

Testimony of Larry Werner on 11/4/13 before the Zoning Commission

With regard to the Office of Planning's Proposed Zoning Rewrite

Lewis Carroll would be proud of the Office of Planning's proposal.

'Sentence first--verdict afterwards'" said the Queen to Alice in Wonderland.

'Stuff and nonsense!' said Alice loudly.

'Hold your tongue!' said the Queen, turning purple.

'I won't!' said Alice.

'Off with her head!' said the Queen.

The modern version is: "Our mind's made up; don't confuse us with the facts; we'll do everything we can to make sure we don't have to hear."

Isn't that really what the Office of Planning has done with the Zoning Rewrite?

I believe you owe it to our Great City to send this back to OP for a complete and total revision.

If Lewis Carroll wasn't OP's principal author how else would one explain the illogic and selectivity of what OP has produced?

Let's look at just a few of OP's fundamental premises and problems.

OP head Harriet Tregoning says that the existing zoning code is unchanged from 1958. Others say there have been more than 1,000 revisions. Which is accurate?

OP says 'we need to make these changes so there will be affordable housing.' But where in these pages is there any requirement that a developer or anyone else provide affordable housing – or even a definition of what that is?

OP says 'people living in transit rich zones don't need cars, so we shouldn't require developers or others to provide off-street parking.' But Residential Parking Permits are overwhelmingly and almost exclusively issued in transit zones, and OP's premise is playing out so well in real life that we now have more and more special parking zones reserved 16 hours a day, seven days a week for the vehicles OP says the residents don't have and won't need.

How many DC residents have had any input into this process? I suggest it's well under one (1) percent – and the majority of those few come from people attending "push" information sessions

held during the December holiday season with people standing in line for the opportunity to make 30 second or one minute comments or ask questions.

And what happened to the original task forces? I'm unaware of any meetings in years, or even any record of what recommendations were made or followed.

A senior OP executive told at least one group of DC residents that ADU's would NOT increase density in their neighborhoods. We can allow up to five strangers per property, each with a car and each able to have at least one visitor with a car, but density won't increase?

OP's head, Harriet Tregoning, claims the number of cars (selectively not counting SUV's or trucks) in our City is declining. Selectively true but DMV statistics show the number of vehicles is substantially increasing. And that's without accounting for all the vehicles here on reciprocity or in the City during the day for employment or providing services. Is selectively choosing a subset of vehicles needing streets and parking really valid evidence to support a conclusion?

OP's population growth projections assume in part that singles currently in the City will have children and stay in the City with their families. Of course there's no similar allowance in OP's plans when those who don't currently have vehicles buy them to transport their children.

Nor does OP seemingly address how these families will live in the sub-1000 square foot units that seem to constitute the vast majority of new housing in Washington. And I hope they're not suggesting that these growing families will live in ADU's without changing density, impacting schools or otherwise changing the character of neighborhoods.

I still wonder whether if a bus route today doesn't have enough ridership to include in an OP Transit Zone today but ridership passes the threshold next year, will that automatically rezone a large part of Washington? What if WMATA changes its definition? Does the Circulator count?

Perhaps the Commission could turn to its staff for assistance. But how can I or any member of the public have any confidence that your staff – the same Office of Planning that drafted the proposed document in this way -- will give you unbiased analysis?

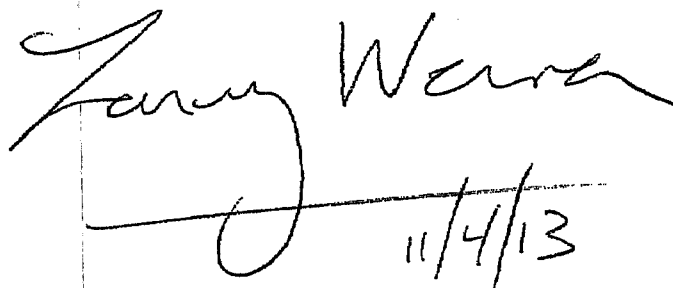
Alice could wake up from her fantasy dream. Please don't let OP's imagined Wonderland become a nightmare for Our City.

Send this proposal back to the Office of Planning with instructions to take into account public concerns about these and hundreds of other issues and questions in open and public meetings. Then and only then should you entertain the possibility of blanket zoning changes anywhere nearly as drastic as OP's proposal – and then only as a complete and total revision of this proposal.

Larry Werner

4700 – 29th Place NW

Washington DC 20008



11/4/13