

My name is Donna Barbisch. I am the President of Capitol Hill Village, an organization of neighbors established in 2006 to develop Quality Life on Capitol Hill for the Long Term. We currently have more than 350 members, mostly senior citizens, and several hundred volunteers. Our four employees help us provide a wide range of services to our members, including medical advocacy, drivers, educational programs related to health and housing, and social activities. We generally own our rowhouses, and many of us have lived in them for decades. Our annual membership fee is \$500 for an individual and \$800 for a household. We also offer a full membership to low-income persons that requires them to pay only a minimal amount of dues. In addition to dues, we support our activities through fund-raising events, grants, and donations. We are the largest and one of the oldest Villages in the nation and are at the forefront of developing the Village concept in the US.

We have followed the zoning rewrite process for the past two years, and I testified at an earlier hearing about our concerns. We believe that the current version of the rewrite is better than the earlier draft, but we continue to have concerns. As seniors, we have needs that are different from those of young people, who are the focus of presentations about the zoning rewrite. While young adults are the fastest growing sector of DC residents, seniors are the next. The representation of seniors will continue to grow as the general population ages and older persons continue the trend of moving into the city. As DC works to become an Age Friendly City (<http://dcoa.dc.gov/page/age-friendly-dc-initiative>), this emphasis on young people seems somewhat misplaced.

One of our concerns with the zoning rewrite is with transportation. Most of us can no longer ride bicycles and should probably not try, but the rewrite puts an emphasis of this means of transportation. Also, for many of us, walking more than a few blocks to a Metrorail station or a bus stop is beyond what we can do. However, we need reliable transportation that can get us where we need to go. So, many of us need our cars, and cars require parking spaces. In sections of the city such as Capitol Hill, on-street parking has become very difficult to find in recent years. For this reason, it is important that parking minimums be maintained in all new residential construction, both low-density and high-density dwellings.

The issue of parking becomes particularly important to Capitol Hill Village in NoMa and the southeast and southwest areas of DC near the ballpark. As you know, these areas have been combined with downtown in the rewrite to be zones in which new residential construction will have no minimum parking requirements. However, they are fundamentally different from downtown, as they are just now developing and currently do not have a large stock of underground parking. We are interested in these areas because, as we age, we find that taking care of our historic rowhouses and climbing their steps becomes more and more difficult. So, we are increasingly considering moving to one-level living. NoMa and the ballpark area are prime areas of interest for us, as they offer a variety of types of one-level living and are near the Hill and the life we have known for many years. To allow large housing developments with no parking is to say that seniors should stay out. As an example of seniors' interests in these areas, the Housing Committee of Capitol Hill Village recently held an educational seminar on the financial and other aspects of selling a rowhouse and moving to an apartment or condo. The seminar was well-attended and a number of couples and individuals indicated that they are seriously considering such moves. This trend will only continue as the population of Capitol Hill and DC ages. Many of us have

spent our entire adult lives in DC, and we want to remain in the city. It is important, therefore, that the city shows us that they continue to want us. Parking minimums are one indication of this support to us.

Another area of concern in the zoning rewrite is alley dwellings. As you know, Ward 6 has the largest number of properties that might be appropriate for alley dwellings of any ward in the city, and many of these are on Capitol Hill. Under certain circumstances, carriage houses and garages would be eligible for conversion to dwelling units. While the rewrite presentations claim that these units would provide low-cost housing for seniors, many of them will contain interior stairs that we do not want. Also, it is likely that these dwellings would not include any parking. In fact, some spaces that are currently used for parking might be lost in the conversion. So, there will be more pressure on street parking. Finally, there are currently a substantial number of illegal alley dwellings on Capitol Hill. One of our members counts five such units in her square alone, all belonging to rowhouses that also contain at least two other units. While this is not an issue for the zoning rewrite, it is clear that encouraging additional alley dwellings will only exacerbate this problem. As there has been no enforcement activity related to these illegal units in the past, there is no reason to believe there will be any in the future. Thus, illegal units will proliferate and housing stock for seniors will not expand.

“Smart Growth” is a catchy phrase, but it must not be used as a means to eliminate seniors from our neighborhoods. For those of us who live on Capitol Hill and those who belong to Capitol Hill Village, our quality of life is extremely important. Parking minimums and no expansion of alley dwellings would clearly have a positive impact on our lives. Thank you for listening to our concerns.

Donna F Bulisch