

Brookland Neighborhood Civic Association

1502 Otis Street, N.E. Washington, D.C. 20017

January 7, 2010

Councilmember Harry Thomas, Jr.
District of Columbia City Council
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Councilmember Thomas,

Happy New Year to you and your staff.

I'm writing to you on behalf of the Brookland Neighborhood Civic Association regarding recent events related to the District of Columbia's Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan provides overall guidance on planning and development in the District of Columbia and the DC Office of Planning (OP) is currently engaged in a process to consider amendments to the Plan.

Several weeks ago, it came to our attention that the Brookland Community Development Corporation (CDC) and several Brookland property owners had teamed together to develop and submit a set of proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan. These proposed amendments were submitted to the Office of Planning. (Text of these proposed amendments attached.) These amendments would significantly change current zoning and development requirements along 12th Street and surrounding areas.

On January 4, 2010, BNCA members and other interested neighborhood parties received a briefing on these proposed amendments for the first time. The DC Office of Planning will be transmitting these and other proposed amendments to you and the DC City Council for approval in the near future. I am writing to apprise you of substantial concerns that were expressed by BNCA members and others at the January 4th briefing.

Concerns raised included the following:

1. First and, perhaps, foremost, the failure of the CDC and the amendments' authors to engage the community on a proposal that, if adopted, would have profound effects on residents and businesses, alike.
2. The adverse effects of the proposed up-zoning (to moderate-density development) on areas currently zoned residential. Individuals from the block of Newton Street between 12th and 10th Streets, in particular, expressed profound concerns about the effects on their homes.
3. The adverse effects of the proposed up-zoning (from low- to moderate-density development on 12th Street in the area north of Otis Street) on businesses in the current core Brookland

business district between Monroe and Otis Streets. New up-zoned development on 12th Street north of Otis Street could exacerbate the problems currently facing the Brookland core area.

4. The effects of the proposed up-zoning on the current Planned Unit Development (PUD) zoning approval process. The proposed up-zoning would grant developers "matter-of-right" approval to build their projects with little or no input from nearby residents or ANC representatives. The proposed up-zoning would eliminate current PUD regulatory requirements for public and ANC participation in such things as building design, heights and density, and would eliminate requirements for provision of public benefits.
5. A lack of faith in the effectiveness of the proposed "Transferable Development Rights" regime for preserving historic homes and businesses.
6. Skepticism about the need to develop large areas for parking when existing possibilities go unused and untapped and when the city is trying to promote Transit-Oriented Development.

These proposals first surfaced in the context of the development of the Brookland/CUA Metro Station Small Area Plan issued a little over a year ago. Community interests in protecting the lower density scale of Brookland neighborhoods and in preserving opportunities for residents to have a say in development prevailed and the proposals were rejected decisively by the Office of Planning. Today, in the context of amending the District's Comprehensive Plan, the Office of Planning is again recommending against the proposed amendments for the same reasons. ANC5A also considered the proposals and submitted comments rejecting them.

Brookland residents share an interest in bringing positive changes and new businesses and services to our neighborhood. We want to be involved in decisions related to new development. We stand ready to work together with neighborhood businesses and other interested parties to help bring about positive new development changes which also preserve the character and livability of our neighborhood. When the Comprehensive Plan comes before you, we hope you will oppose any amendments that, if adopted, would foreclose that opportunity.

Sincerely,

Caroline Petti, President

Attachment: Text of Proposed Amendments to the 2006 Comprehensive Plan submitted by Brookland Community Development Corporation/Lavinia Wohlfarth and Kilmurry Properties/Joe Bender and Brendan Magner