



MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Zoning Commission
FROM: Jennifer Steingasser, Deputy Director, Development Review & Historic Preservation
DATE: January 14, 2010
SUBJECT: Proposed Text Amendment to Section 2116 -Location of Parking Spaces

I. RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning (OP) recommends that the proposed text amendment to Section 2116 shown at the end of this report be set down for a public hearing.

II. BACKGROUND

At the Zoning Commission's public hearing on Parking and Loading (ZC 08-06) held on November 15, 2010, the Commission requested the current language of Section 2116 (Location of Parking Spaces) be amended to reflect the intent expressed in the proposed new language of Section 1506 (Location Restrictions). The Commission deemed amendments necessary to ensure that development is not inconsistent with the intent of the existing Comprehensive Plan, albeit prior to the adoption of the new Zoning Regulations.

The provisions of the existing Zoning Regulations do not support the new Comprehensive Plan's goals and policies in many respects, as it was written prior to the Plan's adoption and would encourage continuation of development patterns inconsistent with contemporary urban design principles.

The intent of the amendments is to foster good urban design, including ensuring that active uses line parking structures or a building's street frontage, to minimize adverse impacts on neighboring property due to excessive parking, as well as to minimize conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians. This intent supports several of the policies and actions of the Urban Design Element of the existing Comprehensive Plan.

III. ANALYSIS

Currently, Section 2116 provides most of the location restrictions for parking spaces. The requirements specify that parking must be within a garage, or within a rear or side yard. However, parking accessory to commercial or industrial uses can be located anywhere on the lot. The section also includes some exceptions and special exception relief provisions related to the location requirements.

The current location restrictions are inadequate to implement the policy goals of the Urban Design Element of the Comprehensive Plan, which generally states that "new parking should generally be set behind or underneath buildings."

Therefore, the amendments are intended to establish its purpose and clarify parking location restrictions which are not inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan. The amendments would clarify that:

- Parking for commercial uses can no longer be placed in front of a building.



- Above-grade structured parking must be located at least 20 feet from all front lot lines, resulting in “liner” spaces that can activate the street.¹
- The new location restrictions on surface parking would not apply to industrial zones.

IV. PROPOSAL

The following amendments to Section 2116 are proposed accordingly: (**New text is shown in bold**)

1. *Amend § 2116.1 as follows:*

- 2116.1 (a) **The intent of this section is to prevent negative impacts on neighboring property from excessive parking, prevent conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians, respect the pedestrian environment, foster good urban design, and provide space for active uses to line parking structures.**
- (b) Except as provided in §§ 214, 510, 708, 730, 743.2(d), 753.1(c), 761.2, 803.1, 926, 2116.5, 2116.10 and 2117.9(c), all parking spaces shall be located on the same lot with the buildings or structures they are intended to serve.

2. *Amend §2116.2 as follows:*

- 2116.2 Parking spaces, including car-sharing spaces, shall be located in one (1) of the following ways:
- (a) Within a permitted garage or carport, subject to the special provisions of chapter 23 **and § 2116.12**; or
- (b) On an open area of the lot as follows ~~except as provided in § 2116.4.~~
- ~~(1) Within a rear yard~~
- ~~(2) Within a side yard; or~~
- ~~(3) Except in an SP District, elsewhere on the lot if accessory to a commercial or industrial use.~~

3. *Amend §2116.4 as follows:*

- 2116.4 ~~Required spaces shall not be located in the area between a building line and lot line abutting a street. Parking spaces shall not be located in the following areas:~~
- (a) **Between a setback line or building restriction line and a lot line abutting a street.**
- (b) **Except in an industrial district, between a lot line abutting a street and the more restrictive of either a building façade or a line extending from and parallel to a building façade. A building used solely as a parking attendant shelter shall not trigger this restriction.**

4. *Add new text § 2116.12 as follows:*

- 2116.12. Parking spaces provided within a structure shall be located at least twenty feet (20 ft.) from all lot lines that abut public streets, unless the surface of the parking spaces is at least ten feet (10 ft.) below grade, at all points along the building frontage.**

¹ Above-grade structured parking is rare in the District, since it is included in the building’s allowed FAR and land values typically make it prohibitively expensive. However, this requirement ensures that if it is built, above-grade parking structures will not create unattractive “dead zones” that degrade the pedestrian environment.

V. 2006 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The proposed amendments are not inconsistent with the 2006 Comprehensive Plan, including many policies of the Urban Design Element.

UD -1.4 Reinforcing Boulevards and Gateways- Good urban design is essential to reestablishing the city’s avenues and streets as positive elements of city form. 906.2

Policy UD-1.4.3: Avenue/Boulevard Vistas and View Corridors- Protect views and view corridors along avenues/boulevards, particularly along streets that terminate at important civic monuments or that frame distant landmarks. Vistas along such streets should be accentuated by creating more well-defined street walls, improving landscaping, and requiring the highest architectural quality as development takes place. 906.9

Action UD-1.4.A: Zoning and Views- As part of the revision of the District’s zoning regulations, determine the feasibility of overlays or special design controls that would apply to major boulevards and gateway streets. The purpose of such overlays would be to ensure the protection and enhancement of important views and to upgrade the aesthetic quality of key boulevards. 906.12

Policy UD-2.2.10: Surface Parking- Encourage the use of shade trees and landscaping or screening of surface parking areas. Parking should be designed so that it is not the dominant element of the street, and should be located behind development rather than in front of it. 910.19

Policy UD-2.2.11: Parking Structures- Encourage creative solutions for designing structured parking to minimize its visual prominence. Where feasible, the street side of parking structures should be lined with active and visually attractive uses to lessen their impact on the streetscape. 910.21

Policy UD-2.2.12: Strip Shopping Centers - Ensure that zoning and parking standards discourage strip commercial shopping centers and auto-oriented building designs within designated neighborhood centers. 910.23

UD-3.1 Urban Design Hits the Street 913 - The management of the space between the curb and the street wall should be guided by a number of objectives.

