



Smart Growth Platform for the District of Columbia 2014

Transportation, land use and housing for a competitive, sustainable and inclusive city

Four Goals:

1. Keep our city inclusive, walkable, and livable by growing smartly near Metro stations and along high-capacity transit corridors, linking transit with increased supply of housing.
2. Implement a comprehensive housing strategy to serve the needs of all DC residents and workers.
3. Support a more sustainable transportation system that makes walking, bicycling and riding transit safe, reliable and first choice options for residents and visitors.
4. Engage regionally to support a network of equitable and sustainable transit-oriented communities.

The Challenge: Ensuring a vibrant, growing city offers greater housing, employment and transportation choices to all residents

DC's population is growing rapidly, climbing back to levels not seen since the 1970s. From 2000 to 2010, DC added nearly 30,000 people. Astonishingly, between 2010 and 2012, DC added another 30,000 residents, averaging 13,600 people per year. At the same time, the demand to live in the city is pricing many residents out, while we are not doing enough to preserve and add affordable housing.

DC's extensive transit network has been a major asset with 80 percent of new housing and 91 percent of new office development built within one-half mile of Metro stations from 2010 to 2012. The attraction of transit-oriented living has placed the city at the forefront of the national trends in increased transit use, walking, bicycling, and less driving. Miles driven per person in DC have dropped 22 percent since driving peaked in 2003, car ownership rates remain low with 38 percent of DC households owning no vehicle, and bicycle commuting has tripled. Transportation options have proliferated in the city including: expanded bus service; Capital Bikeshare, generating millions of bicycle trips since its launch in 2010; and more than 1,000 car-sharing vehicles from companies such as Zipcar and car2go, providing alternatives for DC residents seeking to reduce car ownership. These trends mean more people are escaping getting stuck in traffic, avoiding the steep costs of owning and operating a car, and enjoying the benefits of healthier and environmentally-friendly ways of getting around.

DC's remarkable turnaround can and should be a story of success and opportunity for everyone. Continuing to improve our transportation network with more cost-effective and sustainable options like better bus service, safer walking conditions, and more protected bike lanes help all residents and visitors. We must match this by redoubling our efforts to preserve and create housing so that moderate and lower income residents can afford to live in DC and enjoy the benefits of improved services in a thriving, sustainable and inclusive city.



1. Keep our city inclusive, walkable, and livable by growing smartly near Metro stations and along high capacity transit corridors, linking transit with increased supply of housing.

Over the past few years, Metro stations have drawn over 60 percent of the metropolitan region’s development and 80 percent of DC’s housing. DC is experiencing a boom in housing construction in response to a growing population, with over 4,900 new housing units and another 1,988 rehabilitated units added between 2010 and 2012. During this period, 1,500 of these housing units were affordable to low and moderate income families. Another 1,700 affordable units are under construction, and DC’s Inclusionary Zoning program is beginning to deliver housing units to the market with 900 in the near-term pipeline.ⁱ

Despite the increased production, housing prices are rising as existing unit prices are bid up by the strong demand. As a result, the gap between affordable units available and the number of households at lower incomes is growing. To keep up with projected demand over the next two decades, DC would need to increase its overall annual housing production by two to four times, or 3,100–5,200 units/year.ⁱⁱ The increase in supply will need to be matched by direct efforts to preserve and increase housing options for lower income households.

Actions

- Complete the long-overdue revisions to the 1958 zoning code. The modernization of the code makes modest but important changes, including reducing costly and unnecessary parking requirements, and reducing barriers to creating accessory apartments for homeowners. These changes reduce residential construction costs and create the opportunity for more affordable homes.
- Plan for growth while conserving neighborhoods. To meet surging demand to live in the city, the District needs to urgently expand neighborhood planning to better accommodate growth, guiding more housing, jobs and services to Metro stations, bus priority corridors and streetcar routes along major streets.
- Support individual smart growth and transit-oriented development projects that provide more housing and commercial space at transit and employment hubs while meeting community needs, including the proposals for 200 apartments at the Takoma Metro station; the mixed-use development with 677 new homes, historic preservation and new parks at the McMillan Sand Filtration site; and the housing and retail development with public space at the front door of the Brookland Metro station.
- Update the Comprehensive Plan, and include the following components:
 - Conduct a detailed assessment of DC’s future housing needs and capacity to meet those needs through increased supply of more moderately priced housing and more effective affordable housing policies.
 - Appoint a task force made up of visionary civic, non-profit and business leaders who can ensure that our city can manage growth in a way that enhances the quality of life of our neighborhoods while reversing the decline in housing affordability.
 - Connect land use with a sustainable transportation system based on the moveDC long-range transportation plan.



