

Testimony on Zoning Case No 08-06A, Subtitle C: General Provisions

My name is Kathleen Quinn and I am a resident of Friendship Heights.

I am also the parent of a pair of young 5th generation Washingtonians and during the 100 years my family has lived in DC the city has changed a lot – both for better and for worse.

My great grandmother owned and lived for many decades in a rowhouse at 5th and H Streets NW that exists today in what is now known as Chinatown and on the ground floor of that rowhouse she ran for many decades what today we would refer to as a cornerstore and as I understand it some in the city think such cornerstores are a bad idea.

Some folks in my community also believe that allowing people to rent out their basements or to convert their garages to additional apartments is a bad idea but over the century that my family has been living in Washington DC both practices have been common and both 100 years ago and 50 years ago most households had many more members than they do today.

But housing in DC historically has been less expensive than it is today so allowing people to rent out their basements or to convert their garages to apartments will enable more people to afford to live in DC and more importantly allow more people to age in place by generating revenue from homes that cost much more to maintain relative to their incomes than they did when they were younger.

On the question of parking requirements in new buildings the city is full of older buildings and homes that don't meet today's requirements – in fact my family lives on a 95 year old block of rowhouses that were built without off street parking and there are numerous older multi unit buildings of various sizes throughout the city that were built without parking.

But a progressive zoning code should discourage cars and driving not encourage it by requiring more parking spaces.

My concern as a resident who lives on a narrow side street already burdened with too much traffic is how will we accommodate all of these extra cars when they are not parked?

Most high demand neighborhoods don't have enough on street parking spaces on the street today – it sounds logical to say we need off street spaces in those neighborhoods for new residents except their cars won't stay parked all the time and their drivers will likely follow the pattern of existing drivers and seek out under priced on-street parking when they leave their new buildings.

And which congested neighborhoods have space or the tolerance for more traffic? It is idealistic to plan for housing cars but stupid to simultaneously have no plan for how you will move them and I for one don't want any more traffic on my street which is what we will get if we keep encouraging more cars by requiring more parking.

Most apartment and condo buildings as well as commercial buildings already have more than adequate amounts of parking and tenants who desire buildings with parking will still have the opportunity to seek out those buildings.

But the District has a lot of car free households today and also many households like ours that are car light and encouraging future development that is slanted towards people and not cars will make for a better city.

During the span of time my family has lived in the District we have gone from a city where corner stores were common, where more people and generations lived in each housing unit and a city where many buildings and homes were built without off street parking and there is no reason to believe that a city that is becoming more transit and pedestrian oriented can't thrive with a zoning code that is rooted in both the past and the future while leaving behind the mistakes of the 1950's so I support and urge you to support the proposed changes to corner stores, accessory apartments and parking minimums as currently proposed by the Office of Planning.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak tonight and coming to our community to hear from us – although the zoning re-write has been covered in the Northwest Current and extensively on-line this is my first contribution to the process and I hope it does not come too late.

Kathleen Quinn
5322 41st Street NW
Washington DC 20015