



COALITION FOR SMARTER GROWTH

Testimony before
the Honorable Kwame Brown, Chairman
Committee of the Whole of the District of Columbia, regarding:

DC Office of Planning Oversight Hearing, 2011

By Cheryl Cort, Policy Director
February 16, 2011

Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am speaking on behalf of the Coalition for Smarter Growth, a regional nonprofit based in DC. I would like to express my support for the good work of the Office of Planning. In addition to diligent work on small area plans and development review, the Office of Planning's major effort to revise and update our outmoded, 1950s zoning code is coming to completion this year. I have appreciated how DCOP has engaged the public through working groups, and provided us with new research and analysis to support a robust discussion. OP's detailed assessment and proposed code revisions will help us fulfill the 2006 Comprehensive Plan vision to build a sustainable, inclusive city. This effort builds on the great assets of our city – its walkable/bikable neighborhoods, connected street grid, pedestrian-oriented buildings and blocks, compact mix of uses, and robust transit system. The in-depth work by OP to modernize parking requirements will help us foster greater economic development and job growth, along with better urban design, multimodal access and increased affordability. Looking forward, we need to ensure that OP has the resources it needs to complete this once-in-a-generation task. This effort is on track to be completed this year.

OP plays an essential role in the city's new Inclusionary Zoning program which uses a density bonus to compensate private development for building some affordable and workforce housing in most matter of right residential projects. IZ will be a major source of moderately-priced housing for our workforce, freeing up other limited resources to be devoted to those with greater needs, at lower income levels, or those who need additional assistance to be successfully housed. OP plays a vital role at the development review stage to ensure that IZ is properly implemented. OP is there to ensure the process is easy to follow for developers, and that the public benefit of moderately-priced housing is fulfilled.

We wish to suggest that OP take a stronger role in redeveloping District-owned properties. OP offers important expertise in urban design, Inclusionary Zoning, community outreach, and integration of existing community plans. Closer collaboration between OP and DMPED on land dispositions and development projects will provide better outcomes for the community and the city as it utilizes all our best expertise and experience.

Better addressing land use connections to economic development, OP created the Retail Action Roadmap to bring missing retail to our neighborhoods and ensure it thrives. This strategy also helps keep tax revenues and jobs in our neighborhoods.

In closing, I wanted to express my broad support for the efforts of the Office of Planning. I look forward to collaborating with OP's planning staff as a non-profit organization, and as a resident.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.