

<February 8, 2014>

Christopher Winnike

1825 East Capitol St SE

Washington, DC 20016

Anthony Hood

Chairman

DC Zoning Commission

One Judiciary Square

441 4th Street NW, Suite 200 South

Washington, DC 20001

Re: Zoning Case No. 08-06A, Subtitle[C, D] Vehicle parking requirements, accessory apartments and corner store

Dear Chairman Hood and the D.C. Zoning Commission:

Hello, my name is Christopher Winnike.

I live in Ward 6 at 1825 East Capitol St SE.

I am here to express my support for the proposed update to the zoning code, particularly the reduction in the minimum parking requirements.

I moved to D.C. a little more than a year ago from Alexandria, VA. The primary reason for my move was to be closer to where I work and hang out. I love living in D.C. because I have almost eliminated my need for a car, by taking metro or biking to work and using bikeshare and public transportation to get around the city. I only rarely use my car for longer trips for places that aren't Metro Accessible. I have also found that many of my friends have no car or use a carshare service when they need one. Reducing the parking minimums would help to make the city more walkable and bikable, while also slowing the increase of traffic congestion and pollution.

But even more importantly we have a critical housing problem in this city where many residents cannot afford to live in safe, walkable, neighborhoods with access to public transportation. There is no way to solve this problem without building more housing units to meet the need. As long as we continue to under supply housing, the housing available will be taken by the well-to-do with the poor and working class left out. Public housing, subsidies, and inclusionary zoning are important programs that can help with the problem but we will never serve all of those in need without increasing the number of units available, particularly in the more desirable neighborhoods near transit.

A recent paper by Enterprise Community Partners and the Urban Land Institute entitled *Bending the Cost Curve: Solutions to Expand the Supply of Affordable Rentals* (https://s3.amazonaws.com/KSPPProd/ERC_Upload/0086703.pdf) states that, "Parking minimums were the most noted barrier over the course of our research" to the production of affordable housing. In my work as an architect I see this with every new project that we do a planning study for. The first step is always to determine the amount of parking that can efficiently fit on the site. From there, we determine how many units can be built. While some developers have their own standard ratio of units to parking the majority feel that the residents will not use all of the parking required. This often the end of the project because if the minimum parking requirements do not allow for enough units to make the project viable. In addition to all of the projects that are not built because of the excessive minimum parking requirements, there are also several units taken off almost every project. In sum, the current parking requirements have drastically reduced the number of housing units built in the city and will continue to limit growth until they are updated.

The parking requirements also have other negative impacts. One is that they make it much more difficult to maintain existing or historic buildings. It is almost always cost prohibitive to build parking under an existing building. Therefore, even buildings that could otherwise be renovated or preserved often must be demolished to make a larger project viable on the same site. Another problem with the excessive parking requirements is that they make it harder to build small and medium size projects which may be more appropriate for historic neighborhoods but are not large enough to support an underground parking garage.

I want to be clear that I support the proposed minimum parking requirements as an improvement to the existing code. My only disappointment is that the proposals still require much more parking than is needed.

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-There is no need for any minimum parking requirements for projects within 1/2 mile from a metro station.

I would also like to voice my support for the proposal allowing accessory apartments by right. This is another policy that could provide more affordable housing in the city as well as supplementary income for current homeowners. Again I feel that the proposed changes are an improvement. However I feel that the proposed regulations are still too restrictive and will greatly limit the number of accessory apartments.

-I think that it would be reasonable to allow at least 2 accessory units per lot in all neighborhoods and more in some districts that already include a mix of apartments and single family homes.

-I see no benefit in preventing accessory apartments to have separate doors facing the street if the façade meets all other requirements such as historic review.

-I feel that new accessory buildings should be permitted by right as long as the site as a whole is in compliance with the zoning code.

-I do not support creating a maximum number of people for a property as many existing homes in the city can support more than six people very comfortably. If a maximum is created it should be much higher. I would suggest 10. A compromise that may be acceptable would be to base the maximum on square footage.

The third proposal that I would like to support is the proposal to allow corner stores. I would love to have more corner stores in my neighborhood.

Looking at development patterns throughout the city and the region, I think it is blatantly clear that people prefer to live in areas where they can walk to stores and restaurants.

This proposal is a great improvement to the current code but is also more restrictive than it needs to be.

-Corner stores should be allowed to cook food. The rule should be changed to allow corner restaurants in addition to corner stores. Restaurants are one of the most sought after neighborhood amenities and we should be encouraging more of them not limiting them

-The requirements that limit corner stores from being within 500 ft of commercial zones or more than one eating establishment is unnecessary. The fact that they must be on corners is enough to distribute them efficiently. Also it is important to keep in mind that real estate is extremely expensive in DC if a corner store can afford to stay open in a neighborhood that means there must be large demand for it's services in that area.

-Accessory apartments should be allowed in addition to a primary dwelling unit on corner store lots.

-I think that the 9:00PM limit and the limits on alcohol sales are appropriate. But there should be a straightforward process for changing these limits if the community supports them.

In conclusion I would like to thank the commission for hearing my testimony and the staff who has worked on the zoning update for contributing to this much needed effort. I think that the proposed changes are a vast improvement from the current code and will support a more sustainable, affordable, and livable city. My hope is that we fully embrace these positive changes and are not too timid as we move our zoning code into the 21st Century.

Christopher Winnike