Policy UD-3.1.6: Enhanced Streetwalls- Promote a higher standard of storefront design and architectural detail along the District’s commercial streets. Along walkable shopping streets, create street walls with relatively continuous facades built to the front lot line in order to provide a sense of enclosure and improve pedestrian comfort. 913.13

Requiring parking areas to be located at the rear of structures eliminates these areas as the dominant element of the street by replacing it with active streets for pedestrians. It also encourages a more cohesive street wall. This is supportive of the Comprehensive Plan elements, as well as DDOT’s and DPW’s Complete Streets policies, which discourage placing “cars between people and buildings,”² ensuring that destinations are accessible by many transportation modes.

VI. SUMMARY

OP recommends the proposed amendments be set down for public hearing. As previously discussed, the amendments would bring current Zoning Regulations in line with the Comprehensive Plan’s goals and policies for improved urban design, and would support multi-modal transportation options, including pedestrian, bike, bus and streetcar modes .

² **Complete Streets: Best Policy and Implementation Practices-** Barbara McCann and Suzanne Rynne, Editors. March 2010. 97pp.

ATTACHMENT

PROPOSED SECTION 2116 IS SHOWN AS FOLLOWS:

2116 LOCATION OF PARKING SPACES

- 2116.1 (a) **The intent of this section is to prevent negative impacts on neighboring property from excessive parking, prevent conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians, respect the pedestrian environment, foster good urban design, and provide space for active uses to line parking structures.**
- (b) Except as provided in §§ 214, 510, 708, 730, 743.2(d), 753.1(c), 761.2, 803.1, 926, 2116.5, 2116.10 and 2117.9(c), all parking spaces shall be located on the same lot with the buildings or structures they are intended to serve.
- 2116.2 Parking spaces, including car-sharing spaces, shall be located in one (1) of the following ways:
- (a) Within a permitted garage or carport, subject to the special provisions of chapter 23 **and § 2116.12**; or
- (b) On an open area of the lot as follows **except as provided in § 2116.4**.
- ~~(1) Within a rear yard~~
- ~~(2) Within a side yard; or~~
- ~~(3) Except in an SP District, elsewhere on the lot if accessory to a commercial or industrial use.~~
- 2116.3 For a church, up to fifty percent (50%) of the number of parking spaces may be located elsewhere. The spaces shall be located within four hundred feet (400 ft.) of the church in a public or private parking lot or garage where the required numbers of spaces are made available for the use of the church through a binding agreement with the owners of the parking facility. However, at least three (3) parking spaces shall be provided on the lot where the church is located.
- 2116.4 ~~Required spaces shall not be located in the area between a building line and lot line abutting a street.~~ **Parking spaces shall not be located in the following areas:**
- (a) **Between a setback line or building restriction line and a lot line abutting a street.**
- (b) **Except in an industrial district, between a lot line abutting a street and the more restrictive of either a building façade or a line extending from and parallel to a building façade. A building used solely as a parking attendant shelter shall not trigger this restriction.**
- 2116.5 Except as provided in § 2117.9, if approved by the Board of Zoning Adjustment pursuant to § 3104 for special exceptions, open parking spaces accessory to any building or structure may be located anywhere on the lot upon which the building or structure is located, or elsewhere, except in the case of a one-family dwelling, in accordance with §§ 2116.6 through 2116.9.
- 2116.6 The Board shall determine that it is not practical to locate the spaces in accordance with § 2116.2 for the following reasons:
- (a) Unusual topography, grades, shape, size, or dimensions of the lot;

- (b) The lack of an alley or the lack of appropriate ingress or egress through existing or proposed alleys or streets;
 - (c) Traffic hazards caused by unusual street grades; or
 - (d) The location of required parking spaces elsewhere on the same lot or on another lot would result in more efficient use of land, better design or landscaping, safer ingress or egress, and less adverse impact on neighboring properties.
- 2116.7 When the accessory parking spaces are to be located elsewhere than on the lot upon which the building or structure they are intended to serve is located, the parking on adjacent lots or lots separated only by an alley from the lot upon which the building or structure is located, shall be preferred.
- 2116.8 The accessory parking spaces shall be located so as to furnish reasonable and convenient parking facilities for the occupants or guests of the building or structures that they are designed to serve.
- 2116.9 The Board may impose conditions on any accessory or non-accessory parking spaces as to screening, coping, setbacks, fences, the location of entrances and exits, or any other requirement it deems necessary to protect adjacent or nearby property. It may also impose other conditions it deems necessary to assure the continued provision and maintenance of the spaces.
- 2116.10 Notwithstanding §§ 106.7 and 2116.1, parking spaces serving the District of Columbia Correctional Facility and other uses and agencies currently on the site as of March 2, 2007 may be located anywhere within Public Reservation 13 tract.
- 2116.11 Subsection 2116.10 shall expire in seven (7) years.
- 2116.12. Parking spaces provided within a structure shall be located at least twenty feet (20 ft.) from all lot lines that abut public streets, unless the surface of the parking spaces is at least ten feet (10 ft.) below grade, at all points along the building frontage.**