

**DC's Comprehensive Plan
Generalized Policy Map & Future Land Use Map**

“Where the Rubber Hits the Road”

**A Presentation by Caroline Petti
to the
Grass Roots Planning Coalition
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Good afternoon.

The Grass Roots Planning Coalition has spent many months discussing and debating the District of Columbia's Comprehensive Plan. You weighed in on the DC Council's consideration of the Framework Element of the Comprehensive Plan. That is behind us now - the Comprehensive Plan Framework Amendment Act is now D.C. Law L23-0127 - and the DC Office of Planning has submitted proposed amendments to the rest of the Comprehensive Plan to the Council of the District of Columbia for the Council's consideration.

Besides the Framework Element, there are twelve other elements that make up DC's Comprehensive Plan. There are also “Area Elements” and last, but not least, there are two Maps: the Generalized Policy Map and the Future Land Use Map.

These are not just any maps. These are very, very important maps. In my view, these maps are where the ‘rubber hits the road’. They play a leading role - if not THE leading role - in determining future land-use, growth, and development in our city.

What are these maps? Well, there are two of them. There's the Generalized Policy Map (GPM) and the Future Land Use Map (FLUM). They both cover the entire city and they map out in different color-coded categories desired land-use and density across the city.

The Generalized Policy Map depicts intended land-use using categories like “neighborhood conservation”, “commercial areas” and “institutional uses”.

Here is a copy of the current Generalized Policy Map:



You can find an easier-to-read version of the GPM on-line at:
<https://planning.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/op/publication/attachments/2011CompPlanPolicy.pdf>

The Future Land Use Map - or “FLUM” - depicts the intended density of locations across the city using categories like low, moderate, medium and high residential and commercial. The FLUM also identifies typical density and character of buildings associated with each category as well as representative zoning districts.

Let’s look at one category - “Moderate Density Residential” - as an example:

“This designation is used to define neighborhoods generally, but not exclusively, suited for row houses as well as low-rise garden apartment complexes. The designation also applies to areas characterized by a mix of single-family homes, two- to four-unit buildings, row houses, and low-rise apartment buildings. In some neighborhoods with this designation, there may also be existing multi-story apartments, many built decades ago when the areas were zoned for more dense uses (or were not zoned at all). Density in Moderate Density Residential areas is typically calculated either as the number of dwelling units per minimum lot area, or as a FAR up to 1.8, although greater density may be possible when complying with Inclusionary Zoning or when approved through a Planned Unit Development. The R-3, RF, and RA-2 Zone Districts are consistent with the Moderate Density Residential category, and other zones may also apply.”

Future development in areas identified on the FLUM as “Moderate Density Residential”, would generally have to correspond with this representative description and zoning. Descriptions for each of the FLUM categories can be found in Section 227 of the newly-enacted D.C. Law L23-0127 “Comprehensive Plan Framework Amendment Act of 2019”.

Here is a copy of the existing Future Land Use Map:

District of Columbia Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map

Purpose

This map is part of the Comprehensive Plan of the District of Columbia. It addresses land use and transportation planning for the city. The purpose of this map is to show the future land use and transportation for the District of Columbia. It is intended to guide the development of the city and to provide a framework for future planning.

Status of this Map

This map was created as part of the Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map and Transportation Policy (the Approved Plan) of 2011. It was approved by the Council on December 4, 2011.

Guidelines for Using this Map

Together with the Detailed Policy Map, this map is intended to provide a general guide for development and conservation decisions. The following guidelines apply to its use and interpretation:

This is not a zoning map. Zoning maps are site-specific and establish detailed requirements for setbacks, height, use, parking, and other standards. This map shows the general land use and transportation categories and is intended to be used in conjunction with zoning maps. By definition, this map is to be interpreted broadly.

This map is a generalized depiction of intended uses in the future year of the Comprehensive Plan, roughly 20 years in the future from the date of publication. It is not a map of existing and use, although it may show future uses for an area as to come as from the zoning map.

