

JAMES A. FELDMAN
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Washington, D.C. 20015-2532
February 20, 2014

Anthony Hood
Chairman
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 (parking minimums);
Subtitle D – Accessory apartments and corner store

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

I was born in Washington and have lived here most of my life. I have seen decades of development and change in the city, since the 1950s, and I think it is time for our zoning laws to be altered to correct some of the mistakes made in the past. I therefore strongly support zoning changes that reduce parking minimum requirements and that would allow for additional accessory apartments and corner stores in the residential areas of our city.

I am fortunate to live in a neighborhood where I can easily walk to grocery stores, restaurants, a drug store, a movie theater, and a public library. These are the features that in the twenty-first century make living in a city a convenient, enjoyable, and rewarding experience. With respect to parking minimums, there is no reason to require buildings to have more parking than the market dictates. Doing so just encourages an oversupply of parking spaces, which leads to lower-than-market prices for such spaces and an incentive for residents to purchase cars. While the city should not unduly discourage auto ownership, it certainly should not *encourage* and provide incentives for car ownership and use; the parking minimums are a remnant of a long-discredited and totally mistaken idea that a modern city can be built around car ownership and use by everyone. Also, parking minimums drive up the cost of housing, while an important goal of the zoning code should be to *reduce* the cost of housing. If people want to own cars, they should pay the costs of them, just as they pay for other items. This is not an anti-car position; it is a pro-community position that will strengthen our communities for all residents.

I also strongly believe that the new zoning code should include more options for accessory dwellings. These options can help lower the cost of housing, both for homeowners who may be pressed by high tax rates and other costs and for renters, who would have new opportunities to live in the city. Some have argued that this would increase density, but I do not think this problem is a real one. Washington has far fewer residents than it did 50 or 60 years ago, and the city can easily accommodate modestly increased density. Indeed, modestly higher density is likely to lead to an increasingly vibrant and interesting city life and increased support of local businesses. There is

page two Feb. 20, 2014

also a property-rights issue: I think there is no sound basis to interfere with a homeowner's right to use his/her own property to house a renter, friend, or family member.

Finally, I feel particularly strongly about the need for changing the zoning code to encourage corner stores. I have lived in other cities (Philadelphia, New York), in neighborhoods where corner stores are common. They add enormously to the convenience of city life, enabling residents to purchase a few items without getting into a car to drive to a large supermarket. In Chevy Chase, for example, the Broad Branch Market at Broad Branch Road and Northampton Street has long been a center of the neighborhood and a great amenity. Other neighborhoods, too, should have the chance to have that kind of a market.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James A. Feldman", written in a cursive style.

James A. Feldman