

November 19, 2013

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Chairman Anthony Hood
D.C. Zoning Commission
One Judiciary Square
441 4th Street NW, Suite 200S
Washington, DC 20001

RE: Zoning Case No. 08-06A, Subtitle C, Chapter 19
Testimony in support of off-street parking requirements

Chairman Hood and the D.C. Zoning Commission:

My name is Chris Furlong and I work for CityInterests, a local multifamily and hospitality developer. My testimony today is my own and does not reflect the views of my firm or our Partners.

I am testifying tonight in **favor** of lowering the off-street parking minimum requirements. As a lifelong resident of Arlington County who attended high school in the District and now proudly calls D.C. my home, I have been afforded a unique perspective on the evolution of the city and its transformation from a sleepy government town to the bustling, lively, diverse community it has grown to become. D.C. has not always maintained a sense of place like its suburban neighbors have enjoyed, but changing demographics, evidenced in the city skyline and accelerating commercial development, have begun to create the District that our progressive Office of Planning envisions.

A new era demands new thinking, and the Office of Planning has done an excellent job responding to the current and future needs of the City's residents. No City ever grew or progressed and improved without visionary leaders and strong resolute decisions. The conservative voices of the past threaten to derail over 6 years of hard work on the Zoning Rewrite by the Planning Commission and City Council. If the plan were flawed, and it certainly has its weaknesses, I would not be taking my personal time to sit in front of you today. I believe in this City, its leaders, and the structures of government that promise to continue the path of progress.

I'd like to focus a few minutes on the economic realities of the Rewrite, which, as an Economics major from Williams College with a market research and analytics background now focusing on underwriting real estate developments, I find central to this discussion and even more important than the social goals which the City is attempting to achieve. Without sound financial policies, the social goals will bankrupt the city and lead it back to the reality of post-riot DC. A couple thoughts:

1. While the rapid growth that D.C. experienced during the financial crisis will not continue as other cities' employment centers recover and the federal government slows its often overly rampant growth rate, D.C. will continue to expand due to its knowledge economy and expanding technology, real estate, finance, culinary, and entrepreneurial industries.

2. Parking is a vitally important issue. Cars are not going anywhere, and no one is waging a 'war on cars' as AAA's John Townsend would like you to believe. Organizations such as the Coalition for Smarter Growth, under the leadership of my colleagues Cheryl Cort and Stewart Schwartz, are visionaries in the field of multi-modal transit development that aim to serve the greatest public good while undoubtedly expanding the economies and industries of our great City and it's suburban neighbors.
3. Parking is not a public good, and it demands investment. Adam Smith's invisible hand has proven incredibly effective at allocating resources efficiently, and such is the case with parking. Developers, including my firm, CityInterests, and other local and national firms including JBG, EYA, Jair Lynch, AvalonBay, Hines, and many others you are undoubtedly familiar with, all understand the demographics of real estate development and the demands of parking better than perhaps anyone besides Jeff Tumlin and Sam Zimbabwe. If the market demands parking, it will be built. But who among us can predict the future? A couple of recent projects on H St NE delivered more parking than was proven ultimately necessary for the respective developments, even following extensive market studies, planning sessions with the Zoning Commission and Office of Planning, and perhaps most importantly meetings and forums with local residents. Allowing the market to dictate the level of parking, particularly within areas where transit options are abundant, is far more logical and preferable to mandating a level that presumes that OP will know what parking demand will be like in 2, 5 or 10 years. This Rewrite is about the future, and planning for it appropriately.
4. The parking debate will not end tonight, and we still have a long way to go. When making your decision with regards to the Zoning Rewrite's parking reforms, please think long and hard about where our City is heading. If you believe that my generation will revert to the same preferences as our parents' who fled to suburban schools and lifestyles, then, by all means, reduce funding for public transit, cut infrastructure finance, and expand local highway systems.

If, however, you believe, as many are slowly realizing, that the next generation of District residents will continue to operate cars but with far less reliance than previous generations with our continually expanding public transit system and increased options for transportation, education, and employment with increased technological reliance, then please do not delay this process further. I have confidence, Chairman Hood, Vice Chairman Cohen, and Commissioners Miller, Turnbull, and May, that you will recommend this Zoning Rewrite legislation on behalf of District Citizens who believe in its future as much as you do.

Thank you for your time tonight, and for the long hours you dedicate to crafting policy on behalf of this wonderful City. Now, more importantly, let's get the 'Skins back to D.C. where they belong!