

Testimony before DC Zoning Commission
Zoning Code Update - Case No. 08-06A
February 8, 2014

Good Morning. My name is Christian Alexander and I am here as a resident of Ward 6 to speak in favor of the zoning code update. Although I have only lived in DC for a few years, my father grew up in the DC metro area in the 1960s and 1970s. As a result, I have some sense of the city that he knew while growing up here, a city shaped by the current zoning code. Thanks to this City's public transportation system and to my neighborhood, which includes a number of small businesses in close proximity to me, I am able live a nearly car free life (even when Christmas tree shopping -- see attached photo). I'd like all DC residents to be afforded this same opportunity. The zoning code update takes a step in this direction.

This Commission has a choice: stick to the outdated planning policies that structured the city that my father grew up in, or take modest steps, such as the update, to shape the city to fit the needs of current and future residents, like me. This update includes modest proposals that are important to enhancing liveability, affordability, and sustainability. Its parking revisions remove costly subsidies for cars and increases density, which allows for the possibility of more affordable and diverse housing. Its accessory apartment provision also provides more options for housing, and its neighborhood cornerstore provision allows for better access to local businesses. These provisions all provide increased options -- options for where to live, where to go, and how to get there -- that in turn provide mobile and economic freedom to DC residents.

I appreciate the concerns of some of the opponents of these changes, and I think it is good that the changes are thoroughly vetted and debated. I thank the Commission for giving this measure the attention it deserves. I also think that these changes are only one step, only one part of the solution, and that they alone will not change things for the better overnight. We need to continue to work to address real concerns regarding equity and respect for DC's great established communities.

However, while keeping in mind valid concerns, I think failing to implement these changes is a step backwards. The fact is, these modest proposals are well thought out and have been the subject of substantial public outreach and opportunity for public input. Far from threatening the integrity of DC communities, these changes provide an updated blueprint for a healthy, livable, modern city.

Please vote in favor of the update.

Thank you.

Christian Alexander
DC Ward 6 Resident

