

DC Housing Priorities Coalition - Comprehensive Plan Framework Element Bill, B23-1

July 8, 2019/ revised July 18, 2019

Who We Are:

The DC Housing Priorities Coalition includes: Enterprise Community Partners, DC Fiscal Policy Institute, Coalition for Non Profit Housing and Economic Development (CNHED), Somerset Development, Coalition for Smarter Growth, Greater Greater Washington, United Planning Organization, Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)

Comparing our Coalition's Amendments to B23-1 with Chairman Mendelson's Amendments:

While the Chairman's amendments incorporated many of the [Office of Planning's August 2018 amendments](#), which we support, the revised bill does not clearly make affordable housing a top priority throughout the document. Without this, DC's land use policies will continue to perpetuate racial and economic inequities rather than advance inclusion.

Specific Language We Support Adding to the Bill:

1. Housing affordability is the highest priority for DC

- Chairman's amendments in 221.18, states: "the production of new affordable housing units, above and beyond existing matter-of-right limits, and the prevention of permanent displacement of on-site residents should be considered as high-priority public benefits in the evaluation of residential PUDs.
- Our proposed change: affordable housing and displacement prevention should be "highest" priority
- Councilmember Nadeau and other Councilmembers have expressed support for our language.

2. Emphasize tenant protections and anti-displacement

- Chairman's amendments in new 221.18 (old 227.7) exclude OP August 2019 Amendments, and our proposed addition to explicitly address redevelopment and tenant protections.
- Our proposed language: "While providing for greater flexibility in planning and design than may be possible under matter of right zoning procedures, the PUD process shall not be used to circumvent the intent and purposes of the Zoning Regulations, nor to result in action that is inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan. In cases where redevelopment occurs on properties with housing made affordable through subsidy, covenant, or rent control, such units should be preserved or replaced with similar sized units either on-site or nearby. The necessary density may be provided to: enable reinvestment in the property with no net loss of affordable units; when feasible, facilitate a net increase in affordable units on-site or nearby; and minimize unnecessary off-site relocation by enabling construction of new units before demolition of existing occupied ones."
- Councilmember Nadeau and other Councilmembers have expressed support for our language.

3. Reinforce principles of fair housing and connections to communities of opportunity

- Chairman's amendments make a brief reference to fair housing but retain language that reinforces the strong emphasis of the Guiding Principles on preserving the physical character of neighborhoods, rather than enhancing neighborhoods while also accommodating new housing opportunities for people of all incomes.
- Our proposed amendment to section 218.18, add: "Development should also be guided and shaped to bring the District into compliance with the Fair Housing Act, affirmatively further fair housing, reduce segregation, and satisfy the District's housing needs including affordable housing at all income levels in all areas of the District."
- Councilmember Nadeau and other Councilmembers have expressed support for this language.

4. Ensure effective development approval process amendments

- Chairman's amendments reject a number of the original bill's clarifications of the development review process, the role of the Future Land Use Map, the Zoning Commission and the Planned Unit Development process.
- We propose supporting the original bill language, and adding support for more affordable housing through a matter of right bonus density provision. We also recommend clarifying how the Zoning Commission should determine the evidence needed to satisfy PUD requirements to address adverse impacts of development projects.
- Councilmember Nadeau and other Councilmembers have expressed support for similar language.

Background

Why We Formed

The Housing Priorities Coalition formed to help update the DC Comprehensive Plan, the land use policy that guides development decisions in the District. (Learn more from DC Office of Planning on [the DC Comprehensive Plan amendment process here](#), plandc.dc.gov). See full Housing Priorities Coalition [amendment package](#).

Our [DC Housing Priorities](#) for the Comprehensive Plan Amendments

- Meet the housing demand
- Equitably distribute housing
- Best utilize areas near transit
- Include families: ensure homes for people of all income levels and of all household sizes, including families.
- Prioritize affordable housing as a community benefit
- Preserve existing affordable housing
- Protect tenants
- Support neighborhood commercial corridors
- Clarify zoning authority
- Improve data collection and transparency

Why These Priorities

- Lack of affordable housing and risk of displacement are among the greatest challenges DC faces to achieving racial equity, quality of life for residents, and economic sustainability for all.
- Low-income District residents, particularly residents of color, do not currently enjoy equal access to affordable housing connected to communities of opportunity, perpetuating a gaping racial equity gap.
- The Planned Unit Development (PUD) process, which is an important way to produce new housing with substantial affordability, is now held up in constant court challenges resulting in thousands of stalled homes, including hundreds of affordable homes. Court challenges and rulings have relied heavily on narrow interpretations of the Comp Plan, so our proposed amendments help to clarify how the Zoning Commission should judge and prioritize PUDs. Such clarification is critical, because [even the risk](#) of lawsuits has dramatically reduced the use of PUDs for affordable and market-rate housing (ex: Park Morton public housing blocked due to Bruce Monroe PUD lawsuit). View the list of stalled projects published by Washington Business Journal [here](#).