

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION 3B
GLOVER PARK AND CATHEDRAL HEIGHTS



Testimony of Brian A. Cohen
On behalf of Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner 3B,
Representing Glover Park and Cathedral Heights
Zoning Commission Hearing
November 19, 2013

On behalf of Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3B, representing the communities of Glover Park and Cathedral Heights in Northwest DC, I urge you to approve the draft revisions to the zoning code.

ANC 3B has been monitoring the ongoing discussion over these revisions, and has provided numerous opportunities for our constituents to learn about and comment on the proposed changes to the zoning code.

We hosted a representative from the Office of Planning at a public meeting in December 2012. In February 2013, the five ANC 3B commissioners unanimously supported a resolution in support of the zoning rewrite. I have attached a copy of this resolution to my testimony.

Each meeting was announced in advance; each was heavily publicized; and each meeting provided ample opportunity for commissioners and the public to ask questions, learn about the proposed changes, and provide input.

The ANC 3B position, memorialized in our February 2013 resolution, has not changed: we continue to support the rewrite. The five-year process has allowed for ample community input and education; representatives from the Office of Planning and Office of Zoning have visited communities, heard from residents, and addressed concerns. It is time to move forward to update the District's out-of-date zoning code.

I would like to address three controversial areas under discussion in the current draft. While I am aware that the focus of tonight's agenda is parking, I hope you will briefly indulge me to discuss two additional zoning code issues that will affect ANC 3B.

The updated draft makes reasonable allowances for local corner stores in rowhouse residential areas, including Glover Park. These stores will provide community residents with the ability to walk a short distance to local, neighborhood-friendly stores; they will enrich our neighborhood fabric and provide easy access to daily necessities. We support these changes to the zoning code.

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CASE NO.08-06A
EXHIBIT NO.395

The updated draft proposal offers improved options for homeowners to create accessory dwelling units. The neighborhoods positively affected by these proposed changes include Glover Park and Cathedral Heights. These units create more affordable housing, increase the value of existing housing stock, allow for neighborhood population growth without modifying existing building density, and can provide an income source to allow seniors to age in place in their own homes.

The proposal also contains reasonable limits on accessory dwelling to prevent overcrowding of neighborhoods or accessory dwellings that are not consistent with the fabric of traditional residential neighborhoods.

We therefore support changes to the zoning code that would make it easier to create accessory dwelling units.

The updated draft proposal contains limited changes to current mandated parking minimums.

Current parking minimums undermine market forces, increase housing costs, reduce incentives to use mass transit, and damage the historic and walkable form of many neighborhoods. The changes proposed in the draft zoning code - which are limited to downtown and areas well served by transit, would mitigate these problems.

They would allow room for automobiles, but create new incentives and opportunities for environmentally- and neighborhood-friendly transportation options: walking, car- and bike-sharing, and mass transit.

These changes would apply to Wisconsin Ave. in Glover Park and Cathedral Heights, which is served by numerous bus lines. We support the proposed changes to the zoning code with regard to parking minimums.

Commissioners, I know that you are under heavy pressure to maintain the status quo, and I hope you will resist that pressure. The proposed changes are not radical; they are long overdue modifications to an out-of-date, 1950's zoning vision.

The proposed zoning changes will make our neighborhoods and the District of Columbia as a whole a better place to live, work, and play in the years ahead. On behalf of ANC 3B, I hope you will approve these changes in an expeditious fashion.

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ANC 3B Resolution Supporting Proposed Rewrite of DC Zoning Code

Whereas, the District's current zoning code, written in 1958, predates Metro and the modern mass DC bus system, and is not consistent with past population shifts or expected trends in population growth in Glover Park, Cathedral Heights, and the District of Columbia as a whole;

Whereas, 50 years of accumulated amendments have made the code complicated and hard to navigate and understand;

Whereas the Office of Planning proposed and sought public comment on a December 2012 update to the generations-old zoning code;

Whereas, the updated proposal makes reasonable allowances for local corner stores in rowhouse residential areas such as Glover Park so that the ability to walk a short distance to local, neighborhood-friendly stores enriches our neighborhood fabric and provides easy access to daily necessities;

Whereas the December 2012 draft of the zoning update contains reasonable limits on these corner stores to limit trash, noise, or other problems;

Whereas the updated proposal offers improved options for homeowners to create an accessory dwelling unit, creating more affordable housing, increasing the value of existing housing stock, allowing for neighborhood population growth without modifying existing building density, and allowing seniors to age in place in their own homes;

Whereas the December 2012 draft of the zoning update contains reasonable limits on such accessory dwelling to prevent overcrowding of neighborhoods or accessory dwellings that are not consistent with the fabric of traditional residential neighborhoods;

Whereas, the updated proposal modifies required parking minimums that undermine market forces, increase housing costs, reduce incentives to use mass transit, and damage the historic and walkable form of many neighborhoods;

Whereas the December 2012 draft of the zoning update requires set-asides for car sharing, updates bike parking requirements, and does not modify parking minimums for large apartment buildings outside of transit zones so that the proposal will not adversely impact the availability of on-street parking;

Whereas, a simplified zoning code will offer clear rules that can be followed by the average resident and enable the zoning code to be transparent and accessible to all;

Therefore, be it resolved that the ANC supports the December 2012 Office of Planning zoning code draft that will let Glover Park, Cathedral Heights, and the District of Columbia grow in a sustainable way while meeting the needs of current and future residents of all ages;

Now, therefore be it further resolved that the ANC 3B asks the Zoning Commission to adopt the December 2012 draft zoning code proposal.

The resolution was APPROVED by a vote of 5-0 at the February 21, 2013 ANC 3B meeting.



Brian A. Cohen, Chairman



Joe Fighlio, Secretary