



C100 Subcommittee on Affordable Housing

GENERAL PRINCIPLES of AFFORDABLE HOUSING for DC

May 9, 2017

The mission of the C100 Housing Subcommittee is to promote an inclusive city by advocating policies and tools that will produce greater housing affordability and a larger variety of affordable units for low and moderate income people who earn 60% or less of the AMI (Area Median Income) and who should not have to pay more than 30% of their income for housing.

Realizing our ideal of inclusivity, economic diversity and a full range of housing opportunities is an urgent civic priority for the District of Columbia. Section 8 and Low Income Housing Tax Credits are expiring with the imminent threat that 70+ buildings will be converted to market rate housing and no longer available to people of limited means. Slum landlords are driving people with few choices to leave their virtually uninhabitable buildings. Neither code enforcement nor local funding programs to tackle the affordable housing crisis are keeping pace with the growing need for lower priced housing in the city; and a number of federal programs for low-income housing may be abolished in the 2018 budget.

Preservation of existing affordable housing and construction of new affordable housing are linked strategies. The city needs even more aggressive policies and actions to preserve and upgrade buildings for reasonably priced housing; to renovate vacant buildings as affordable housing; and to gain a greater percentage of affordable units, particularly for larger families, in new projects.

The Committee of 100 on the Federal City promotes a broad range of *simultaneous actions* to stem housing loss and spur housing production. Below are some of the strategies for **Housing Preservation** and **New Housing** that we think can produce good results.

(Over)

Housing Preservation

- Strengthen existing tools for housing and neighborhood preservation through:
 - Rent control – Inventory and publicize all rent controlled buildings and amend authorizing legislation to preserve their affordability.
 - Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA) – Amend processes to facilitate tenant purchase and provide financial assistance, including legal services, in order that tenants may properly exercise their TOPA rights.
 - District Opportunity to Purchase Act (DOPA) – Accelerate the process for finalizing implementing regulations and fund implementation.
 - Legal action against slum landlords through the Office of the Attorney General.
 - Greater application of successful models that maintain affordability in publicly subsidized housing over time such as limited equity housing cooperatives, land trusts, rental assistance and maintenance financing.
- Increase investment to maintain high quality public housing operated by the Housing Authority.
- Ensure that all federal HOME block grant funds are well used by the city to create and maintain affordable housing for low income residents.
- Urge the DC City Council to:
 - Require a report on vacant and under-utilized buildings, including residential buildings that need upgrading and direct Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to prioritize rehabilitation of these buildings.
 - Require DHCD to collect, maintain, and make publicly available comprehensive data on all affordable housing in the city (rents no more than 30% of low to moderate income based on DC metro area median income); and to identify which buildings receive federal or local subsidies.
 - Evaluate whether existing funding to assist low and moderate income property owners is targeted to the greatest need, is adequate to meet the demand for maintenance and upkeep, and is being efficiently administered.
- Prevent displacement of DC residents. Ensure that zoning, tax programs, and planning actions do not unfairly create a burden on low and moderate income residents and risk forcing these residents to abandon their homes.
- Protect existing affordable housing suitable for larger families (i.e., 3+ bedrooms).
- Preserve and upgrade existing housing consistent with both historic preservation and environmental sustainability benefits.
- Ensure that existing tenants are protected, afforded first rights under TOPA to buy their homes, allowed to continue their tenancies with minimal disruption; or, have the right to return or the right to an equivalent relocation if they must re-locate when re-development is proposed on rent controlled, subsidized, or other housing identified by DHCD.
- Require the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA) to notify the Zoning Commission (ZC) of property violations by any landlord who seeks zoning approval for new development, and require clean hands certification prior to ZC consideration of new construction project approval.
- Anticipate and mitigate the potential unintended consequences of planning actions that incentivize the conversion of existing housing to commercial, office or other non-residential uses.
- Establish a Preservation Unit tasked with being the District's central resource for housing preservation as recommended by the Preservation Strikeforce.

New Housing

- Conform development of new affordable housing to relevant guidelines in the city's Comprehensive Plan.
- Support substantial funding for both preservation and new low-income housing in the city's annual budgets.
- Ensure a greater supply of new affordable housing suitable for families (i.e., 3+ bedrooms).
- Require affordable housing in all residential developments of 10+ units, including those in the Central Employment Area, that permit or receive bonus density including transfer of development rights.
- Approve Planned Unit Developments (PUD) only if they add significantly to the number of affordable housing units in the neighborhood and are consistent with the Future Land Use Map of the Comprehensive Plan.
- Give priority to PUDs near Metro stations that provide a majority of affordable units and include a significant number of multiple bedroom units affordable for families.
- Expand opportunities to build well-designed affordable housing consistent with neighborhood scale and character on District-owned properties, underused commercial and industrial sites, vacant buildings, and vacant infill sites scattered throughout the city.
- Repurpose vacant land and vacant non-residential buildings that are no longer economically viable for their original purpose as affordable housing through zoning, implementation of DOPA, and financial incentives.
- Deny incentives for development that would replace existing buildings that reasonably meet current zone development standards and that could be retrofitted as affordable housing.
- Require developers who purchase publicly owned buildings, including DOPA buildings, to avoid involuntary displacement and provide additional affordable housing and complementary neighborhood services and retail where permitted.
- Require DMPED to give priority to planning and economic development in neighborhoods with a predominance of newly-constructed, retrofitted or continuing affordable housing.
- Ensure that community necessities such as parks, playgrounds, recreation centers, schools and public transportation are available for residents of every affordable housing project, particularly in low income communities.

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