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Via Facsimile to 202-727-6072

Anthony Hood, Chairman
Zoning Commission
District of Columbia Office of Zoning
441 - 4th St., N.W., Suite 210-S
Washington, DC 20001

RECEIVED
D.C. OFFICE OF ZONING
2008 AUG 11 AM 9:44

Re: Zoning Commission Case 08-06-2
Proposed Amendments to Parking Regulations 11 DCMR

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia

Opposition to Office of Planning Proposal

CASE NO. 08-06-2
EXHIBIT NO. 45

Dear Mr. Hood:

To the extent that the Office of Planning proposes to allow the construction of new buildings in the Friendship Heights area with a reduced number of parking spaces, the proposal is ill-conceived. It will cause considerable hardship to existing residents by clogging their streets with parked vehicles, will reduce rather than improve the quality of life for residents who live and work in the new properties, and will result in a financial windfall for developers at the expense of our city's citizens.

I was born in the District and have lived in my current home for 37 years. I have seen houses remodeled and rebuilt and families come, move on, and be replaced by younger families.

It is unrealistic to think that reducing available parking will discourage motor vehicle ownership. Automobiles are needed for many things, including very importantly, getting to retail establishments that are inadequate in the District. Rapidly escalating D.C. real estate taxes resulting from escalating land value have forced many business establishments out of the District. You can look any new area of development in the City, except maybe Shaw, and you will see endless apartment houses with little or no retail amenities. I have to go to Rockville for a large shopping center, home repair supplies, or an office supply or drug store that has enough floor space to have a good selection of merchandise. I need a car to go to these places, as does everyone else who lives in my neighborhood.

The Metro is not an adequate substitute for a car. It does not go close enough to suburban retail locations. It runs so infrequently on weekends that it takes far too long to get anywhere. It is so jammed and crowded during rush hour that riding is exceptionally slow and unpleasant. Adding thousands of new riders will break the system down more than it is already broken. I rode the Metro to work since the day it opened -- for 32 years -- and finally had to stop this year when commuting rose to 50 minutes each way, standing up on trains, compared to 20 minutes driving -- a loss of an hour a day.

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While the purchase of motor vehicles has slowed with the quick rise in fuel prices, that trend will reverse when manufacturers produce more fuel-efficient products like the Prius and Smart Car. The automobile manufacturing business is too big to die. They will adapt and keep their products moving.

So what will happen if parking is restricted?

1. Our residential streets will become off-site parking lots for apartment dwellers, and residents will often not be able to park in front of their homes. A similar problem has existed for many year near Georgetown Day High School. The lesson taught there should be remembered.
2. The increased traffic will endanger pedestrians, including children.
3. Air pollution will be increased as drivers cruise the streets looking for ever-scarcer parking spaces.
4. The shortage of parking spaces will bid up the price, so that developers will profit by being able spend less to build parking and then charge premium prices for what they do build, enriching the developers at the expense of residents and making it more difficult to attract moderate-income residents to the District. Indeed, even if some housing units are reserved for low-income families, those families may not be able to afford to live in a low-priced unit if they have to pay a high market price for parking, defeating the income-diversity objective of reserving low-income units.
5. The quality of life for District residents, both in and out of the new buildings, will be reduced.

When you "plan" for development, you have to plan for all aspects of development, not just a narrow goal. If you are trying to influence human behavior, you must take into account fundamental human nature and the driving forces of our economy, none of which you can change with regulations that do not include strong economic incentives that are not within the Commission's authority. Reducing parking spaces will not stop people from owning automobiles and will not discourage the manufacture and sale of automobiles. The real life result will be to drive up the price of scarce parking spaces, resulting in a windfall for developers and increased burdens on our city's residents whose interests your agency is supposed to serve.

Please do not create a situation that will look like an accomplishment on paper now but will burden our residents with long-term harmful consequences that will take huge amounts of money and/or decades of time to undo. Metro as currently built is not a realistic answer.

Sincerely,



Peter Tannenwald