Categories shown for any given area on this map generally reflect contiguous properties on a block. Individual buildings may be higher or lower than these heights within each area.

Zoning of any given area should be guided by this map, interpreted in conjunction with the text of the Comprehensive Plan including the Detailed Policy Map and other documents as well as approved Special Area Plans.

Designation of an area with a particular land use category does not necessarily mean that the most intense zoning district included in the land use category is automatically permitted. A range of densities and intensities applies within each category, and the use of different zoning districts within each category should reflect this range.

Some areas identified may be compatible with more than one Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map designation.

The intent of this map is to show use rather than ownership. However, in a number of cases ownership is indicated to note the District's limited jurisdiction. Specifically, corporate headquarters are shown as "Headquarters" even though the actual site includes housing and industry (e.g., Balling Air Force Base), offices (e.g., the Federal Triangle), hospitals (e.g., Walter Reed), and other activities.

This map does not show existing or intended or regulated use and zoning. If a change in use occurs on these sites in the future (for example, if a school becomes a park or a residence), the new designation should be comparable in density or intensity to those in the vicinity unless otherwise stated in the Comprehensive Plan and Subarea or an Approved Subarea Plan.

Streets and public rights-of-way are not an explicit land use category on this map. Various uses are shown, but the street grid and public rights-of-way are not explicitly shown as the street grid.

Urban renewal plans for parts of the District of Columbia, including Shaw, Columbia, and Fort Lincoln.

These plans remain in effect and their controlling provisions must be considered as land use and zoning decisions are made.

This map and the Detailed Policy Map are not intended to be used in isolation. They are intended to be used in conjunction with the Comprehensive Plan and other documents. The Comprehensive Plan is intended to be a dynamic document that is periodically updated in response to the changing needs of the city. Residents are invited to provide input to the process through public hearings and the Council. In all cases, such changes require public hearings before the Council and ample opportunities for public input. The process for Comprehensive Plan amendments is described in the Implementation Section of the Comprehensive Plan.

The generalized depiction shown on this map is intended to be generally correct as shown, and it is the joint action of the map and its incorporation in the Comprehensive Plan. Lack of individual copies of this map may give the impression of more detail, but any information not clearly visible at the scale of the print edition of the map has not been reviewed by Council. It may or may not be correct, and does not affect the policy of a particular land use category.

LEGEND

Residential Land Use Categories

- Low Density Residential**
Single detached houses, duplexes, townhouses, and other detached housing units with less than 10 units per acre.
- Moderate Density Residential**
Single detached houses, duplexes, townhouses, and other detached housing units with 10 to 20 units per acre.
- Medium Density Residential**
Single detached houses, duplexes, townhouses, and other detached housing units with 20 to 40 units per acre.
- High Density Residential**
Single detached houses, duplexes, townhouses, and other detached housing units with 40 to 100 units per acre.

Commercial Land Use Categories

- Low Density Commercial**
Retail, professional, and other commercial uses with less than 10 units per acre.
- Moderate Density Commercial**
Retail, professional, and other commercial uses with 10 to 20 units per acre.
- High Density Commercial**
Retail, professional, and other commercial uses with 20 to 40 units per acre.

Production, Distribution, and Repair

- Production, Distribution, and Repair**
Manufacturing, warehousing, and other industrial uses.

Public and Institutional Land Use Categories

- Federal**
Federal government buildings and other federal facilities.
- Local Public Facilities**
District government buildings and other public facilities.
- Institutional**
Hospitals, universities, and other institutional facilities.
- Parks, Recreation, and Open Space**
Parks, recreation areas, and other open space.

Mixed Land Use

- Mixed Land Use**
Mixed-use developments and other mixed-use areas.

Water Bodies

- Water Bodies**
Lakes, rivers, and other water bodies.

Metro Stations

- Metro Stations**
Locations of Metro stations.

Metro Lines

- Metro Lines**
Routes of Metro lines.

