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August 25, 2008

Chairman Anthony Hood
DC Zoning Commission
441 4th Street, N.W., Suite 220-South
Washington, D.C. 20001
Via Fax 202-727-6072

RE: In SUPPORT of Case No. 08-06-2 (Comprehensive Zoning Regulations Rewrite: Parking)

Dear Chairman Hood & members of the Zoning Commission:

My support for the proposed parking regulations comes from two vantage points: (1) as a resident of the District of Columbia, and (2) as a professional city planner working across the country on urban development and transportation issues.

My wife and I moved to Washington, DC two years ago from San Francisco. Neither of us has owned a car for nearly 10 years, and one of our primary reasons for moving to Washington, DC was that we could meet all of our daily needs without needing to own a car. We sought out our house primarily because there is no off-street parking space we would need to pay for despite not owning a car. These locations are all too rare within the city. Parking is often built into the cost of a housing unit as a hidden cost that residents are forced to bear. In San Francisco we had lived in an apartment building with 2 parking spaces for 9 units where the cost of one of those spaces was north of \$150 per month.

We do, however, appreciate the convenience of car ownership. We have been members of carsharing organizations for more than 5 years and are currently Zipcar members here in DC. There are Zipcars within easy walking distance from our house, both on street and off-street. The convenience offered by Zipcar supports our lifestyle. When parked off-street, these cars pay market rates for parking, something each member shares in the cost of car usage.

As a DC resident, I support the proposed parking regulations because I do not feel that my transportation decisions should be mandated. The current regulation scheme does not allow the housing market to respond to the needs of DC residents, and instead forces all to pay the costs.

As a professional, I work across the country on the relationship between transportation and land use, helping communities create livable, walkable communities with a range of transportation options. Professionally, I see that off-street parking provisions impacts three key areas of creating these communities: (1) it makes housing less affordable, (2) it impacts economic development, and (3) it increases our contribution to global climate change.

Off-street parking reduces housing affordability because minimums artificially require developers to provide off-street spaces, even if residents don't want them. Each additional parking space per residential unit can reduce the number of units on a typical lot by 20% and increases the cost of a typical unit by 20%. As of the 2000 US Census, there were just fewer than 200,000 households in the District of Columbia that owned zero or one cars, representing 80.4

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percent of all households. By way of contrast, in Tulsa, Oklahoma 79 percent of households had either 1 or 2 cars available in the 2000 Census. Why should we require new development in DC reflect the demographics of Tulsa?

Economically, not only does unnecessary parking decrease the buying power of DC residents, who disproportionately support the local economy through our spending power, but livable, walkable communities have been shown to have real economic value. CEOs for Cities conducted an analysis of the "green dividend" Portland, Oregon has received from supporting walkability and alternative transportation. Fewer automobile trips and increased walking, biking, and transit use means that around \$800 million/year is staying within the Portland economy, rather than going to gas or cars. ("Portland's Green Dividend", July, 2007) Most of the cost of both gas and cars is immediately exported from DC, just as it is in Portland. Oversupplying off-street parking encourages people to drive more, while eliminating minimum parking requirements contributes to the creation of a walkable city by creating pedestrian-friendly streets without constant curb cuts. Reducing the amount of off-street parking also makes feasible the levels of density that support neighborhood retail that underpins the city's economy.

Environmentally, the transportation sector emits one-third of CO₂ emissions nationally (and is the fastest growing sector). Because free and available parking encourages increased driving, the current regulatory framework encourages an increase in greenhouse gas emissions locally. This is in addition to the well-documented air quality and public health impacts of additional automobile traffic on local residents.

Cities around the country are starting to implement parking maximums. San Francisco has had wide success with neighborhood plans dating back to 2006 and is now expanding the areas covered by parking maximums. Seattle, Portland, and towns in the Boston region, have all eliminated parking minimums and/or established maximum ratios.

As a professional, I support the proposed parking regulations because I know that the impacts of providing too much parking affect all aspects of city vitality and efficiency. The current regulations do not respond to the demographics of the city, impacting housing affordability, the environment, and the economy.

The proposed parking regulations are sound policy for the future growth and health of the district and the region and I urge their adoption by the commission.

Sincerely,



Sam Zimbabwe
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Washington, DC 20003