

**DC Zoning Commission Hearing
Zoning Case No. 08-06A, Subtitle C, Chapter 19**

November 12, 2013
One Judiciary Square
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Testimony in support for reducing off-street parking minimums

Greetings Chairman Hood and Zoning Commissioners,

I'm Neha Bhatt and I'm here to express my very strong support for reducing the minimum off-street parking required for new developments in the District.

Close to half a decade ago, I served on the citizen task force that investigated this question and looked at what other cities like ours were doing and assessing the results they were seeing. After months of detailed deliberation, the task force advised the Office of Planning that it was time to remove mandated parking requirements and let developers and consumer demand determine the level of need and the best ways to accommodate it. Many of the task force members, myself included, testified before this commission a few years ago relating our findings and urging the removal of minimum parking requirements.

The proposal before you today aims to lower the parking minimum standards, as opposed to doing away with them entirely. After serving on the task force, my view is we were ready five years ago to eliminate the requirements altogether, and today, we are even better positioned to do so. Our City has become a national leader in diversifying its transportation system. (Just look at the number of competing car sharing companies doing business these days.) Even cities less ready than us – like Cincinnati who just passed their parking ordinance this summer – are letting go of the old-school parking mandate system.

Regardless, this proposal to lower parking requirements represents a very positive step in the right direction. This is the right thing to do, and it is long overdue. We have to accommodate our growth with a balanced transportation strategy in mind. We know also, minimum parking mandates inflate the cost of housing – how else are developers going to recoup the cost of a \$30,000 parking spot? The seniors moving back to age in place and possibly give up driving someday soon, the millennials choosing to own fewer private cars; those families making less than the near-six figures that is the median income in this area – these are all beneficiaries of this important policy change.

I'm very glad this commission is leading this important public discussion, and that we are finally at the precipice of dealing with the parking-mandate-albatross that's been weighing down our land development. It took considerable public debate to get to this point and I heartily urge the commission to codify this proposal. It reflects a critical evolutionary

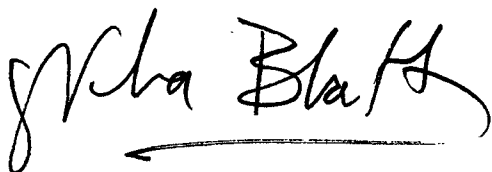
moment in DC's development.

It may be obvious but perhaps worth noting that reducing parking requirements is not the same as not allowing parking. New developments will continue to include parking. But with this improved code, it will be responsive to what will work best. Please approve this code amendment, the sooner the better.

Before I finish, I do want to make a quick to say I strongly support the new corner store zoning regulations as well. I live in Ward 7, east of the Anacostia River in the Capital View neighborhood. I've been there over 9 years and sadly, shopping choices continue to be few and far in between. My closest grocery store is three Metro stops plus a 15 minute away from my home. The corner stores in my neighborhood serve a critical function. They sell basic goods like milk and bread. They are not always the fanciest places to shop, but they provide some access to basic goods.

I think the City would do well to be even more encouraging and accommodating of corner stores east of the river – where it is still such a food and shopping desert. If we lost our few and couldn't replace them, well, it would be a lot harder on our neighborhoods. Please think about daily life in these neighborhoods when you consider those regulations. Loss of corner stores would be tough for East of the River.

Thanks for the opportunity to weigh in.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Cha Blah". The signature is written in a cursive, fluid style. Below the signature, there is a horizontal line with an arrow pointing to the left.