

March 16, 2018

Dear DC Council Chairman Mendelson, Ward 5 Councilmember McDuffie, and the other Members of the City Council:

We write to you today on behalf of the civic, community, and citizens associations we represent in several of Washington, DC's prominent Ward 5 neighborhoods. We wish to express our deep concern and opposition to the draft Framework Element of the Comprehensive Plan presented to the Council by the Mayor and the DC Office of Planning. We urge you to return this draft to the Office of Planning, with directions to conduct a public notice and comment process, prior to Council consideration and enactment. We also believe this draft is in need of significant revision to better protect the public interest in city zoning and land use decisions.

We strongly believe in the importance of the Comprehensive Plan as a meaningful and effective guide to zoning and land use decisions in the City, and we also recognize the importance of amending the Plan periodically to account for changes that are occurring in the City. What should be foremost in city planners' minds in undertaking that periodic reassessment, however, ought to be the good of the City as a whole, especially its current residents and most vulnerable, who face inordinate economic pressure and cultural and lifestyle shifts resulting from the "boom times" DC is currently having.

Unfortunately, the draft of the "Framework Element" that you have been asked to consider – the chapter that sets the tone for the whole Plan – does not tackle the real problems that require solutions through planning and policy. The changes we have seen instead appear to be calculated to make it as easy as possible for developers to build what they want and where they want, without regard to public necessities such as affordable housing, sustainable traffic management, protection of historical character, green space, and other public amenities.

- The draft minimizes attention to the problems of displacement, lack of affordability, economic opportunity, and quality of life for existing residents.
- The draft ignores the importance of green space, environmental values, historic preservation, and community and cultural continuity as markers of a great city.
- The draft opens the door to out-of-scale over-development throughout Ward 5's modest, low-density family homes, row houses, low-rise apartment buildings, and small businesses.
- The draft weakens the Plan so that it no longer functions as a useful guide for agencies and courts in making land use determinations.
- The draft sets the stage for eliminating opportunities for public input and community involvement in development decisions where we live.

These deficiencies in the current draft of the Framework Element will affect Ward 5 disproportionately. According to the Plan, over the coming years the Upper Northwest will experience more growth than any other area of the city. Ward 5 saw no less than 61 proposed changes to both the Generalized Policy Map (GPM) and the Future Land Use Map (FLUM). That is twice as many as any other ward in the City. Most of these came from private developers

and property owners interested in building on their properties outside the scales currently contemplated by the existing plan.

The best solution to the deficiencies in the draft Framework Element would be for the Council to send it back to the Office of Planning with direction to undertake a public comment period on the current draft, hold hearings, and then issue a revised draft (preferably one reflecting the concerns of our communities, as outlined above), which the Council may then consider. This is what the Office of Planning stated that it intended to do when it initiated this process well over a year ago. It remains the best course of action. The Plan is far too important a document for either the Mayor or the Council to revise it hastily and without full consideration of the lasting impacts it will have over the coming years and decades.

We thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

*/s/ David Conrad*  
President, Michigan Park Citizens Association

*/s/ Charlotte Lewis*  
President, Queens Chapel Civic Association

*/s/ Kevin Mullone*  
President of the Langdon Park Community Association

*/s/ Daniel Schramm*  
President, Brookland Neighborhood Civic Association

cc:

Eric Shaw, Director, DC Office of Planning  
Colleen Willger, Senior Neighborhood Planner, DC Office of Planning