

Testimony by Gerald Fittipaldi, Petworth resident

Before the D.C. Zoning Commission

RE: ZC Case No. 08-06A, Subtitle D – Accessory Apts & Corner Stores in old R-3

November 6, 2013

My name is Gerald Fittipaldi. I live in Petworth, just bordering Columbia Heights.

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak this evening. I am here to voice my support for the proposal to allow corner stores in residential districts. I grew up in a suburban neighborhood that lacked corner stores. One of the things I like best about living in D.C. is having the option to walk only a couple minutes to a corner store. The items that I most commonly purchase at my local corner store include milk, orange juice, bananas, apples and avocados. I also indulge myself with the occasionally candy and ice cream. Corner stores bail me and my housemates out if we need to pick up paper towels or toilet paper in a pinch.

I am fortunate enough to live half a mile from large grocery stores such as Giant and Target. Being so close allows me to walk or bike to get groceries. However, I can only carry so much on foot. A gallon of milk is quite heavy. The combination of a corner store and larger grocery stores allows me to purchase heavy items, like milk, a hop-skip-and-a-jump away, while walking a little further for all the other essentials. Take the corner store out of the equation, and walking to get my groceries suddenly becomes a little less appealing. The threshold for getting around by car and adding to congestion is not far off.

I live in a notably high density area. However, even residents living in lower density row house neighborhoods, specifically the old R-3 zones, can benefit greatly by having corner stores. Corner stores lead to fewer trips to distant grocery stores. If a resident forgets to pick up an item, he or she can step out of the house and return with the item within five minutes. No need to get in a car and deal with the crowds at the big box stores.

In addition to the convenience that corner stores provide, they also bolster a sense of community. I know the workers at my local corner store. Every visit I make ends with a smile if not a short conversation. The community benefits also extend outside the doors of the corner store. The streets are more lively and feel much safer, particularly at night, as the customers walk along the sidewalks. One last benefit of corner stores is the independence they afford for both seniors and children. Some seniors don't drive. Having a local corner store gives them the ability to fill some of their needs without feeling like they are being a burden on younger family members. Parents can send their children out for an errand when the corner store is close by and does not involve crossing any major streets.

I am glad to see D.C.'s progressive approach to updating zoning codes for corner stores. Thank you for listening to my story.