- Sustain the high level of professionalism at the DC Office of Planning and DC Zoning Commission to ensure that city staff and commissioners are planning for a vibrant and inclusive future for a growing city. Ensure in particular that the Zoning Commission maintains expertise and support for affordable housing.

2. Implement a comprehensive housing strategy to serve the needs of all DC residents and workers.

For moderate and low income households, DC's affordable housing options have plummeted as housing demand and prices have skyrocketed. One in five DC households spends more than half of its income on housing costs. Rents since 2000 have more than doubled, while low wage earners' incomes have declined or stagnated. DC has seen a record number of homeless families enter the shelter system, from 326 in 2011 to 907 in 2014. DC is experiencing a housing crisis where people with modest incomes are paying more than half their incomes to housing, are doubled up with friends or relatives, or worse – find themselves on the streets or in a shelter.

This outcome is not the inevitable result of DC's new-found growth. DC's strong fiscal position enables it to respond to this crisis with policies and funding to directly address housing and employment needs. By allocating a larger share of the increased revenues from its strong economy and tax base, the city can invest in education, job training, and the affordable housing the city's residents need.

Actions

- Dedicate at least \$100 million annually to the Housing Production Trust Fund, and tap new revenue to fund affordable housing preservation, especially in neighborhoods with rapidly rising real estate values.
- Strengthen resident protection tools like Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act by providing reliable funding and technical assistance.
- Launch a comprehensive preservation strategy to identify and preserve at-risk subsidized and market-rate affordable housing.
- Address the homelessness crisis by strengthening and expanding Rapid Rehousing and Emergency Rental Assistance Programs. Dedicate additional funds to Permanent Supportive Housing for the chronically homeless and invest in the Helping Families Home: A Roadmap for the District.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Increase investment in the tenant Local Rent Supplement Program.
- Ensure surplus city-owned property developed with residential uses includes 30 percent of units as affordable if near transit, and 20 percent if not, reaching households down to 30 percent of area median income.
- Strengthen Inclusionary Zoning, including: adequate staffing, stewardship for permanently affordable units, and improved income targeting to allocate half or more of all IZ units to households at 50-60 percent of area median income.
- Focus city affordable housing investments on long-term affordability by:
 - Prioritizing long-term affordability using shared-equity models of homeownership that allow owners of affordable homes to benefit from building equity, while maintaining the affordable pricing of the units for subsequent homeowners.
 - Work with non-profits to ensure long-term stewardship of affordable units through ongoing assistance to homeowners.



3. Implement moveDC, the city's long range transportation vision plan, for a more resilient and sustainable transportation system that makes walking, bicycling and riding transit safe, reliable and first choice options for residents and visitors.

DC's robust transit network, high walk and bike-to-work rate, and low car ownership levels have allowed many households to significantly reduce transportation costs, helping to reduce combined housing and transportation costs. This has attracted thousands of new residents, and many new and innovative businesses. With moveDC, the city can build on these transportation advantages to maximize its economic competitiveness and offer residents more sustainable, healthier, and affordable lifestyles.

