

Written Testimony for the D.C. Zoning Commission by

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RE: ZC Case No.08-06A, Subtitles C & I, D, E: Parking; Accessory Apartments; Corner Stores

6 November 2013 et seq.

Since 1967 as a DC resident, practicing architect, teacher and journalist, I have witnessed first-hand, spoken publicly and frequently written about why and how Washington, DC, has changed. Evolving forces - economic, socio-demographic, cultural, technological, environmental, regulatory - have positively as well as negatively shaped the city we know today. These forces will continue to evolve and affect the future city. Among the most potent forces is the zoning code governing to a large extent the form and function of the District.

Regrettably DC's zoning too often has been a negative rather than a positive force, obstructing rather than enabling justifiable land use and architectural progress. The city has changed in many ways, but zoning regulations enacted decades ago have not kept pace. Today's voluminous, overly complex zoning code has long needed updating and streamlining to reflect 21st century urban conditions and needs; to more proactively enhance urban livability; and to be more user-friendly.

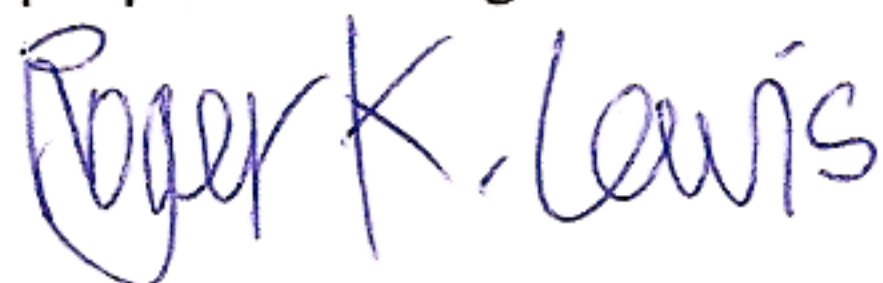
Given the above, I very much appreciate the long overdue, multi-year effort by the DC Office of Planning in critically analyzing DC's zoning regulations in light of current and prospective realities. And I endorse OP's well reasoned and reasonable zoning proposals now being considered by the DC Zoning Commission.

I especially support three important zoning revisions based on contemporary data and city characteristics: 1) reducing parking requirements in certain areas served by transit, and for new commercial and residential projects where current parking requirements are excessive; 2) allowing accessory apartments in low-density residential house zones, if specified criteria and conditions are met; and 3) allowing modestly sized, convenience-style corner stores in rowhouse and multi-family residential zones, if specified criteria and conditions are met.

Reducing parking requirements reflects a fundamental behavioral shift on the part of Washingtonians: increasing use of transportation modes other than private cars. Ever more younger and older Washingtonians, including commuters, are traveling by subway, bus, carpool, bike, taxi, short-term rental car and walking. Telecommuting is on the rise. And people will walk even more in a more walkable Washington. In the future, we will need and own fewer cars, will drive them less often and will spend less time looking for a space to park them.

Facilitating prudent development of accessory apartments and corner stores is a "no-brainer." Contrary to what some naysayers allege, accessory apartments as envisioned for DC serve a worthy social and economic purpose. They augment affordable housing opportunities, help multi-generational families, add value to residential real estate and do not threaten neighborhoods. Likewise corner stores as envisioned will yield commercial and financial benefits, plus jobs, without jeopardizing the communities served by the stores.

All the above changes will make the nation's capital a better place to live and work, a better place to invest and do business, and a more attractive place to look at. Accordingly I urge the Zoning Commission to act favorably on OP's proposed zoning revisions.



Roger K. Lewis