



The Roosevelt Network at George Washington University's Testimony the Updates to DC's Comprehensive Plan

Dear DC Council,

I am here to represent the Roosevelt Network at George Washington University, a student run think tank working to write and advocate progressive policies across the DMV area. As students at GW and residents of the District, our organization provides a unique perspective on DC government policy. Like many other groups throughout the district, we are especially concerned about the housing affordability crisis and the high levels of displacement currently occurring within the city. DC has been experiencing a gentrification driven phenomenon known as "Black Flight," as the black share of the district's housing population has fallen from over 70% in 1970, to under 50% in 2015. We believe that the Comprehensive Plan must be used to help address this crisis and appreciate the steps the currently proposed updates to the plan would take to address this issue.

In that vein, we are not opposed to the utilization of a public-private partnership to combat the crisis period. However, we remain concerned that the production incentive policy outlined in Policy *H- 1.1.2* lacks sufficient oversight and enforcement fortitude to police tax credit fraud. More robust language, including a reaffirmation of the Attorney General's power of oversight as the chief law enforcement officer in the city, **MUST** be included in the plan.

Additionally, we believe that mixed-income and mix-used developments in stable neighborhoods should be heavily encouraged, which would improve the overall quality of life and access to goods and services for low-income residents and their children.

We are also concerned with two sections in the economic development component of the plan. The first is that the plan takes little to no action to protect the large number of workers throughout the District that are being taken advantage of by companies such as Uber, Lyft, GrubHub and others (See Action *ED-1.3.J*). The District should commit to taking larger and more comprehensive steps than protect these workers. The second is that language in the comprehensive plan encourages "performance-based incentive packages to encourage large corporations to locate and maintain their offices in the District" (See Policy *ED-2.1.2*). It has been proven time and time again (most recently with Amazon in New York) that massive tax handouts to corporations aren't required to get them to locate in a city. Washington DC, and the surrounding areas, is a wonderful area in which to live and work. These incentives are unnecessary and will only eat away at the city's tax base.

Finally, we would like to comment on the near Northwest portion of the plan. Having Howard, Georgetown, and George Washington University's main campuses covered within this element of the plan means that it will have significant ramifications for the city's student population. As a student run organization, we hope that we can provide a relevant perspective on school specific issues and the wider policy in the near Northwest region.

We appreciate the commitment to providing more affordable housing in the area, like the redevelopment of Parcel 42 into affordable housing units and the implementation of DC Housing Preservation Strike's to protect existing affordable housing in the area and prevent displacement. We also appreciate the deletion of certain high limits in the Dupont Circle area and the development of new affordable housing in Foggy Bottom. However, we are concerned about changes to the existing plan that would eliminate language to promote investment in the area's affordable housing stock. For example, we are against the deletion of language that laid out specific concrete methods to encourage affordable housing in Policy *NNW 1.1.9*. We are also against the replacement of the phrase "provide incentives" with the weaker "support" affordable housing in Action *NNW-2.1.D*.

Outside of housing, we support the creation of more multimodal transportation in near Northwest, especially developments of better public transportation to get to and from Georgetown. Better public transport will allow all city residents, no matter their level of income, to access previously unreachable jobs and economic opportunities, while also helping businesses attract new customers and grow.

While we appreciate the plan's commitment to protecting the Georgetown Waterfront from environmental degradation, we are deeply concerned about the deletion of Policy *NNW-1.2.10*, which encourages sustainable development in all developments in the Northwest region. It is crucial that the city maintains its commitment to protect the environment, especially in areas with as many new developments as near Northwest.

Finally, we wish to touch on changes to GW and student specific elements of the plan. We support changes to the plan that would encourage renovations, instead of expansions, to student dormitory housing (Policy *NNW-1.1.8*). We also appreciate the plan's reaffirmed promise that GW will stay within its campus plan boundaries and discontinue undergraduate off-campus housing. However, in the next section (Policy *NNW-2.5.1*) the plan seems to contradict this promise by replacing wording that the University should maintain "its current boundaries and enrollment" with the phrase "applicable limits for both campus development and enrollment." This change creates a more lenient limit to expansion and is deeply concerning. GW already has a large portfolio of real estate holding throughout the city, owning over \$1 billion dollars in real estate according to their most recent financial statements. They do NOT need greater expansion. To prevent the University and its students from crowding out existing communities, the Comprehensive Plan should ensure that the University be held to its current physical boundaries.



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While our group has comments and concerns on other components of the plan, we will focus on comments here on the Near Northwest section of the plan. Having Howard, Georgetown, and George Washington University's main campuses covered within this element of the plan means that it will have significant ramifications for the city's student population. As a student run organization, we hope that we can provide a relevant perspective on school specific issues and the wider policy in the near Northwest region.

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