To: Office of Planning

From: Brookland Neighborhood Civic Association

Date: May 15, 2026 (Updated June 6, 2026)

Re: Feedback on initial draft DC 2050 Future Land Use Map

On April 21, 2026, Brookland Neighborhood Civic Association (BNCA) held an open forum with representatives of Office of Planning (OP) who presented the draft DC 2050 Future Land Use Map. Approximately 65 people attended a standing room only meeting. BNCA was proud to hold this meeting on behalf of our members and neighbors. Relatedly, we have, over the past year, undertaken an extensive community discussion about the 12th Street business corridor, culminating in our recent report about its future. We have also over the past several years convened many community discussions about large-scale development projects in Brookland. Here are key takeaways from these experiences as they relate to the draft FLUM:

- **Brooklanders are very proud and protective of the neighborhood**. It was noted that the FLUM was recently updated and expanded just five years ago. The proposal to up-zone portions of Brookland to Moderate Density Residential place type sparked heated discussion. Most participants seemed to agree that the Moderate Density place type is appropriate for the Rhode Island Avenue corridor. However, upzoning the adjacent residential blocks that extend into Brookland proper was controversial. Similarly, some residents raised concern about the application of the Moderate Density place type to the area south of the Monroe Street Bridge, as this area has already been the subject of upzoning through the 901 Monroe Planned Unit Development process. Another contingent of attendees supported adding density to Brookland. Discussion of the "moderate scale neighborhood" place type revealed some areas of narrow consensus (e.g., upzoning to allow duplexes) but also lack of consensus (e.g., apartment buildings).

- **Brookland has a backlog of unbuilt projects**. The last update to the FLUM, in 2021, included upzoned areas that have yet to be built out. More generally, several large-scale projects (PUDs) have been approved but yet to break ground. Thes projects include 901 Monroe Street, Reed Streed, and Brookland Lanes, which, taken together, would account for over 1250 new residential units. In this context, some residents expressed skepticism about the need for additional upzoning in new areas.
- **Infill development has a mixed track record**. Brookland has seen its share of infill development along mixed-use corridors. Many of these projects are successful. However, a trend of declining project quality has been apparent in some more recent builds on single-family lots, perhaps reflecting the current economic climate. Some of these buildings are generic "shoe boxes" constructed of builder grade materials, with inadequate provision for trash, poorly considered interfaces at the sidewalk, etc. On some blocks we see infill buildings interleaved among single family houses, which is both inefficient and creates more conflict points with longtime neighbors. Street parking is also an issue as new buildings might bring 20 units to a lot previously containing a single house.
- **Brookland's historic 12th Street retail corridor is at a crossroads**. The importance of the 12th Street corridor is underscored by a new DC Preservation League project documenting its history over 100 years. BNCA's 12th Street report calls for several measures to protect and strengthen the corridor. Recent experience with retail-skeptical developers raises the prospect of retail erosion, which could lead to corridor collapse if retail storefronts are not protected during any future (re)development on 12th Street. While new development has the potential to increase density and stimulate demand for retail in the area generally, we also note that long delayed projects such as the ones described above can keep properties "dark" for many years, which reinforces the retail erosion risk in the near term.
- **Brooklanders want development with purpose**. Many Brooklanders see a need for community benefits that go beyond increasing the housing supply. For example: Improving/expanding green spaces, preventing displacement of longtime residents, preserving adequate transit capacity, and incentivizing family-sized units and condominium ownership in new multi-unit developments.

Our understanding is that OP is seeking input by May 17 that will inform a revised draft FLUM to be put out for comment later in 2026. Based on the discussion and observations outlined above, we offer some questions to OP. We hope consideration of these questions

will result in a new version of the FLUM that drives greater consensus around needs of current and future Brookland residents.

1. **Does the existing FLUM already provide sufficient capacity for growth in Brookland?** The 2021 FLUM contains many areas designated for higher residential density that have not yet been built, including the approved PUDs mentioned above and other areas that are earlier in the planning process (e.g., the Brookland-CUA metro station). Moreover, while the Residential Low Density category that characterizes most of Brookland under the 2021 FLUM contemplates both single-family detached housing (i.e., R-1 zoning) and semi-detached housing (R-2), most of this area in Brookland is currently zoned R-1. In other words, the existing map includes built-in headroom for potential *neighborhood-wide* upzoning to R-2, which, over time, could bring more density. Lastly, might there be room for an intermediate zoning category in-between the Small Scale and Moderate Density Residential place types, e.g., encompassing row homes (R-3) but not apartment buildings (RA-1)? Such a place type might be more appropriate as a "step down" from Moderate Density to Small Scale Residential areas where appropriate.

2. **Can the map be defined more surgically?** As mentioned earlier, neighbors at our open forum seemed to agree that the Moderate Density place type is appropriate for Rhode Island Avenue corridor. However, several neighbors raised concern about extending this place type north of Rhode Island Avenue. Similarly, feelings pertain to extending Moderate Density south of the 901 Monroe development. Could these areas be treated as step down zoning (row houses but not multifamily buildings) to ease the transition to surrounding Small Scale residential area?

3. **How can we protect the 12th Street Retail corridor**? As mentioned above, we are concerned about retail corridor erosion along 12th Street NE, especially in the core blocks north of Monroe Street NE. 12th Street has served as Brookland's "village center" for over 100 years—we need to ensure that it will remain so in the future. The "Neighborhood Center" place type would allow, *but not require*, retail storefronts. Can OP create a new overlay category (e.g., "Retail Corridor") that envisions "like for like" replacement of retail storefronts in any future development along 12th Street?

4. **How will the FLUM and related policies ensure smart development patterns**? Potential areas of applicability include: (a) encouraging home ownership in new developments, (b) default Residential Parking Permit (RPP) limits—especially near public transit hubs, (c) economic incentives to prioritize construction of already-approved projects, (d) avoidance of inefficient and conflict-prone "gap-toothed" infill development, (e) incentives to provide and maintain community green spaces,

and (f) streetscape compatibility guidelines to encourage frontages that are aesthetically and functionally compatible with the surrounding neighborhood. We are not certain where these kinds of considerations are reflected in the comprehensive plan, but we do believe that they are an essential adjunct to the FLUM.

5. **Is the proposed FLUM planning to expand the 12th Street "neighborhood center" to adjoining side streets?** The DC2050 map does not call out 12th Street as a "change area". Yet, after we submitted our original letter on May 15, an eagle-eyed Brookland neighbor noticed upon zooming into the draft FLUM that the Neighborhood Center place type along 12th Street NE appears to be broader in extent than the existing mixed-use zoning, extending several properties deep into adjoining residential blocks. (A direct comparison to the 2021 FLUM is difficult because of the low resolution of the online version of that map.) If this analysis is correct, it would set the stage for a major increase in mixed use zoning that could dramatically change the nature and character of the blocks adjoining 12th Street. As much of the 12th Street frontage has already been developed for multi-unit housing, we would expect to see more single lot "shoebox" buildings that present scale and compatibility challenges and do not seem consistent with the spirit of the Neighborhood Center place type as described on the DC2050 website. Is it correct to read the map as indicating a potential expansion of mixed use zoning adjacent to 12th Street?

As noted above, we hope that due consideration of these questions will result in a greater consensus around the next iteration of the FLUM. We look forward to providing more formal comments when the next version is released. We hope that OP will provide a generous amount of time for community discussion on this next draft, which will allow BNCA to convene more discussions in our community to build consensus and inform our future feedback.