

Testimony in SUPPORT of Case 08-06A, by
Jessica Zdeb, 1317 Shepherd St NW, Unit D, Washington, DC 20011,
before the DC Zoning Commission
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My name is Jessica Zdeb, and I live in Ward 4 on the 1300 block of Shepherd Street. I am here tonight to speak in support of the updates to DC's Zoning Code, especially reforms to parking requirements for residential development. I believe that these reforms can help make DC a more environmentally sustainable and affordable city which are two aspects of this city that I value highly.

Like over a third of DC residents, I don't own a car. The myriad transportation options available to me – 50 buses within a half block, 70 buses and bike share in a 5-minute walk, Metrorail in 10 – mean that I can easily make this choice. The carbon footprint of my transportation is tiny and helps in a small way reach DC's goal of making ours the healthiest, greenest and most livable city in the US by 2032. Lowering parking requirements in these areas rich in transportation options can ease the way for more development that lets people go car-free.

I make the choice not to have a car, but for many of my fellow residents, it's not a choice. A car is simply unaffordable. With the high cost of housing here, adding the burden of auto payments is too much. Lowering the requirements for parking can help lower the cost of housing by making developments pencil out more easily. More units on the same amount of land mean lower prices for each one. I want this city to stay diverse, and providing more housing opportunities for all income levels will help with that.

Even though I don't own a car, I do own a parking space. My husband and I are not the only owners in our 8-unit building in that situation. Our neighbor also owns a space, but no car. We rent our spaces to Zipcar. Three other unit owners do not have cars. And yet we know the neighborhood was in an uproar about our building's development because of parking. Five spaces were never going to be enough for eight units even though that's one more than required under current zoning. And yet they are more than enough.

I heard a developer's presentation at my local ANC meeting about how he needed a parking variance for a building nearly within sight of a Metrorail station and next to bus stops. His company proposed to have residents use the under-utilized garage at a nearby building of theirs. It's eminently sensible. And under the new zoning regulations, this kind of parking share agreement will not require an onerous variance process. I'm happy to hear about smart developers like this who will forgo car parking and will add in-unit bike parking.

The current zoning code will not lead to development that supports a green, diverse city, and that's what I want to see. I hope you will bring this long process of the zoning update to a close by supporting these changes which will help make and keep DC the modern, world-class city it's meant to be.