

Zoning Update Public Hearing

Testimony of Sebastien Guilnard

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I generally support the zoning update, proposed by the Office of Planing.

On Accessory dwelling units, the District needs to look at our alleys in a different way. Instead of seeing them as the back of the house, the utility area, or a forgotten space, we can look at sculpting this into a living space. Most architecture looks away from alleys making them often dark, ugly, foreboding spaces that may encourage crime, dumping, and other illegal activities I have always been disappointed while experiencing the typical DC alley.

To allow accessory apartment or dwellings in alleys would allow for more interesting, safer, beautiful spaces that could only bring value to DC on many levels. What if owners spent as much time planting, fixing, and beautifying our alleys as they do on the front of their homes? Imagine how nice it would be to allow the alleys to be an extension of our streets, more people living, walking, playing, and making them safer spaces.

I was told that the Fire Marshall was concerned that alleys smaller than 30 feet should not be allowed to have accessory apartments. This is absurd. If fire is a concern, then perhaps the zoning code could put requirements that all buildings in alleys should be of non-combustible type materials, greatly reducing the possibility of an out of control fire.

Finally, having separate rentable spaces in a larger residential single family home gives owners greater flexibility in living their lives, and remaining in their communities. Owners that fall on hard times can rent out a space, Elderly parents, Adult children, family, or friends can move in. The space could even be used by domestic help for children, elder care, or other. All this while maintaining a personal space for the owner's family and possibly bringing in a little revenue.

On the parking issue, again, we need to look outside the box and find new options for transportation. I support the change to remove restrictions on parking, however, I would like to see some provision for large residential and commercial buildings, wether they provide vehicular parking or not, to provide secure bicycle parking on premises.

I also noticed that there was no provisions for motorcycles and scooters. Motorcycles take up a considerably smaller footprint in cities, and can be parked in very little space. In a dense city environment, they are perfect to quickly get around and while carrying a passenger. All new construction should be required to provide a good amount of dedicated motorcycle parking.