



## **Testimony for hearing on the DC Comprehensive Plan, Bill B23-0736**

The Dupont Circle Citizens Association (DCCA) thanks Chairman Mendelson for the opportunity to testify, and for considering postponing the Council's final decision until the next Council session.

DCCA testified on the Comp Plan in 2018, and we were pleased that Framework passed by Council addressed some of our concerns. In particular, the Framework adopted in October 2019 strengthens language giving priority to the Plan to provide oversight of the zoning commission and thereby allowing citizens to appeal zoning commission decisions. In addition, there was added language on equity and affordable housing.

DCCA also submitted comments on the amended Plan released in October 2019, in which we focused on the Near Northwest Element. The Plan now under consideration, released in April, did incorporate one of our suggestion, to restore to every Area Element the section entitled "Planning and Development Priorities" in which communities detailed their hopes, desires, fears, and aspirations for their neighborhoods.

While the Plan has improved in some areas owing to feedback from ANCs, community organizations, and individuals, DCCA has remaining concerns with the amended Plan:

- We urge Council to postpone consideration of the Plan until it is possible to assess the long-term impacts of the COVID-19 epidemic on how we live, work and commute in DC. In particular, the need for a large increase in market rate housing, as projected by the plan, should be reconsidered until we have a better estimate of population growth.
- Although the Framework now includes additional language on housing equity and affordability, these principles are not adequately incorporated into the amended Plan. The Plan should include specific plans for community-led equitable development and much more emphasis on the preservation of existing affordable housing and building new affordable housing in all wards. Affordable housing should be defined to include housing that is affordable to families, existing residents, and people with low and moderate incomes (e.g., city workers, restaurant employees).
- At community meetings in 2019, Near Northwest residents expressed a strong desire to prevent future giveaways of city-owned land without adequate public benefit (e.g., significant amounts of housing that is affordable to low and moderate income residents, and the creation or preservation and maintenance of public green space). This matter is of particular importance to us given the pending conversion to public/private use indicated on the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) of the Reeves Center at 14th and U Streets (parcel 9813), the Division 3 Police Station (parcel 707), and potentially other city-owned parcels in Near Northwest, either within our just outside the borders of our association.

- The DCCA borders include all or parts of five historic districts – Dupont Circle, 16<sup>th</sup> Street, Greater 14<sup>th</sup> Street, Strivers Row and Massachusetts Avenue. These historic designations contribute to the unique character of our neighborhood, and therefore we request that the FLUM for our area remain as is in the Plan, except for changes of commercial zones to mixed use, south of Dupont Circle, to allow for the conversion of office buildings to housing.
- Although there is certainly room for more development in our area, both within and outside these historic districts, DCCA is concerned that the language on building design in the Dupont Circle Section 2112.3 has been seriously and consistently watered down in various versions of the plan. First, the October 2019 version replaced the words “consistent with” with “sensitive to.” Then, in the April 2020 version, the words “require” and “ensure” were replaced with “encourage” in three instances.<sup>1</sup> We request that the stronger language be reinstated.

**Submitted by:**  
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<sup>1</sup>• ~~Require~~ **Encourage** a scale of development ~~consistent with~~ **sensitive to** the nature and character of the Dupont Circle area in height and bulk;

• ~~Ensure a general compatibility in the scale of new buildings with older low-scale buildings by restricting the maximum permitted height and floor area ratio of the new buildings to that of the underlying zone~~ **Encourage a general compatibility in the scale of new buildings with older lowscale buildings by enacting sensitive design and appropriate transitions;**

• ~~Ensure~~ **Encourage** compatibility of development with the Comprehensive Plan, **including District-wide goals to address the affordable housing need, by promoting increased housing opportunities.** 2112.3