



LAWRENCEVILLE UNITED

A Resident Driven Organization

LU Testimony on Council Bill 2021-1085 Planning Commission Hearing, 2/23/2021

Good afternoon. My name is Dave Breingan and I'm the Executive Director of Lawrenceville United. I'm here to speak in support of the zoning code text amendments of Council Bill 2021-1085 and request that the City again go further.

First, I want to commend Mayor Peduto and City Planning for taking additional steps to improve pedestrian safety, enhance neighborhood walkability, and promote non-vehicular mobility. When the administration proposed dropping minimum parking requirements for single family attached homes, a group of community organizations in R1A neighborhoods came together to express our support and ask that the City take additional steps to meet the goals of the legislation.

Specifically, we called for minimally replicating the curb cut design standards in the RIV zone into R1A zones. We're grateful for the Mayor's administration and City Planning for taking this feedback and implementing our request quickly.

As City Planning's briefing demonstrated so well, front-facing off-street parking, integral garages, and their corresponding driveway curb cuts do significant and long-lasting damage to the essential character of rowhouse neighborhoods. They remove public on-street parking, increase vehicle trips, threaten safety and accessibility, drive up housing costs, permanently eliminate the ability to plant street trees, and demote neighborly interaction.

This legislation goes a step further than eliminating the parking minimum. This is another stride in the right direction to limiting the propagation of driveway curb cuts on otherwise walkable blocks, as we certainly have seen instances where developers, to save money or out of simply poor design choices, have attempted to create off-street parking in the front when rear access existed.

However, we must acknowledge the limits of even this new legislation. For one thing, it only applies to single-family attached dwellings, and not to R1A zones, which leaves a lot of residential projects exempt in neighborhoods like Lawrenceville. Most of our R1A neighborhoods have lots of single-unit detached dwellings interspersed with rowhomes. While they share the same blocks, the same character, the same off-street parking, and the same sidewalks, detached homes don't have to follow this design standard under this legislation. An improvement on this legislation would be to include this curb cut design standard for any use within R1A zones, similar to the way that the language appears in the RIV zone.

Beyond this, it must also be noted that many parcels in Lawrenceville do not have access to rear alleyways. Yet front-facing off-street parking still does the same damage. Consequently, further action is still needed, and we want to again reiterate our call for further legislation that restricts the use of front-facing driveway curb cuts, and gives communities like ours the tools to oppose them when they harm the neighborhood fabric. We ask that Planning Commission recommend these additional steps as part of your recommendation to City Council. Thank you.