Actions

- Adopt the moveDC long range transportation vision plan as the guide for the city's future and support the necessary policies and funding for its implementation. MoveDC is one of the most progressive transportation plans in the nation, with 72 miles of protected bike lanes, 22 miles of streetcar lines, 28 miles of dedicated bus lanes, a new downtown Metrorail loop, expanded commuter rail, managed traffic lanes to ease congestion, and increased priority for pedestrians.^{iv} These investments are critical for a growing city expected to add 28 percent more residents and 40 percent more jobs by 2040.
- In the short-term, commit the necessary funds and staffing to implement Metrobus Priority Corridor improvements, making transit a high-priority for streetspace on these high ridership routes. Dedicated rush-hour bus lanes on 16th Street NW and other measures to reduce delays and improve bus reliability in this high ridership corridor should be a top, near-term priority.
- Adopt a Vision Zero goal and implementing policies to eliminate traffic deaths and injuries in the city. DC should follow other US cities in implementing a Vision Zero action plan to achieve steep reductions in pedestrian and bicyclist deaths using a multi-pronged approach of improved street design, enhanced enforcement, and legislation to improve safety.
- Improve walkability through implementation of the traffic calming and bicycle and pedestrian safety improvements identified in the neighborhood livability studies; conduct livability studies for the rest of the city; and provide reliable funding for sidewalk maintenance and repairs to eliminate backlogs.
- Build on the DDOT Curbside Management Study to develop coordinated commercial and residential curbspace management policies and dynamic implementation. Use performance pricing of parking to improve space availability and balance competing needs and priorities.
- Strengthen DDOT's Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program, including aggressive vehicle trip reduction measures, TDM plans, and monitoring.



4. Engage regionally to support a network of equitable and sustainable transit-oriented communities.

The District of Columbia is directly impacted by the development and transportation decisions made in every suburban jurisdiction in the region. Any revival of sprawling development on the outer edges of the region and pursuit of proposals for outer beltways and northern Potomac River bridge crossings would divert economic investment from the region's core and transit-accessible suburbs. Region Forward, the vision plan adopted by vote of all 22 jurisdictions in the Metropolitan Washington region, calls for a more sustainable way to grow based on a strong city and a network of transit and transit-oriented development. DC must continue to partner with suburban jurisdictions to shift regional transportation priorities and funding to implement the Region Forward Plan, vastly expanding transit networks and transit-oriented development that tie the DC and suburbs together to create an attractive and competitive region for the next generation workforce. This approach will improve access to jobs for DC residents, and reduce vehicle trips, vehicle miles traveled, air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

Actions

- DC should lead partner jurisdictions in fully funding the Metro Momentum strategic 10-year plan. Metro is the backbone of our region's transit systems and critical to the city's economic future, yet it is reaching capacity. The Momentum plan^v will provide increased capacity, with all 8-car trains at rush hour, bus priority corridors, and station capacity expansion.
- Fight to keep federal and private jobs in DC and/or at surrounding Metro stations, and achieve more equitable growth by increasing development and employment at eastside Metro stations in DC and Prince George's County.
- Oppose the Outer Beltway (Bi-County Parkway and N-S Corridor in Virginia), northern Potomac River bridge crossings, and continued expansion of long-distance commute corridors. These projects would consume billions of dollars while scattering jobs and housing farther from the city.
- Redirect highway funding to Metro, other transit services, and bicycle and pedestrian projects.
- Ensure new transit investments are closely linked to transit-oriented development plans to maximize return-on-investment, cost-effectiveness, ridership and connectivity with DC.

ⁱ The District of Columbia Comprehensive Plan Progress Report, Moving Forward: Building an Inclusive Future, April 2013, DC Office of Planning.

<http://planning.dc.gov/DC/Planning/Across+the+City/Comprehensive+Plan/Comprehensive+Plan+Progress+Report+April+2013/Comprehensive+Plan+Progress+Report+Moving+Forward+April+2013>

ⁱⁱ Housing the Region's Future Workforce, 2012-2032, December 2013, George Mason University Center for Regional Analysis, http://cra.gmu.edu/pdfs/studies_reports_presentations/Housing_the_Regions_Future_Workforce_2012.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ DC Fiscal Policy Institute, *Helping Families Home: a Roadmap*, <http://www.dcfpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Helping-Families-Home-6.13.14.pdf>

^{iv} See: <http://www.wemovedc.org/>

^v <http://www.wmata.com/momentum/>