

Testimony of Liz Borkowski, MPH
2750 14th St. NW, #401, WDC 20009
DC Zoning Commission Hearing
Support for Case No. 08-06A Subtitle C – Reduced Parking Requirements
November 12, 2013

Thank you for the opportunity to testify tonight in favor of updating parking requirements as part of the District's Zoning Code updates. My name is Liz Borkowski, and I have been a non-car-owning resident of the District for the past 14 years. I support the Zoning Commission's proposals to remove and relax parking minimums because doing so will help make housing more affordable and contribute to creation of the "well-balanced and multi-modal transportation system" called for in the DC Comprehensive Plan.

As a resident of Columbia Heights and, before that, Adams Morgan, I appreciate the many investments DC has made in bus service, bike lines, and pedestrian infrastructure. I appreciate being able to walk to stores, restaurants, the gym, and my friends' homes, and this walkability is one of the main reasons my husband and I chose to buy a home in the District.

In purchasing a home, however, we experienced higher costs that I believe were due to parking minimums that are no longer appropriate for DC. We purchased our condo from the building's developer three years after its construction. We did not want to purchase a parking spot in the building's underground garage because we do not own a car and prefer to spend our money on other priorities. However, the developer had evidently been unable to sell many of the building's parking spaces, and made our purchase of the unit contingent on us buying two parking spaces at a total cost of \$30,000. In the end, we were able purchase one space rather than two, but we are still paying for a space that we use only infrequently.

My husband and I are fortunate that we can afford to pay for a parking space we rarely use, but many are not so fortunate. Requiring the construction of parking

spaces in excess of those residents want and can pay for increases housing costs unnecessarily. As housing becomes less affordable, lower-income residents struggle to stay in the city. Removing and relaxing parking minimums can help this become a welcoming city for people of all income levels.

I understand that many people need to drive cars, and I might myself fall into that category one day. But the District has for too long privileged driving above other transportation modes, and relaxing parking minimums is an important step in ongoing efforts to improve the balance.

As a public-health researcher, I have watched evidence accumulate regarding the environmental and health benefits of human-powered and public transportation – benefits for individuals and for communities as a whole. When parking spots are readily available, people who could easily use other modes are more likely to default to driving. Removing parking minimums will allow those who prefer to use alternative transportation modes the opportunity to use them and not pay for parking. As more people walk, bike, and take transit, we can invest more in improving these transportation modes.

In short, removing and reducing parking minimums will help achieve a healthier and more equitable future for the District of Columbia. I support this update to the Zoning Code.