

Citizens Association of Georgetown
Zoning Commission Hearing – Case 08-20
February 26, 2009

The Citizens Association of Georgetown is grateful to the Zoning Commission for holding this hearing to allow public comment on the changes to the proposed rulemaking establishing parameters for location of handgun sales stores. The significant changes that have been proposed to the original proposal certainly merit giving the public a chance to voice their concerns.

We have such concerns for the safety and welfare of Georgetown families, including our 1,200 paid members, as well as the thousands and thousands of students and visitors who spend time in our community.

Our commercial corridors nearly always abut residential areas or are part of mixed-use development. By shifting the entry point for handgun sales to C-2 zones, the Commission would be inviting these sales into residential communities, either around the corner from a residence, downstairs from one, across the street from one. Surely this is inconsistent with the intent to create a buffer between gun shops and residential zones.

And as to that buffer, we strongly urge the Commission to return to at least the 600-foot standard that was part of the original proposal. As the record indicates, other cities use even greater distances for their buffers around handgun sales.

There is another question about a provision discussed at the earlier hearing. Assuming a transaction conducted completely in compliance with District and Federal law, how does the purchaser get the firearm home? The transcript suggests requiring at least one parking space, but parking requirements are waived for historic districts.

No waiver of the parking requirement in historic districts should be considered. The waiver is an important component of the need to preserve the integrity of the district. Businesses for which purchasers *must* have parking for legal transport of purchasers cannot be located in zones where parking requirements are waived.

MPD apparently asks the Commission to consider allowing location of gun shops on second floors to discourage theft. This is not comforting. If MPD believes ground-level gun shops are targets for theft, they make the best argument for protecting families, visitors, shoppers, and students from too-convenient handgun sales.

The Citizens Association of Georgetown asks the Commission to restore the controls that were in the first version of the proposed rulemaking: 600-foot minimum, special exception review, and C3 zones as the first zone in which handgun sales would be permitted. (If large groups of persons justify protective buffers around churches and schools, the regular crowds on Wisconsin Avenue and M Street surely justify the changes we advocate.)

We support the resolution enacted by our Advisory Neighborhood Commission and join in its request that you grant Great Weight to its position.

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EXHIBIT No. 3