

SEPTEMBER 25, 2015

“Comments on ZRR Case No. 08-06A -Proposed Title 11 DCMR – Zoning”

I do not understand the Planning Office’s effort to undermine single family neighborhoods. From the expansion of commercial ventures OP would allow in residential areas, to the number of customers per hour (8!), to the effect their parking reductions would have on households near or far from metro, it all boils down to an attack on single family homes.

Rather than embracing our calm, orderly and peaceful neighborhoods, these planners want to jumble up residential with commercial, taking away the tranquility and civility of quiet neighborhoods. There are many, many quiet neighborhoods in our city, in every quadrant, where people treasure the peace and quiet their homes and neighborhoods give them.

We work so darned hard to find a moment of peace in modern life. A tranquil home, friendship with neighbors and the absence of commercial activity brings us each back to our senses. We don’t have to keep our guard up, we don’t have to fend off unwanted advances or commercial messages, we don’t have to fuss with strangers who commandeer scarce parking. We can relax and restore energy for a moment before we launch the next day, yet again, into the fray of commercial city life.

Why in the world would OP destroy what exists? I can only surmise OP has some aspirations to turn Washington into New York. Visitors from the boroughs of New York would kill to live here. One neighbor’s son took a 60% pay cut from his New York job just so he could bring his young family to this area. I didn’t tell him about the zoning proposals. I didn’t have the heart.

Has anyone even thought about all the ancillary activity that commerce in residential areas would cause? Beyond the ridiculous 8-customers-per-hour, to delivery trucks, to parking battles, to confusion about who-lives-here-and-who-doesn’t caused by accessory dwellings (AirBnB anyone? VRBO?). I ask you: who’s going to let their kids out to play?

If OP doesn’t care about families, I hope the Zoning Commission does. The family is the central organizing structure of society. OP’s proposed changes would make family life difficult and stressful. We count on adults, - parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles – to set aside their own needs to

attend to the young and vulnerable. What OP wants to do (through parking restrictions, accessory dwelling turnover, commercial activities) would throw out what tenuous control we adults create for our kids. Children need safe, secure, stable environments where they grow, learn, thrive. Don't create environments where kids to be cautious, fearful and isolated.

Preserve our ability to use our cars, and to park our cars. Subway and buses are just not up to the job: our subways are crammed full; our buses follow narrow routes that are just not extensive enough to satisfy the needs of residents. Even now, Metro is trying to reduce routes. If Metro's subway officials ever get their finances in order and can maintain their equipment and schedules to even their own original standards of excellence, then we can talk again about what parking changes might be worthwhile.

Don't let these OP proposals destroy what Washington DC now offers. Their proposals benefit only developers, not voters or residents. I plead with you, the Zoning Commission, to apply some wisdom in your deliberations by these steps:

- a) allow each ANC to decide what commercial activities are appropriate in their jurisdiction.
- b) stop the attack on parking. Our current rules should be retained. We are already well below the requirements of surrounding jurisdictions.
- c) keep the businesses in the commercial areas or allow some in residential by special permission not by right. Retain distinctions between residential and commercial areas.
- d) for certain businesses like day care, which require lots of activity in early AM and late afternoon, set standards to limit impact on street traffic and parking, perhaps limiting the number of pick-ups and drop-offs per hour.
- e) limit accessory dwelling rentals by allowing neighbors the opportunity to testify when the building is first being built not when rental is imminent.
- f) if you allow commercial activities in accessory structures in residential areas, do not make it by right and limit commercial activities to professional services (accountant, architect, graphic design) and prevent services that require several deliveries or pickups, noise, smells or disruption to neighborhood security and tranquility.

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