

ward3vision

smart growth • vibrant neighborhoods

Testimony on Zoning Case No. 08-06A, Subtitle C: General Provisions

Chairman Hood and members of the commission, thank you for the opportunity to testify tonight.

I'm Steve Seelig and I am testifying on behalf of Ward 3 Vision, a grassroots campaign that supports the addition of vibrancy and opportunity to Ward 3. Ward 3 Vision strives to maintain the high quality of life that currently exists while encouraging improvement along major transportation corridors.

Through community engagement, we encourage sustainable urbanism by supporting affordable housing, multi-modal transportation options, appropriate mixed-use development and walkable streetscapes that enhance everyone's quality of life. Our goal is to improve upon what is great about Ward 3 - we don't want to lose that.

Commissioner Hood mentioned last week he was concerned that he was not hearing from the "silent majority." I am glad to report that Ward 3 Vision does represent the "silent majority." Ward 3 Vision was created out of frustration that voices in support of sustainable growth and good urbanism were not being heard in issues related to planning, development and transportation in the ward over the past 20 years. We looked around the region and the nation and saw other jurisdictions embracing Smart Growth and saw not just environmentally more responsible growth but more livable and walkable neighborhoods grow up. In our own backyard, we heard only opposition. Unless of course we spoke to our neighbors who in general are OK with the direction the District has taken. We would submit that the alphabet soup of neighborhood organizations you repeatedly hear from in opposition to development in Ward 3 are nothing more than the vocal minority.

- Our members are baby boomers, and gen Xers. Oh, we have one millennial. And we have one member of the Greatest Generation.
- Our members own cars and bicycles and walk, cycle, run, ride buses and the Metro.
- We have been active in previous cases before the Zoning Commission including the Wisconsin Avenue Giant, Jemal's redevelopment of Babe's and the 5220 Wisconsin Avenue Akridge case. We believe our involvement has helped to craft better places for our Ward, and are proud to have been involved in the process.
- We have participated in the revisions to the Comprehensive Plan and the Zoning Code

We believe the "silent majority" of residents desire a responsible, environmentally resilient solution to address the issues facing the District over the long-term. But we don't believe that singling out any particular generation as representing a particular point of view is fair, and hope that the Commission remove from this discussion those "old versus young," "me versus them" statements about this process.

Yes, I read the Greater Greater Washington blog, from which I learn a great deal of information about our city, but I also read information from conservative sources like the Heritage foundation. I am a member of WABA and am also a member of triple A. I own 4 bicycles and 2 cars. I ride my bike to work some days and I drive others. I'm a baby boomer and have a 4 year old child, so I have millennial friends. So which group am I a member of? Let's move beyond these labels, for the sake of the City's future.

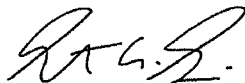
On the zoning rewrite itself, it is time to move forward with this process, it has been too many years and hundreds of public meetings and there has been plenty of time for all voices to be heard. It is time to plan for the future of the District and no longer live in the 1950s past.

On the parking minimum issue, Ward 3 Vision supports lower or no parking minimums. The proposal from the Office of Planning begins the process of providing more flexibility and living choice in how much parking must be built, although we would have preferred the original iteration of the proposal with no minimums.

- The opponents of this measure often complain that lowering minimums is a one-size-fits-all proposal, however, requiring parking minimums is much more one-size-fits all. Lowering these requirements allows developers to look at the demographics, transportation options, and needs to better decide how much parking is appropriate. That is far from one-size-fits-all.
- Opponents also worry about on-street parking. In some neighborhoods this is a valid concern, but it is not a concern in most of Ward 3 where parking is plentiful and the RPP structure is very generous in providing almost free on-street parking.
- Even where parking is difficult to find, building more private garages will never solve that problem, and it will likely exacerbate traffic problems as more cars drive on already-crowded streets.
- On-street parking management should and can be addressed by DDOT. New performance parking measures are already in place near the ballpark in Ward 6. Using more meters and increasing on-street parking prices helps steer visitors into existing lots will help alleviate some of the problem. Parking management should be dealt with separately from the zoning discussion.
- Lowering parking minimums goes a long way toward improving housing affordability. For each parking place, it costs a developer \$30,000-50,000 per spot. This cost is routinely passed on not just to those who take advantage of the parking, but also to car-free residents who will end up paying a higher rent.
- Higher parking minimums forces car-free residents to continue to subsidize the desire of others to own a car. And it hampers developers from deciding on who their clientele might be, especially if they hope to cater to those who do not own cars.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak tonight.

Sincerely,



Steve Seelig,
On Behalf of Ward 3 Vision