

## Testimony to the Zoning Commission for the District of Columbia

*Relating to Title 11, Zoning Regulations - Comprehensive Text Revisions Section C: General Procedures (includes parking, bike parking, loading)*

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Differences in parking requirements across the US. Image from Graphing Parking.

Good evening and thank you for the opportunity to present my testimony. My name is Matt Malinowski and I live in the Truxton Circle neighborhood in Northwest DC. I would like to speak in favor of the proposed revisions to the zoning regulations, and in particular in favor of eliminating parking minimums downtown and minimizing parking requirements elsewhere, especially near frequent transit.

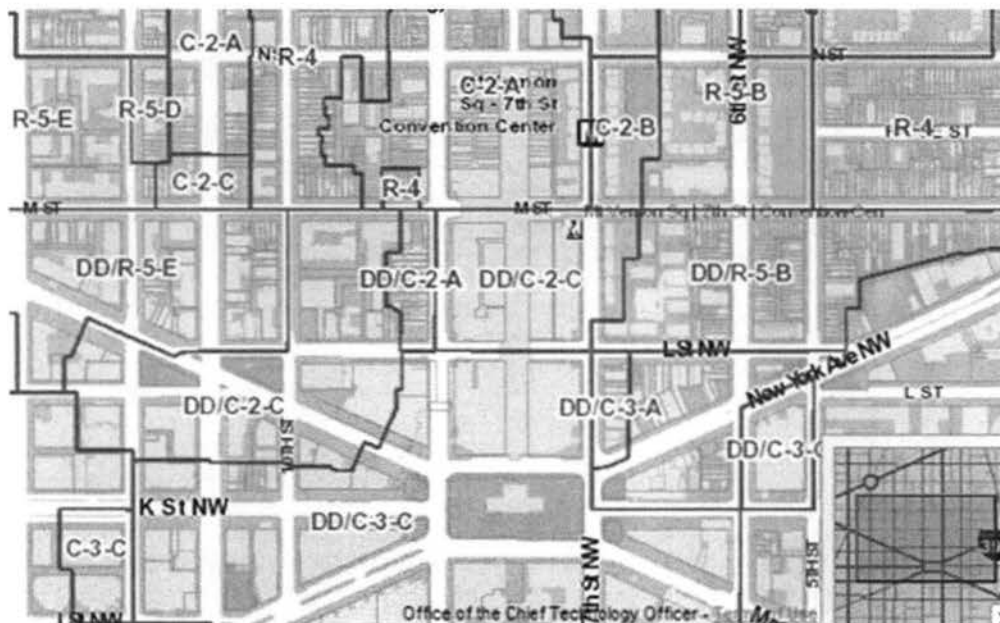
The current off-street parking requirements for general office uses most of downtown, including the C-2-B, C-2-C, C-3-B, C-3-C, and C-4 zones for buildings on lots greater than 10,000 square feet, is 1 parking space for every 1,800 square feet of floor space in excess of 2,000 square feet. This rule seems very precise, and I am sure that there are parties here tonight who would like to maintain it. But is it right?

Many cities across the United States either have or have had parking minimums, so there seems to be a precedent for maintaining them. But what is interesting is that each city has a different minimum, with Baltimore requiring more and Philadelphia less.

How can each city be right? Or are all the cities, and the idea of parking minimums with it, wrong?

One explanation for the variation is that each city is built differently, and the urban form of each city demands different amounts of parking. Sure enough, even within DC, the minimum parking requirements vary by zone, with less-dense commercial zones like C-1, C-2-A, and C-3-A requiring 1 parking space for every 600 square feet of floor space in excess of 2,000 square feet.

In effect, crossing the street from one zone to the other has tripled the parking requirement. But has the urban fabric changed so much that three times as many people will now drive to work?

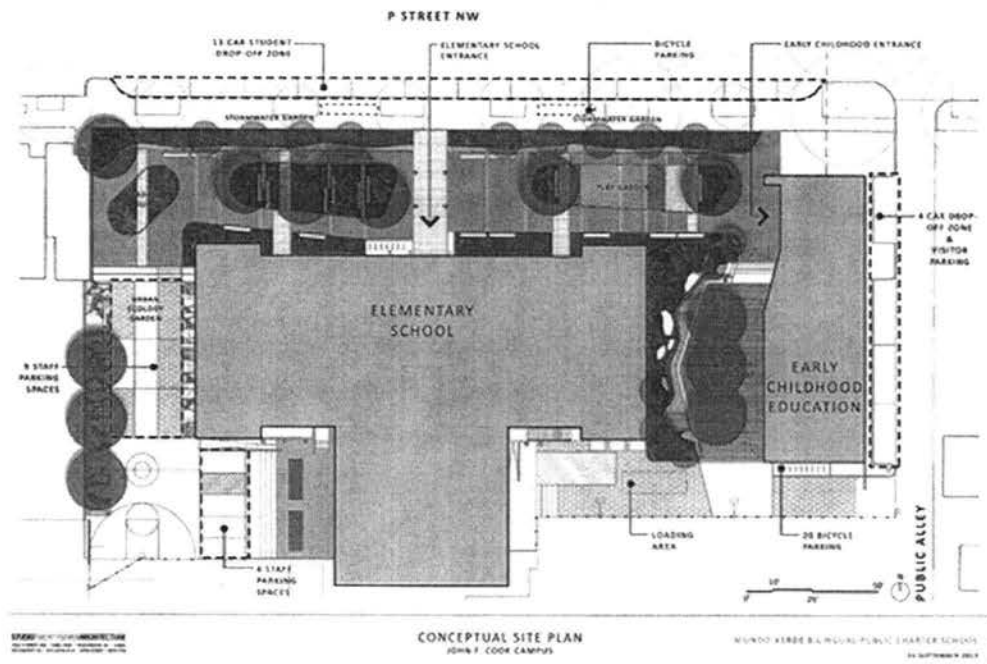


M Street NW forms the boundary between C-2-A and C-2-C zones, drastically altering the parking requirements.

Image from the DC Zoning Map.

The current system breaks down not just at the boundaries, but also within zones. In Truxton Circle, there are three schools within a block of each other: the newly rebuilt Dunbar High School, one charter school, and another charter school in planning. According to neighbors, cars are overflowing the parking lot at Dunbar, while the existing Community Academy Public Charter School (CAPCS) has recently built a parking lot for 140 cars overnight, and apparently without any permits.

Meanwhile, the forthcoming Mundo Verde Public Charter School is seeking a variance to give up 36 of its 53 required parking spaces and build gardens in their place. Staff are expected to ride bikes, so there are 20 bike parking spots instead, and the Metro is a 10-minute walk away.



Mundo Verde conceptual site plan showing proposed gardens. Currently, the entire lot is covered by parking.

So even for the same uses in the same location, one-size-fits-all parking requirements do not apply. Rather than develop even finer zone boundaries or zone definitions (an overlay specific to green charter schools?), how about a simpler solution: eliminate or minimize parking requirements wherever possible. That means downtown, in other higher-density zones, and near high-frequency transit.

Rather than perpetuating the current set of arbitrary requirements based on unknowable ratios of drivers to occupants, please focus on what we do know: land in DC is expensive and driving is unsustainable and causes congestion. Eliminating or minimizing parking requirements allows for the market to provide parking to those who truly need it, while making it clear that free parking is not a right, and that DC values its residents and natural environment over its cars.