

Case #ZC 08-06A

Testimony of Melissa Kunstadter

Parking and the ZRR Subtitle C, Zoning Commission hearing
November 19, 2013

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the DC Zoning Rewrite. I am here this evening to speak against the changes proposed by the Office of Planning to the city's zoning regulations as they pertain to parking requirements.

My name is Melissa Kunstadter; I am an officer of the Tenleytown Neighbors Association but I am testifying as an individual today.

My family and I have lived in Tenleytown for 25 years, a block and a half east of Wisconsin Avenue. Our neighborhood is quiet, tree-lined, and all of my neighbors own at least one vehicle: the young couple next door with twin boys, the single professional across the street who works in Silver Spring, the elderly lady whose husband has Alzheimer's, the young guy who's into cars, the family with a disabled child - and others. Most of them park on the street because they have no garages. As of now we can usually find a parking spot fairly close to our house. But we do compete with shoppers and restaurant-goers and others who are attracted to the commerce on nearby Wisconsin Avenue.

Should parking requirements be diminished or removed due to our being defined as part of a major transit corridor, such would bring hardship to the families on our block; convenient parking is a necessary benefit to having invested in a home in our area.

There are those who complain about the traffic in Tenleytown and claim that reducing or removing the number of parking spaces required per residential and commercial units would discourage the use of cars on our streets and thus open up Wisconsin Avenue to freer-flowing traffic. May I mention that the length of Wisconsin Avenue from Sidwell Friends to Friendship Heights has almost a dozen traffic lights in almost as many blocks - to serve schools, businesses, American University, the post office, fire department, banks, food stores, public library, residential/diplomatic/office buildings - and more. Sufficient parking is needed to serve local residents in addition to those coming from other areas.

Much previous testimony on this subject has claimed that if developers do not have to allow for parking requirements in the construction of new buildings, that the prices they charge would therefore be less and be "more affordable," and have announced that this ensuing free-for-all of parking overflow onto the side streets would be leaving parking "to the market."

While not having to allow for parking requirements when constructing new buildings may indeed reduce costs to a developer, that doesn't necessarily mean that he will pass

those savings on to the first purchasers, or renters, of those units. Surely he will charge what the market will bear. A developer is only part of "the market." The market is supply and demand. The greater Washington DC area has experienced a substantial increase in new households in the past decade, due to government spending and subsequent growth in jobs. More home-seekers are going to drive up prices of any housing, old and new, whether in a sought after established neighborhood such as Tenleytown, or in other "rediscovered" neighborhoods, regardless of parking construction costs. Should government spending decrease and jobs disappear, that too will be reflected in the housing market and prices.

And finally - the Red Line has its issues - planned repair work is extensive and projected to take the next several years to complete. To put yet more people on a transit system that's close to capacity is not doing any commuter a favor. More bikes on the roads simply slow down buses as well as car/truck traffic. Should there continue to be troubles with mass transit, why not make sure we acknowledge cars as vehicles of transit and give them appropriate space on our city streets.

A closing statistic: 79% of Ward 3 households own one or more cars. The current zoning requirements for parking are already far below the statistics on car ownership in DC.

Current parking requirements should therefore be retained or increased.

Thank you.

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