

Testimony before the DC Zoning Commission

In Support of Zoning Case No 08-06A, Subtitles D, E and C

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Good evening. Last year I attended the very informative zoning update briefing at Tubman Elementary School that the DC Office of Planning conducted. I appreciated that you have so many staff on hand to answer our questions and conduct a robust Q & A. Thank you for the opportunity to testify tonight. This is the first time I've ever testified before the Zoning Commission, but I thought it was important that you hear from people like me. I am here to express my support for the reforms to the zoning code that will reinforce what I love best about my adopted hometown – its walkability, diversity and vibrancy.

I'm specifically here to express my support for reductions to parking minimums which were designed for a different kind of place than the city we have today. I'm a transplant from California where I drove my car for everything. Sometimes I drove hundreds of miles a day. When I moved to DC, I was a little leery about leaving my car behind but had heard that you didn't need to have a car to get around in DC. I discovered not only did I not need a car to get around, but I was able to experience the joys of the living neighborhood and city. I walk to grocery shop and restaurants, I ride Metro or the bus to work. I'm amazed that I have so many transportation choices that many other places can't offer.

This is not only my experience but that of my friends and neighbors. DC offers so many different kinds of people the choice not to own a car and enjoy the benefits of walking and riding transit. When I ride the bus or metro or walk around my neighborhood I am amazed at the great diversity in age that I experience- walkable neighborhoods make for better places to age in place and offer accessibility at all stages of life whether in a stroller or using a cane.

For some people this is by necessity as they don't have enough money to maintain a car. For others, it's a choice. Coming from a working class family, I know that owning a car and driving for everything can be a real burden. I wish that my family in California had all the transportation options I enjoy in DC. Given that car ownership is optional in this city, it's important that the zoning code does not add unnecessary parking requirements and costs to housing. Rather than requiring housing for cars, I think that DC through its zoning code in every other way should make it more affordable to live here.

Another way to make it more affordable to live in the city is to allow accessory apartments. Reducing barriers to creating accessory apartments can help empty nesters use extra space to give someone else a home, or a young family the additional income needed to afford the mortgage.

Regarding corner stores, I want to say that allowing corner stores make sense. Allowing corner stores in residential neighborhoods helps them be more walkable. It makes the neighborhood more walkable and makes it easier to not have a car and rely on walking and taking transit to take care of daily needs.

As DC continues to grow, I hope that the zoning code can ensure that moderate and low income families can afford to continue to live in the city. Reducing unnecessary costs from parking minimums, and allowing accessory apartments and strengthening inclusionary zoning are important actions the Zoning Commission can take to ensure that people of all incomes have the opportunity to stay in this city.

Thank you for your service to the city. And thank you for your consideration to my testimony.