1 inch equals 1500 feet

0 1,500 3,000 6,000 Feet

0 100 200 Feet

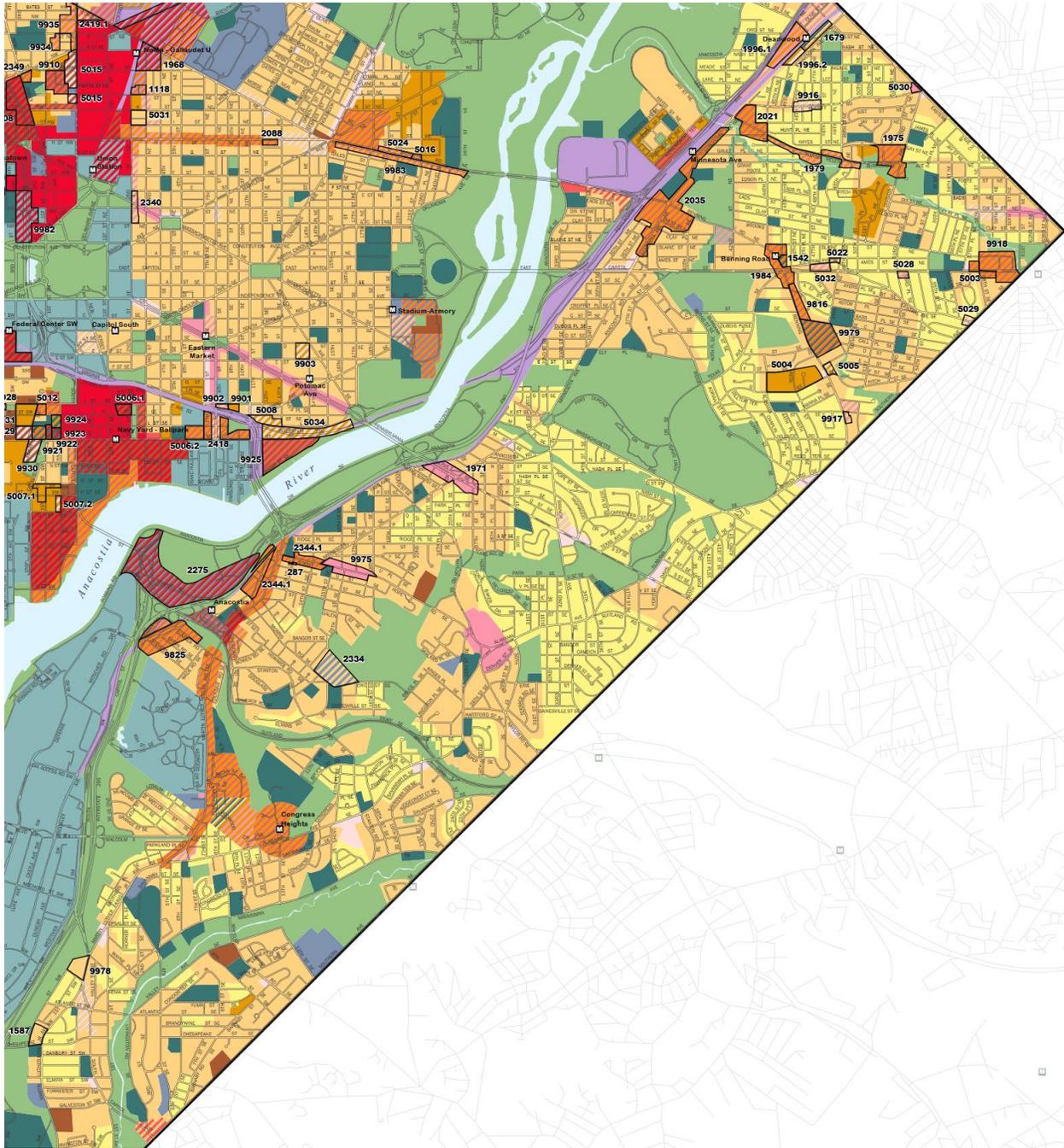
Government of the District of Columbia
Office of Planning - January 2013

You can find an easier-to-read version of the FLUM on-line at:
<https://planning.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/op/publication/attachments/ComPlanLandUseMap.pdf>

The Office of Planning is proposing a large number of changes to the FLUM. Many of these changes were initially proposed by developers and/or property owners and most, if not all, propose a change to a higher density category. Hence, the term “up-FLUMing”.

