



Supplemental Testimony **B23-0736, the Comprehensive Plan Amendment Act of 2020** **November 20, 2020**

We are gravely disappointed in the thrust of the amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and urge that Council to reject them. As was apparent during the hearings on November 12-13, nearly all of the Black residents (other than those who represented their employers) expressed both knowledge of the amendment text and anger that Council's adoption will continue to displace communities of color, clearing the path for the for-profit real estate industry to assume even greater control over Washington's demographics and physical form. Their analysis was in stark contrast to the simplistic script that many White witnesses parroted: immediately pass the 1,500 page Plan as it is.

We urge the Council to scrutinize the language changes and the uniform map changes that have no obvious benefits for residents and will create intentional mischief for our communities and cherished historic resources. We implore you to stand back and see that this plan will deepen the serious divisions in the city.

Residents have never been as cynical as they are now. You cannot remove residents' voices and not expect a reaction. You cannot ignore the frustration and hardship of families that are burdened in so many other ways, and not expect a reaction. You cannot demonize some residents or parts of the city to advance a development agenda and not expect a reaction.

The amendments are based on several questionable assumptions and assertions:

First, the amendments assume large population growth and therefore, a pressing need for much more market-rate housing. Yet in-migration has declined nearly every year since 2012. According to the Office of the Chief Financial Officer, D.C.'s population grew by only **4,202 in 2019**, the smallest increase in a decade, with a **total net increase in the adult population of only 398**.

Second, creating affordable housing is the rationale for radical densification of large swaths of land throughout the city. But the amendments will not achieve the affordable housing goals on which so many people in the city say they agree, many of which are not outlined in the amendments:

- Deeply affordable housing in all wards for those earning 50% or less of MFI;
- Assurances against displacement;
- Substantial new city investments in public housing;
- Expansion of rent control;
- Extension of IZ to the Central Employment Area;
- Lifetime affordability requirements for investment of public funds;
- Permanent supportive housing for the unhoused;
- Target public investment to improve services and amenities in underserved areas; and
- Equitable development that mandates full participation by long-term community members in the destiny of their neighborhoods.

Third, many specific terms in the Plan have been changed to weaken the protections of both the character of our existing neighborhoods and the image of the city itself. A number of witnesses called out the administration's ploy to undercut the ability of citizens to participate meaningfully in the planning process.

Finally, the testimony made abundantly clear that the city is being sold a bill of goods by those who will profit under the guise that they want to help residents when, in fact, their schemes will primarily benefit themselves.

To achieve racial and economic equity in this city, and to gain the confidence and community buy-in necessary to do that, we recommend that Council:

- Retain the current plan as a starting point, as flawed as it may be;
- Immediately focus our city government capacities on implementing best practices in community visioning and planning to develop community-driven Small Area Plans; and
- Identify specific sites and potentially convertible spaces and buildings in each ward that can produce affordable housing to strengthen our neighborhoods and enable low income families to achieve a better and more equitable future.

Submitted by

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