

Testimony before the DC Zoning Commission
Regarding: Zoning Commission Case No. 08-06A Subtitle C (Parking)
By Jalal (Jay) Greene
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Good evening and thank you for the opportunity to present by testimony,

My name is Jay Greene, I am a resident of Ward 5. I have been involved with building and financing affordable housing for the past 15 years. I am a former director of housing and community development in both DC and Prince George's County; I have worked for a national not-for profit developer of affordable housing focusing on the development of affordable housing in the mid-Atlantic region; I have worked for private developers whose mission was the development and financing of affordable housing in DC and I am currently the Chief of the Housing Division for the Department of Housing and Community Affairs in Montgomery County.

I support reducing parking requirements for the development of affordable housing. Various studies show a strong correlation between household income and vehicle ownership. Residents with lower incomes, enabling them to qualify for affordable housing, typically have lower automobile ownership rates than the population at large and therefore have less need for parking.

If the affordable housing is located near public transportation or is in walking distance of a commercial center that will further reduce the demand for parking. It is becoming increasingly more effective to locate affordable housing near mass transportation in order to reduce both housing and transportation costs to low income working families.

Parking is an expensive component to an affordable housing project, for surface parking the costs can range from \$2,000 - \$5,000 per space, for one level of underground parking the range can be \$25,000 to \$40,000 and for a second level of underground parking the costs can be \$45,000 and greater.

At a time when our community is struggling to meet the demand for affordable housing, minimum parking requirements that do not reflect actual need can increase the housing costs or be the determining factor in making an affordable housing project infeasible because the amount of gap financing required i.e. low interest rate loan from local government is too great.

As an example, I am currently working on an affordable housing project within 4 blocks of a metro station. The project is for 149 units of which 139 units are affordable including 15 units affordable to people at 30% of area median income (AMI) i.e. very low income families. The initial design concept for the project included approximately 30 underground parking spaces at a cost of approximately \$1.2 - \$1.5 million. The final design of the project now includes a total 7 surface parking spaces including 2 handicap

spaces and no underground parking. The major factors that lead to the decision to decrease parking and eliminate the underground parking where:

- 1) Marketing studies that were completed for the project determined there were a sufficient number of low and moderate income families in the market area that did not need parking
- 2) Feedback from focus groups of potential renters indicating they would live in the project without parking or lease parking from underutilized nearby facilities
- 3) Informal parking utilization studies of existing facilities indicated excess parking capacity in the immediate area
- 4) The underground parking would have required increased gap financing required for the project but was not available from local government and potentially threatening the viability of the project.

In conclusion, too many of our low and moderate income families are paying more than 30% of their household income for housing costs and up to 50% of household income for housing and transportation costs. By reducing parking requirements for affordable housing and locating more affordable housing in transit oriented areas, we address both issues. It is important that we determine parking needs for affordable housing based on many factors as outlined above in order to ensure that we spent our limited public resources to get the desired outcomes.