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November 24, 2013

Anthony Hood
Chair, DC Zoning Commission
One Judiciary Square
441 4th Street NW, Suite 200 South
Washington, DC 20001

**Re: Zoning Case No. 08-06A; Subtitle C – Vehicle parking requirements and Subtitle I
Downtown Parking Minimums**

Dear Chairman Hood and the D.C. Zoning Commission:

Please accept these comments in support of the Office of Planning's proposed changes to vehicle parking requirements and downtown parking minimums within the DC Zoning Code. As a District resident for over five years living in the transit rich Connecticut Avenue corridor adjacent to the Van Ness – UDC Metrorail station I strongly support efforts to update the District's Zoning Code to better reflect 21st century transportation goals and aspirations for our growing city.

The District's current 1950s era zoning code, even with some amendments, reflects a highly dated view of how cities should be constructed and function when compared with contemporary, mainstream planning today. Where the old code assumes that the vast preponderance of trips would be made by individuals in single occupant vehicles requiring large quantities of parking spaces, we now know that mass transportation (bus and rail) is playing an increasingly larger role in meeting the transportation needs of District residents and suburban commuters.

Similarly, in the 1950s and early 1960s the zoning code emphasized a strict segregation of uses calling for housing, retail and commercial activity and downtown cores in separate physical areas which almost required residents to use motorized transportation to travel among the zones. This zoning principle is also no longer followed in mainstream planning. Today we encourage more mixed use development, walkable neighborhoods similar to those built before the 1950s zoning codes were instituted and increased use of mass transportation to connect various activity centers.

The proposed changes to the zoning code with respect to lowering the amount of parking required for new development adjacent to transit-rich corridors and to abolish parking minimums in the downtown core will provide additional incentives for the continued transformation of the District of Columbia into a more sustainable, mixed-use urban city. Developers will have the opportunity to build and offer a larger variety of housing options, cheaper units without parking for those who have no need to own a car as well as more expensive units with parking for that segment of the housing market that wishes to own a car. With the opportunity to build less parking developers can devote more of their property to housing units, commercial and/or retail space, property amenities or even additional open space. Fewer parking spaces will also encourage people to own fewer cars and use more transit with the corresponding increase in transit demand leading to more transit service. That is a win-win for everyone.

Eliminating parking minimums downtown will emphasize the District's commitment to commuter rail, subway, bus and light-rail transit as the preferred means of egress to the District. It will allow the market to determine the amount of parking required in new developments and to also price that parking appropriately rather than have preset minimums based on general but subjective standards. Eliminating parking minimums will encourage developers to think harder about how their projects fit into the regional public transportation network and build buildings more focused on transit users rather than drivers. Less downtown parking will increase ridership on regional transit systems and strengthen their financial condition resulting in less need for public operating subsidies.

The proposed parking changes in the zoning code will still provide ample parking for those who must or choose to drive to work, shop or recreate. Yes, in some instances they may have to pay a more market rate for the parking, but they will also have more options and less traffic on the roads to compensate them for any additional cost.

I urge the Commission to approve the proposed parking updates to the zoning code. The issues have been more than adequately discussed, vetted and considered by all reasonably committed parties. It is time to bring the District's Zoning Code into the early 21st century.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Strauss". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Steve" and last name "Strauss" clearly distinguishable.

Steve Strauss