

John Wheeler
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November 11, 2013

Zoning Commission for the District of Columbia
441 4th St., NW
Washington, DC 20001

Re: ZC No. 08-06A, Subtitle C—Chapter 21-Off-Street Parking Requirements

Dear Members of the Zoning Commission:

I am writing in favor of lowering the off-street parking minimum requirements. Since I moved to the District of Columbia, many changes have occurred that make driving less of a necessity. Metro has been developed. The Bus system has been greatly improved. And more recently we've seen the great success of car sharing and bike sharing. Plus businesses, such as grocery stores, have moved back into our neighborhoods. When I first heard testimony before you about reducing parking requirements, most members of the Zoning Commission expressed disbelief that people could live in DC without a car. I think you now understand that people can live in DC without a car and without hardship.

I expect that you will be hearing people testify about how important parking is to elderly people. As an elderly person, I believe that is not true. My opinion is supported by statistics--it's the young and the old who are doing without cars; to some extent for different reasons. If people live long enough, they most likely will lose their ability to drive long before they lose their ability to walk. Therefore, walkability and liveability are essential to continuing to live in my neighborhood. Tenleytown, where I live, is very walkable (e.g., three grocery stores, Metro and many bus routes are within easy walking distances), but there is very little housing in the neighborhood that is liveable for people with difficulty climbing stairs. I have first-hand experience of what I've just said.

Several years ago I lost my ability to walk and lost the use of one arm. It turns out that it was a neurological result of Lyme Disease. I spent five weeks at the National Rehabilitation Center and several months with physical therapists learning to walk again. I realized how necessary it will become to live without having to deal with steps. My house doesn't come close to meeting that requirement (e.g., bedrooms and bathroom on top level, kitchen, dining, and living on lower level). Unfortunately, at this time, if I want to stay in my neighborhood, I have very few choices because Tenleytown has very few multi-family residences. I can go a mile north to Friendship in Maryland and have an incredibly large number of choices, but not in Tenleytown where I want to continue to live. I think that reducing the minimum parking requirements is one of the things that you can do to make DC a better place for people to live from birth to death and not force people to leave to find housing on one living level that is affordable. If multi-family housing can be built with less parking, it will significantly reduce the cost of that housing. For neighborhoods such as mine with easy access to transit and accessible stores, that definitely should be done.

Sincerely,

John H. Wheeler

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