

February 24, 2014

Anthony Hood
Chairman
DC Zoning Commission
One Judiciary Square
441 4th Street NW, Suite 200 South
Washington, DC 20001

Re: Support for Zoning Case No. 08-06A, Subtitle C (Vehicle Parking Requirements)

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

I am a Ward 1 resident who speaks to you as one of the nearly 40 percent of households in DC that do not own a car. Although many people in DC are car free out of necessity because of the high cost of car ownership, my family makes a willing choice not to own a car. My husband and I are both busy, working professionals who have the means to own a car, but for us, the advantages of not owning a car outweigh its challenges. We live a block from the U Street Metro station and are fortunate to live where just about everything we need is within a quick walk, bus or bike ride. On the occasions when we do need a car, it's more cost effective for us to take advantage of all of the car sharing, car rental and car service options that we find to be so convenient, rather than pay the costs of car payments, insurance and parking. And we can spend our free time on pursuits other than the hassle of finding a parking spot or worrying that our car is going to get a ticket.

Our lives have gotten a lot more hectic now that we have a young child, but we still find it less time consuming and less of a hassle not to be burdened with car ownership. We appreciate that the beauty and vitality of our city is best enjoyed from a walking or biking speed. Not having a car increases the likelihood that my son and I will find ourselves on any given day walking down the street holding hands and pointing out all of the things that make our neighborhood such a great place, rather than separated in the front and back seat of a car.

I know other families in my neighborhood who choose not to own any cars as well, and I happily preach the gospel of car-free living to anyone who will listen. Still, I recognize that many of my current and future neighbors will still choose to own one. I don't have a problem with that. The proposed changes to the zoning ordinance do not limit a builder from including the parking that residents want and need in a new development. The beauty of the proposed changes is this: they are also flexible enough to allow builders to meet the demand of families like mine, who prefer not to own a car and who shouldn't have to shoulder the extra expense of a below ground parking space that we don't need. Not to mention that the changes can facilitate the construction of more affordable housing, and allow the market to respond to the future needs of an aging baby boomer population that will own fewer cars.

My family offers itself as evidence that the influx of new, relatively affluent residents in DC, even the growing number of households with children, does not necessarily have to exacerbate the city's traffic and parking woes. In the five years that we have lived in the District, we have seen so many positive changes that make car-free living even easier. New apartment buildings around us include more Zipcar spaces. We send our babysitter home using Uber. I use Capital Bikeshare to get to my son's daycare, then travel back with him on Metro once I pick him up. Who knows what new services and innovations will be offered in the future that continue to provide all of us with even more choices on how to get around?

As commissioners, you have the opportunity and responsibility to set in place a new zoning framework that can accommodate a future that we can't possibly conceive right now. The last zoning overhaul happened some 55 years ago, and it's possible that the zoning overhaul you are contemplating will survive longer than any of us before it is fully considered again. With your actions, you could take the safe route, avoiding any changes to parking regulations that might be considered controversial. Or, your actions can bequeath a legacy that can provide our children and future residents with the possibility a more sustainable, more livable city by institutionalizing a more flexible approach to parking as the city continues to develop. I wholeheartedly encourage you to embrace the latter choice.

I thank you for your taking the time to hear my comments on the zoning ordinance.

Sincerely,

Nancy Fox
1323 V Street NW
Washington, DC 20009
Ward 1 Resident