

Testimony in Support of ZC No. 08-06A
By Thomas Millar
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My name is Tom Millar and I have lived in northwest DC for eleven years, currently in a condominium unit at 14th and W streets. My wife and I are both federal employees, we have a daughter who recently turned 3, and I am here to testify in support of the lower minimum parking requirements for Subtitle C.

I am from a military family, have served in the US Air Force, and so I've spent a great deal of my life in suburbs or on bases where possession of an automobile was a necessity. When my enlistment was ending, I spent about a week in Manhattan on leave, and I realized at the end of that week I hadn't seen my car in nine days and I had not missed it, had not needed it, and had yet been able to go see and do just about anything in the world I wanted. I made the decision then that I would move into DC proper, not stay in the suburbs. About seven months after signing the lease to a studio apartment in Columbia Heights, I sold my car and haven't looked back. In the last couple of years, I've even cancelled my car sharing membership.

The point of my anecdote is to illustrate how owning a car is becoming less and less necessary for many DC families, and the new parking requirements should reflect this fact. There are a lot of beliefs and assumptions about car ownership and the necessity of parking that simply aren't true, like the idea that if you have children, you have to have a car. I understand. I used to be incapable of imagining being an independent adult without a motor vehicle. As a federal supervisor, I hire young people from all over the country who come to DC and can't fathom the idea that my family doesn't need a car. They really have a hard time figuring out how somebody could buy groceries without having a trunk to load everything into. But I do it all the time.

My family doesn't need a car. We see no reason why this would change, with all the options DC already offers for public transit, biking, car sharing, and walking. I don't believe that my family is an anomaly. The more people realize that living car-free is not a hardship, the more people are going to be abandoning personal vehicle ownership; not just young single people but couples and families as well. The zoning changes should reflect that by reducing the minimum parking requirements.

Thank you for your time.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Millar', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.