I’m Tommy Wells. I’m an elected representative on the DC City Council and I represent Ward 6.

It’s interesting. A lot of people across the country don’t realize that people actually live in Washington. And we’re a community of over 600,000 people and we’re growing. We’re growing at a rate, really the fastest rate of any jurisdiction in the nation. So we’re a city that is made up of wealthier folks and poorer folks, we really do have a big kind of chasm. And more and more we’re becoming a diverse city.

Great neighborhoods, we’re finding, are not necessarily what we thought they were. We used to think that we divide ourselves up into sections. You put schools over here, housing over here, stores over here. And what we’ve found is that to be able to get anywhere and do anything, you had to get in your car to get there. And the more that we lived in our cars, and the more that we lived in a sectional, stovepiped community, we didn’t see each other, we weren’t diverse, we arranged ourselves according to our functions. And what we’ve seen in livable neighborhoods and with five minute living, we seen that we can create neighborhoods that are diverse, that you may want to live in a multi-family housing dwelling and maybe have a lower cost, or singlefamily housing and it’s a mixed use that includes certainly retail, like walking to fresh food, and being able to walk to school, being able to walk to get your health needs. That’ll work for people of all ages. It creates a diverse community that really enriches us. And people really find it a much better more fun place to live when you can essentially walk anywhere you want to get to in five minutes. And if you can’t get there in five minutes you can get to mass transit that’s safe and reliable, that you enjoy taking, and that’s affordable in five minutes. And that’s a powerful way to live as well. So that is really I think something that everybody would like, of all incomes and certainly of all ages. And that’s what we’re building, that’s what people are moving to.

I know in that Washington, as we start creating and building the infrastructure to support the lifestyle of five minute living, we thought it was a great thing that 30,000 people moved in to our city over the past ten years when we’d been projected to lose double that amount in the last ten years. But we grew by 30,000. But just in the past two years since the Census was taken, we grew another 17,000. So it’s a lifestyle choice that people are making, it works, and it really does create a higher quality of life for everyone.

In Ward 6 we have about $9 and a half billion worth of development in the pipeline or that’s just been completed. And it’s going to change how we live. And so one of the things that’s finite in the Ward is street parking. Street parking has multiple uses, and we had not evolved the best thinking around street parking. People just believe that it should just be there for anyone any time, but we have begun to restrict street parking from people using it from other jurisdictions and other states. So we had already started managing it and then of course we had parking meters. So what I proposed is that we take a pilot area and we put what I call performance measures on those
parking spaces. And those parking spaces mean about anywhere from three to ten thousand dollars per business that’s dependent on people parking in those spaces. So the parking generates money for the businesses, the parking is a convenience and an amenity to those that use it, and so it only makes sense to manage it because we can’t grow more of it. And so what I did was, with the approval of the city council, with a lot of community meetings with the businesses and the residents, was we used multi-space meters that could be programmed. And the idea was to try to always assure folks that parking is available. So that during high times when people are using the parking, we charge more so that it turns over, and during the times when it’s not being used much we reduce the amount. And we adjust the length of times you can have parking also to try to match the needs of the area.

We see that America, just like the rest of the planet, is challenged to have a sustainable future. We know that we’re using fossil fuels at a greater rate than they’ll ever be replaced. We know that we have environmental impact of our behavior and the things we do that really is assuring us that the climate is changing, that we’re not replacing the natural resources as fast as we’re using them, and the impact that humans have on the environment is fairly deleterious. So we believe that we’re probably going to continue to grow as a country, and we’re going to continue to grow as a planet in terms of the number of people who live here. And so how we grow will determine how we can last as a human race on the planet. And it really is as stark as that. So how we arrange ourselves, the choices we make, how we feed ourselves, how we get around, really has an impact on how the next generation, the next generation and the next generation will be able to have a quality of life that’s as good as the quality of life we have today. We know that people are living longer and we know that again that we’re going to rapidly add to the number of people living on the planet. So more and more we’re seeing that if we’re planful for where we live and how we live, that we can mitigate the impact we have on the planet for the rest of the folks. So smart growth has a lot to do with helping us organize in ways that minimize the impact on the environment, improve our quality of lives, and really live in a more responsible way as stewards of the planet we live on.