

Testimony of Daniel Schramm
President, Brookland Neighborhood Civic Association
Before the D.C. City Council, Committee of the Whole
Regarding the Comprehensive Plan Amendment Act of 2020, Bill No. 23-736
Friday, Nov. 13, 2020

My name is Daniel Schramm and I am the president of the Brookland Neighborhood Civic Association. Today I want to re-emphasize our goals for the Comp Plan in Brookland, and then highlight three corrections the Council should make to the Future Land Use Map, consistent with those goals.

The Council should not blind itself to the current public health crisis and what it could mean for future development in this City. They say generals are always fighting the last war. I fear our planners—whom we pay to exercise expert *foresight*—are doing just that. The latest data suggest the D.C. real estate market may be on the verge of a downturn. That would not be the worst thing for renters and first-time home buyers. It would not be the worst thing for the preservation of historical buildings and the City's green spaces. It also presents an opportunity to review the Comp Plan with an eye to balancing multiple public goods, rather than with a myopic focus on clearing the way for new, private construction heedless of all other values.

Let me be clear: BNCA supports the need for more affordable housing in our area. We support in-fill develop and increased density—done in the right way and where it is appropriate:

- Through enforceable public-participation requirements, including a PUD process for large-scale projects;
- Supporting working families through appropriate size and pricing;
- Near Metro stations with walkable access to groceries and local businesses;
- On under-used or blighted lands;
- Protecting nearby green space, tree canopy, and stormwater retention;
- Preserving historical structures; AND
- Critically - in service to, rather than displacing, current residents, especially People of Color.

OP's draft FLUM gets this wrong in three specific ways in Brookland:

- It designates the Howard Divinity Campus and the Franciscan Monastery for future mixed-use development.¹ These large properties are a long walk to any Metro Station, provide valuable green space and environmental benefits, and have enormous historical value. Any extensive development of these lands would be opportunistic, not good city planning.
- Second, it fails to designate the Brookland Green as “park” space, instead covering the entire area around the Brookland station under medium-density mixed-use.² This is inconsistent with the Brookland-CUA Small Area Plan and

¹ FLUM Map Amendments 649 and 2348.

² FLUM Map Amendment 9997.

with the agreement reached by Councilmember McDuffie for a land swap with WMATA to protect this park in perpetuity. The Council must fix this.

- Finally, OP proposes to designate all of the area along Reed Street for high-density development, right up to existing low-density residential housing along 10th Street and Evarts. This is bad planning by any measure. BNCA enacted a resolution this summer for a *tiered* approach to density at this site, *balancing* the need for in-fill growth with existing residents' quality of life. We urge the Council to adopt this proposal.

I'll close with this observation: we expect opposition to these last two changes on the ground that the FLUM isn't designed to govern at the parcel scale. Yet just look at the numerous parcel-specific changes OP proposes at the behest of private developers throughout Brookland.³ It is that double-standard between private and public interests that we urge the Council to correct. Thank you.

³ See, e.g., FLUM Map Amendments 1603, 1866, 2061.5, 2081, 2426, 2503, and 9803.