

Testimony by Alan Budde, Mount Pleasant resident

Before the D.C. Zoning Commission

RE: ZC No. 08-06A, Subtitle D – Accessory apartments in low-density residential areas and corner stores

Wednesday, November 6, 2013

Thank you for the opportunity to speak here tonight. My name is Alan Budde, I live in Mount Pleasant and I am here to testify regarding my support for zoning code updates to allow accessory dwellings in parts of the city.

I believe that allowing accessory apartments would be a great thing for homeowners, renters, and the community in general. This proposed zoning code change is one way, amidst many others to tackle poverty, by increasing the supply of modest housing, that a person, a couple, a parent and child or a family can live in while maintaining a decent standard of living. There are many new housing units being built all over the city, but affordable housing by and large is not something you can easily build new. Much affordable housing consists of slightly older houses and apartments in less central parts of the city. Existing basements, garages, and carriage houses, to me, represent a great opportunity to better use space and create new affordable housing without significant financial cost to the city.

I first moved to the District in 2000 to attend college and decided afterward that I wanted to stay. I have always found living in the city to be challenging on a daily basis by confronting me with people who have different life experiences, by showing me the interesting and important work others are doing, and by encouraging me to step out of my own bubble from time to time. Increasingly, I have found, as have many others, it can be challenging just to make ends. For some, that might mean cutting back on eating out during the week, others though risk not being able to come up with the rent at the end of the month. I read earlier this year that the region has surpassed San Jose as the most expensive rental market in the country based on median rents according to a Census Bureau report. There is an affordable housing crisis in this city and we need to do something about it.

In addition to giving less well-off people more options, accessory apartments allow older homeowners or those that might have seen their income reduced or family size shrink, ways to better utilize existing spaces. Why should we force the older couple who wants to age in place on a fixed income to either sell their home or constantly worry about keeping up with their bills? Why not give younger people a better shot at owning property in the first place by

allowing them to rent out part of a home? As someone who lives in a basement apartment, I find that my neighborhood is better for bringing together people from many different walks of life, ages, incomes, races, and perspectives. I urge people who oppose the idea to consider whether they would feel the same way if it were their sons and daughters were the ones who were having a hard time finding a decent place to live near their school or place of employment. At the end of the day, for me, allowing individual homeowners to make reasonable choices about their own property cuts to the root of what it means to be an American, embracing opportunities, diversity, and making space for everyone.

Thank you for your time.