and 3. I want your views on the report and how you want us to proceed. I want you to endorse the route we've taken so far. I would like you to recommend more study on what would be the proper minimum and/or maximum parking requirements in DC and to recommend that DDOT and WMATA participate in the parking working group so we may arrive at a comprehensive parking plan.

I view parking in two parts: Residential (primarily R-1 through R-4) and all the rest. First a few comments about parking in general. Foremost, zoning alone will not solve parking problems. Parking requires a comprehensive approach of which zoning is only one part. Zoning can deal with parking minimums and maximums, bicycles, shared parking, car-share parking, and in-lieu fees. Zoning cannot deal with transit subsidies, transit improvements, parking pricing, and residential parking permits. For this reason, DDot and WMATA must be included in the rezoning process and should attend our meetings. In the alternative, the new parking regulations should not become effective until other, to be determined, non-zoning actions are taken.

I. Residential Parking

As to residential parking, I believe that every residential dwelling should have one parking space that is either on public space or on its lot. If a parking space is feasible on the lot no residential parking permits for the first vehicle should be issued to that address.³ If there is no feasible off-street parking only one residential parking permit should be issued at the current administrative cost. Second, third, etc. automobiles should be charged increasingly more for residential parking permits. In the Capitol Hill Historic District we basically live with no parking requirements because curb cuts are not allowed in the historic district. There are overnight parking problems in most of the

¹ I am on the board of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society (CHRS) and Chair of the CHRS Zoning Committee. My testimony tonight should not be construed to represent the views of CHRS. Neither the CHRS board nor its membership have reviewed or approved my testimony and CHRS has taken no formal position on the Parking Subject Area Report.

² I understand that some groups and companies have organized letter writing campaigns. I am not impressed by this and find the efforts in this regard unsavory and counterproductive.

³ I know people who have garages but park on the street and use their garage for storage. I am also aware of one couple that has three cars parked on the street even though they have a garage.

historic district. In greater Capitol Hill, parking is more a block-by-block problem. For more intense residential uses such as new construction of apartments and condominiums, I would not allow the residents to participate in the parking permit program and perhaps have both minimum and maximum parking requirements for the development.

II. All other uses

The book *21st Century Land Development Code*⁴ on pages 267-271 discusses minimum and maximum parking regulations. I have summarized the contents as to minimum and maximum parking requirements below and any errors in the summary mine.

- A. Minimum parking requirements are designed to,
 - 1. reduce street congestion,
 - 2. avoid spillover parking on residential streets, and
 - 3. address problems of an undersupply of parking.
- B. Minimum parking requirements have side effects that,
 - 1. create too much parking because they are designed for peak demand,
 - 2. create surface parking areas,
 - 3. inhibit walkability by
 - a. spreading uses apart,
 - b. forcing pedestrians to compete with traffic, and
 - c. making travel by car more convenient than walking.
 - 4. create urban heat islands, and
 - 5. require stormwater management systems.
- C. If parking minimums create an oversupply of parking other problems may follow,
 - 1. More parking spaces allow for an increase in cars (parking as a fertility drug for cars),
 - 2. More parking results in a decrease in public transit demand,
 - 3. More cars results in a decrease in air quality,
 - 4. Surface parking lots create environmental problems,
 - 5. Reduces DC's ability to comply with the Clean Air Act. The pollution is primarily caused by commuters and the availability of parking for them.

In arriving at parking solutions you must strike a balance. Maximums can create an undersupply of parking just as minimums can create an oversupply. Maximums should be based on a study of parking demands for different areas of the city because one size won't fit all areas. Maximums need to be combined with other transit solutions (see above). It is also possible to have both minimums and maximums. The effects of minimums, maximums or both need further study and firm support for the numbers or formula selected.⁵

⁴ *21st Century Land Development Code*. By Robert H. Freilich and S. Mark White, American Planning Association, Chicago, IL., 2008.

⁵ I believe that for the long term we need parking maximums and should consider having both minimums and maximums, especially for large residential projects. I don't think we yet have the evidence to support this belief.