



Testimony before DC Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street NW Suite 200S
Washington, DC 20001

Re: Support for BZA Case Number 18852 & 18853 – 90 & 91 Bladgen Alley NW
Reduced parking

by Cheryl Cort, Policy Director
Dec. 2, 2014

Please accept these comments on behalf of the Coalition for Smarter Growth (CSG). The Coalition for Smarter Growth is the leading organization working locally in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan region dedicated to making the case for smart growth. Our mission is to promote walkable, inclusive, and transit-oriented communities, and the land use and transportation policies and investments needed to make those communities flourish.

We wish to express our strong support for this project and the proposed reduction in the number of parking spaces provided for this laudable housing development and historic restoration project. Forcing unneeded vehicle parking into this innovative alley residential development would do great harm to this historic alley which is a treasure for the city. We agree that the vehicle parking is unnecessary. Instead of providing vehicle parking, the new housing will offer an attractive car-free lifestyle to residents with a robust transportation demand management (TDM) program. This alternative approach to addressing the transportation needs of residents will ensure the housing is a success and attracts car-free residents. Additionally, by offering a strong TMD program, the lack of vehicle parking will not harm surrounding existing residents.

The code-required parking spaces are infeasible and harmful given the exceptional conditions of the historic site and historic alley character. In addition to the unique qualities of the site, the immediate neighborhood supports car-free living with high levels of walk, bicycle and transit access to nearby shops, services, employment, and longer distance transit. Notably, the largest share of commuters in this Census Tract make their commute by walking to their jobs (37%), followed by riding transit (31%).ⁱ

The proposed alternative to providing vehicle parking also avoids burdening the project with unnecessary costs that would increase the cost of housing and make the project less feasible for this particular site. Further, the rapid innovations in personal travel through Uber, car-sharing, and smart-phone technology travel information are making personal vehicle ownership increasingly optional and a costly liability in highly accessible neighborhoods like this one. The project offers a sound alternative to an unworkable parking supply zoning standard and demonstrates the fallacy of the notion that there is a fixed amount of parking demand per housing unit.

Support for BZA Case No. 1885 & 18853 – 90 & 91 Blagden Alley NW
Coalition for Smarter Growth

We agree with ANC 2F that the developer has demonstrated a compelling alternative model for providing housing that does not generate demand for vehicle parking, and has offered an outstanding set of Transportation Demand Management measures to achieve this intent. We specifically applaud the commitment to pay for the installation of a new Capital Bikesharing station (27 docks & 14 bikes) and bikesharing and carsharing memberships, the secure bicycle storage room for 42 bicycles, a bicycle repair room, and annual bike education and training events.

This proposal is an outstanding opportunity to increase housing options for the many DC residents who would like to avoid the costs and inconveniences of personal car ownership and benefit from the site's accessibility and rich travel choices. Parking minimums are a costly requirement that burdens housing with unnecessary cost, generates unnecessary traffic, and in this case could generate vehicular traffic that could degrade the pedestrian-oriented historic alley system.

Given the strong demand to live in this growing neighborhood, the location's walking proximity to hundreds of thousands of jobs, the neighborhood's low car ownership rate, this project is a helpful contribution to meeting the city's need for more housing. The project is a specifically welcome addition to our city's in-demand housing stock as it provides Inclusionary Zoning units with 11 units, half affordable at 50% AMI and half at 80% AMI.

We urge the BZA to approve this application. New housing opportunities like this project are critically important to achieving our Sustainable DC goal of 75% non-auto trips for the sake of protecting the climate, improving safety and enhancing the livability of our city.

Thank you for your consideration.

ⁱ 37% of commuters walk to work, 31% ride public transit, 24% drive alone, Census Tract 49.02, DP03: Selected Economic Characteristics, 2008-2012 ACS 5 Year Estimates. Additionally 41% of renters to own cars in this Census Tract.