

Testimony by Aimee Custis, 1727 Massachusetts Ave NW #402
RE: ZC No. 08-06A, Subtitle C - Chapter 19 - Off-street parking requirements
November 12, 2013

Good evening. My name is Aimee Custis and I work for the Coalition for Smarter Growth, but this testimony is my own and not on behalf of the organization.

I live in Dupont Circle at 1727 Massachusetts Avenue NW. I am here to express my strong support for lowering off-street parking requirements, especially in areas with good transit.

I've lived in the District for 5 years, and hope to make it my lifelong home. I have never owned a car. My neighborhood, Dupont Circle, has so much to offer: two grocery stores, my favorite bookstore, a locally-owned drugstore, my favorite cafe, shopping, two theaters, dentist's office, and so much more... all within a 5 minute walk of my front door. I'm seconds away from several major bus routes, and can easily walk to Metro's Red, Orange, and Blue lines.

My apartment building on Massachusetts Avenue is a mix of younger people and older, longtime residents who've lived in the building for decades - and as our building is an older one, it wasn't built with much parking. But that's okay - because guess what? Most people in my building that I've met don't own a car. Some, like the very nice old lady on the first floor who asks my boyfriend to help her change her light bulbs, have lived in our building since before our current zoning code was written, which brought with it the requirement that new apartments build parking.

At some point, I'd like to invest even more in our neighborhood, and find a home to buy -- probably a condo. I live in one of DC's nicest neighborhoods, so I know that's not feasible for me for a long time, if ever. But I hope I can find a neighborhood like Dupont -- with its sidewalks, shops, community festivals, and more -- before prices skyrocket out of my reach across the city.

Affordability - that's the #1 reason I support the zoning update. With housing prices soaring across the District, we can't afford to build parking we don't need. It will price out longtime residents like my neighbor, and leave people like me, who want to contribute to our city's long-term success, on the outside looking in.

I want a city where I have the flexibility to purchase a house or condo without having to purchase a parking spot - just because the builder had to build it. I want a city where we have the amount of parking we need, rather than having too much parking, which encourages more driving, which encourages more parking.

While some people will always want or need to drive - and should always be able to - *encouraging* car ownership through policies like parking minimums has tipped the scales unfairly toward car ownership. Now, for the first time in a generation, many people like me - and 38% of District households - are choosing an alternative to a personal automobile, and our land use and parking policies shouldn't punish us for our choices.

I support the Office of Planning's proposal for removing parking minimums in neighborhoods like mine with great transit options. In fact, I wish the Office of Planning hadn't scrapped its original proposal for parking *maximums* in neighborhoods like mine. The District should be doing more, not watering down, policies to keep housing here affordable.

Thank you for your time and your commitment to a better city for all of us.