All of the Office of Planning’s proposed changes to the GPM and the FLUM can be found on the Office of Planning’s Comprehensive Plan website at <https://plandc.dc.gov/page/future-land-use-map-and-generalized-policy-map>. There you’ll find interactive maps and you can focus-in on whatever location or neighborhood you’re interested in. All of OP’s proposed changes are outlined, numbered, and color-coded so you can see clearly what’s being proposed. (E.g., See the following two FLUM snips from different sections of DC.) These proposed changes are now pending before the DC Council for approval. They will not go into effect until they are approved.

Here's a snip of OP proposed FLUM changes east-of the river:



The GPM and the FLUM are NOT zoning maps. When and if the Council approves them, it won't mean an automatic re-zoning of the city. But these maps carry legal weight and they set the stage for re-zoning.

Let me describe how that process typically unfolds:

If the Council approves the GPM and FLUM changes, developers, property owners, and/or the Office of Planning will then move to submit "map amendment" requests to the DC Zoning Commission. They may even submit a package of multiple requests. Map amendment requests are requests to re-zone properties. Most of these will likely be requests for higher, denser zones.

The timeline for these requests is hard to predict. It will depend on development schedules and other priorities, but it's a safe bet that the requests will start to roll in to the Zoning Commission almost immediately after the Comprehensive Plan and map changes are enacted into law. Some are starting to roll in now. Many developers are sitting on developable properties waiting for OP, the Council, and the Zoning Commission to up-zone them so that they can build denser, more profitable developments.

Zoning regulations require applicants to 1) send a written notice of intent to file a map amendment application to the Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) and the owners of all property within 200 feet and 2) make all reasonable efforts to attend a duly-noticed meeting of the affected ANC. This notice and comment period must last at least 45 days. The submission must make the case that the GPM and FLUM designations applicable to the location(s) at issue support a re-zoning, as do other Elements and provisions of the Comprehensive Plan. Zoning Commission rules of practice and procedure for map amendment applications can be found in DCMR Title 11 Subtitle Z [https://dcoz.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/dcoz/publication/attachments/Subtitle Z_2.pdf](https://dcoz.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/dcoz/publication/attachments/Subtitle_Z_2.pdf)

To approve the requests, the Zoning Commission must consider the applicable provisions of the various elements of the Comprehensive Plan, applicable GPM and FLUM designations, and any pertinent Small Area Plan. After input from the Office of Planning, the applicant, ANCs and the public, the Zoning Commission will approve the request if it determines it is "not inconsistent" with the Comprehensive Plan.

Once the map amendments are approved and properties re-zoned, developers can build matter-of-right on the property. They must comply with the development standards (e.g., height limits, density limits, lot size requirements, etc.) and use restrictions specified for the applicable zone, but unlike a Planned Unit Development (PUD), for matter-of-right projects, there is no required opportunity for ANC or public comment and no required opportunity for negotiating affordable housing or other community amenities.

So, where does all this leave us? Where it leaves us is: If you have an opinion about land use and future development in your neighborhood or elsewhere, now is the time to engage: before the DC Council approves final changes to the Comprehensive Plan and Maps. If you wait until map amendment requests are before the Zoning Commission, it will be too late. Start by going to the OP website and taking a close look at the GPM and FLUM maps. If you have your own preferred changes or concerns about OP's, now is the time to share those preferences and concerns - with lot and square specificity - with your Ward Councilmember, Council Chairman Mendelson, the at-large Councilmembers, and others who you think may exert influence on your behalf.

DC residents have as much right to chart a future for where we live, work, and play as anyone. If you have a vision, if you have a preference, if you have a concern, now is the time to express it.

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