

Testimony by Alex Posorske (1417 West Virginia Ave NE) Re. Zoning Commission Case No 08-06A (Alternative Language Subtitle C and D)

My name is Alex Posorske and I live at 1417 West Virginia Ave NE. I work for the Coalition for Smarter Growth but this testimony is my own and I am not representing my employer.

I'm here tonight to testify in favor of the alternate language proposed by the Zoning Commission in response to the Office of Planning's changes from earlier in the summer. Specifically, I want to encourage the Zoning Commission to go with the alternate language on accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and reducing unnecessary parking minimums near major bus priority corridors.

I believe this is important for two reasons.

Number one, as you've heard from a number of commentators throughout this process, preferences are changing in how people want to move around for their day to day needs. Almost 40 percent of DC households are carless and surveys increasingly show more and more people want to live car-free or car-lite. I'm not saying that no one will drive or that no one will ever produce another parking space if we do away with parking minimums. But long-term trends show that we don't need to mandate the level of parking that we used to think was necessary, especially near reliable, regular transit. Priority bus corridors are regular, reliable transit.

Lowering parking minimums near regular, reliable transit is important for environmental reasons as well as helping manage our traffic as we grow. But lowering parking minimums and making it easier to create ADUs is even more important because we have an affordability crisis right now in this city. A recent report from the DC Urban Institute on housing affordability in the region (*Housing Security in the Washington Region*, July 15, 2014), noted that the need in DC for housing for very low income renters outmatches the supply by over 22,000 units.

I've seen a microcosm of this personally. When we bought our house in Trinidad two years ago there was still some semblance of affordability, in comparison to some surrounding neighborhoods. Flash forward to this summer. We attended an open house on West Virginia Ave where the listed price on a rehabbed house was \$699,000, double what many houses were only last summer. We didn't believe that price, but we especially didn't believe it when it was listed as sold within the first week – and for a final figure of \$735,000.

Figures like that show that we have a real problem in supply here in DC. Lower-income and most middle class families simply can't afford those prices. This is in a neighborhood that until recently was considered very affordable by many. That problem is going to continue and it's really going to hurt and possibly drive out the middle and working class from this city.

If we want to maintain a diverse city with a range of incomes, which I think all of us do, we need to be actively addressing these issues. There's no magic bullet solution, but a lot of little things the city needs to be doing. Creating more flexible housing options by easing the restrictions on ADUs allowed by right in carriage houses is one of those things. And since mandatory parking requirements can add up to

\$50,000 a unit, lowering those requirements in areas that have reliable transit options – like major bus priority corridors – is another I urge you to include both in the final version of the zoning update and thus give us two important new tools in creating more housing choice in DC