

Cochran, Patricia (DCOZ)

From: Samuel Myszkowski <noreply@adv.actionnetwork.org>
Sent: Thursday, October 23, 2025 5:06 PM
To: DCOZ - ZC Submissions (DCOZ)
Subject: Letter in Support of ZC 25-12

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Members of the Zoning Commission,

I have lived in DC since 2019 and at no point have I paid less than 40% of my take home income in rent. That is, every month one of my paychecks is almost entirely taken up with rent - entirely when utilities are included. That's not a city that's affordable for working people, and that means every tool for affordability needs to be considered, including changes to the zoning code.

I support the following changes to the zoning code, as being advocated by DC YIMBYs, but I would suggest they don't go far enough. When I look at a zoning map of DC, virtually the whole city is covered by zones that are incredibly restrictive of any housing beyond what's already there. That's no way to accommodate a growing, changing population. It shifts the burden of housing the city, that would otherwise be shouldered by a mix of life-cycle changes and new construction, onto lower-income residents who are increasingly priced out. Since changing zones for parcels is a highly local process, the best thing the zoning commission can do is increase the density (and make possible the physical characteristics of lots and building to allow that density) within the R and RH zones in any way possible, including adopting the following changes but hopefully going further still.

1. Offer DC residents more flexibility to add in-law suites to their properties by:
 - Allowing in-law suites to be up to 1,200 square feet,
 - Eliminating the owner-occupancy requirement,
 - Eliminating the five-year waiting period in rowhome zones,

- Dropping the proposed ban in apartment zones, and
- Amending the arbitrary 3-foot side setback to only apply when necessary.

2. Ease parking requirements near public transit by:

- Fixing a drafting error to ensure that all major transit hubs are included in the reduced parking requirement proposals and
- Defining “high-frequency” transit as places that have buses at least every 15 minutes, so that portions of North Capitol Street, 12th Street NE, and South Dakota Ave NE are included.

3. Allow more community-focused businesses in neighborhoods by broadening the narrow list of covered businesses that are allowed to operate on the ground-floor of certain buildings.

I will close by offering a thought about my own place in DC's housing market. Right now I'm a professional in a lower-paying role and live in a gentrifying neighborhood that my partner and I can afford. I'm applying to law school and hope to attend a school in DC, but we're worried about the prospect of paying rent when one of us goes from a positive to negative income. When I graduate, I hope to practice in the DC area, but I don't want my own presence in the city to be either part of the intense residential segregation that's already the case or to be a push factor in the displacement that impacts so many of my neighbors now. I can't control the systemic factors at work there, the factors that may someday pit my buying power against the people I call neighbors today, but I can ask you to do your best to prevent that conflict by helping expand DC's housing. It will be better for all of us.

Thank you,
Sam

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