

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION 3B GLOVER PARK AND CATHEDRAL HEIGHTS



**Testimony of Brian A. Cohen
Chair, Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner 3B,
Representing Glover Park and Cathedral Heights
Zoning Commission Hearing – Case No. 08-06A, Subtitles C, D & E
September 8, 2014**

Good evening. My name is Brian Cohen. I am the Chair of Advisory Neighborhood 3B, and on behalf of ANC 3B, representing the communities of Glover Park and Cathedral Heights in Northwest DC, I urge you to oppose the July 10 proposed language for Subtitle C – Vehicle Parking - to remove Bus Priority Corridors, and support the original zoning rewrite that retains the Priority Bus Corridors as an area that is eligible for a 50% reduction in mandatory parking minimums as a matter of right.

This is change with a direct and significant impact on our community, which has no metro service and lies within the Wisconsin Ave. priority bus corridor.

ANC 3B has been monitoring the ongoing discussion over these revisions carefully for some time.

We hosted a representative from the Office of Planning at a public meeting in December 2012. In February 2013, the five ANC 3B commissioners unanimously supported a resolution in support of the zoning rewrite. I have attached a copy of this resolution to my testimony. In January 2014, I appeared before you to testify on behalf of ANC 3B in support of the original rewrite.

The ANC 3B position, as stated in our February 2013 resolution, has not changed: we continue to support the language of the original rewrite. The five-year process has allowed for ample community education and input; representatives from the Office of Planning and Office of Zoning have visited communities, heard from residents, and addressed concerns. It is time to move forward to update the District's out-of-date zoning code.

Our resolution in favor of the original rewrite spoke to the problems caused by the mandatory parking minimums. It said that these parking minimums quote, "undermine market forces, increase housing costs, reduce incentives to use mass transit, and damage the historic and walkable form of many neighborhoods."

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District of Columbia
CASE NO. 08-06A
EXHIBIT NO. 785

This was true in Glover Park then, and it remains true now. Indeed, in recent years development or redevelopment of numerous older, existing units into newer and more expensive condominiums has only exacerbated the problems our community is facing with lack of affordable housing.

Reducing by half the parking minimums on the priority bus corridor in our community would represent a small but significant step forward in terms of reducing costs and making it easier for developers to produce more, and more affordable, housing in our community.

To give you a real-life example of how these minimums slow the growth of new housing options, I'd like to tell you about 2140 Wisconsin Ave. in Glover Park. This was a blighted property right on Wisconsin Ave. in our community, and stood that way for years. A developer finally bought it and was prepared to build 4 one-unit condos - but was stymied by the fact that the lot did not have the minimum number of parking spaces for these units. Providing these spaces would have required costly construction and an unsightly curb cut and surface parking at ground level fronting Wisconsin Ave, further degrading the urban fabric of our community. Ultimately, the owner of the building sought and received - with ANC support - a zoning variance waiving the requirements. But this caused months of delay, uncertainty, and expense for the developer and delayed this amenity and housing option that will benefit our community and the new residents who will live in it.

There is no need for these types of situations in our community in a high priority bus corridor. That's why I urge you to support the language from the original zoning rewrite that would reduce by 50% the parking minimums in high priority bus corridors.

I would also like to speak on a few other issues in the July language.

The updated draft makes reasonable allowances for local corner stores in rowhouse residential areas, including Glover Park, and we continue to support this intent. However, I urge you to clarify language that would not allow corner stores on "alley lots." I presume this means that the stores cannot be allowed in alleys; however, if it is intended to mean that stores cannot be located on a lot that has a backyard or driveway that is next to an alley, it would effectively ban corner stores in our community because the ban would cover all our corner lots. It would obviously make no sense to both allow corner stores and then include language that bans them. This would not be the outcome we seek, and if necessary, I hope you will clarify or modify this language.

The zoning rewrite offers improved options for homeowners to create accessory dwelling units. The neighborhoods positively affected by these proposed changes include Glover Park and Cathedral Heights. These units create more affordable housing, increase the value of existing housing stock, allow for neighborhood population growth without modifying existing building density, and can provide an income source to allow seniors to age in place in their own homes.

The July 10 language restricted the ability to use carriage houses as accessory dwellings by right. There are few of these carriage houses in our community (most of our new ADUs would be basement units), but it makes little sense to restrict their use as ADUs. I therefore urge you to support the original rewrite language that would allow these units to be ADUs by right.

Members of the Zoning Commission, I know that you are nearing the end of this long process, and I am hopeful that you will soon approve long overdue modifications to an out-of-date, 1950's zoning vision.

However, the July changes to these proposals marked a step backwards; I urge you to rethink those changes and approve the parking minimum, corner store, and accessory dwelling unit proposals that appeared in the original zoning rewrite.

On behalf of ANC 3B, I thank you for your time and your attention to these issues.