

The Attack on DC's Comprehensive Plan and Your Neighborhood

Fact Sheet Winter 2018 [draft 1/27/18; seeking review by SCJ]

1. The Comprehensive Plan is DC's central planning document by which all other planning documents and policies are to be derived. The policies in the plan attempt to help DC residents and city officials anticipate predictable physical growth and municipal development (including within the planning realms of housing, retail, commerce, institutions, infrastructure, and public facilities and services) over a 20-year planning cycle. The plan emphasizes building "successful" and "inclusive" communities throughout the whole city. <http://www.tinyurl.com/comp-plan-dc>
2. The DC Comprehensive Plan has been adopted as DC law and incorporated into the DC Municipal Regulations as Chapter 10A. Annotated as: "DCMR 10A" or "10A-DCMR" you can Google "DCMR" and go to the homepage of the DC Municipal Regulations site. Then go to the left column and click search by Chapters. Find Chapter 10A. Click on Comprehensive Plan.
3. Written comprehensive plans started in the eighties, and the current DC Comprehensive Plan was passed into law by the City Council and Mayor in 2006. We are more than halfway through the current 20-year planning cycle, yet the public has little knowledge as to how existing planning policies have been implemented by the city, or not, and how these policies are truly helping residents and local businesses, or not.
4. In 2016, the Office of Planning began to host meetings about amending the existing Comprehensive Plan policies. Then in 2017, OP "opened the door" for amendments, giving the public two months to submit changes to the plan. In June 2017, OP staff stopped accepting submissions, claiming to have received over 3000 amendments to the current plan.
5. OP told the public (in writing) that they will sift through the proposed amendments and prepare a report outlining which changes they want to accept and which ones they reject, providing written rationale explaining their decisions. OP had said they would submit this report to the public (ANC's, civics/citizen groups, and all residents) for a 60-day public comment period before formulating any final amendments to the Comprehensive Planning for City Council review and action. OP was expected to have a public report ready sometime in the fall of 2018.
6. In early January 2018, Mr. Eric Shaw, Director of the DC Office of Planning, surprised everyone in formulating final amendments to Chapter Two of the Comprehensive Plan, a leading chapter of the plan called the "Framework Element." Shaw and OP submitted proposed changes to the Framework Element directly to the City Council, deviating from OP's written amendment process, and promise, of an open and transparent public comment period prior to Council review. OP's proposed amendments to the Framework Element affects every corner of the city – all neighborhoods, and every DC resident.
7. The Framework Element sets the scope and overarching goals of DC's central planning document. The Framework Element includes fundamental development descriptions that the city has used for at least thirty years -- Low Density, Moderate Density, Medium Density & High Density – describing the types of DC's commercial and residential buildings and the size of the buildings in the number of stories (i.e. one to three stories; up to seven stories; exceeding eight stories).
8. Given its importance and potential citywide consequence, amendments to the Framework Element arguably deserve much broader public scrutiny and discussion. However, Eric Shaw and OP have moved away from open transparency and broken their promise of public review by the ANC's, civics/citizen groups, and every affected DC resident by delivering these significant changes directly to the Council to pass their amendments into law!

9. On top of bypassing public review, the actual changes to the Framework Element are quite dramatic in that OP's proposed amendments affect the entire city map of anticipated future development, permanently dashing predictability in how your community may grow and evolve in the coming years.
10. The whole tone of OP's changes to the Framework Element is set by OP's self-derived goal of having one-million residents by 2045. OP has not surveyed the existing residents about this type of growth and our desires for the future of our city. OP has not conducted environmental studies to determine impacts of their contrived population growth expectations. OP has not reviewed existing infrastructure and community facility capacity and efficacy to adequately support OP's desire for another half a million people living in DC.
11. Further, OP attempts to rewrite history for black DC residents and families who have been displaced or are vulnerable to being displaced. OP's amendments feign ignorance of gentrification, first by not even using the term gentrification and by and through statements that infer black folks have chosen to move out of DC for "lifestyle choices" and "better opportunities" elsewhere.
12. The Framework Element is a key chapter in the plan that also sets the level of discretion that planning officials have as it relates to adhering to the directives and language of the policies in the plan itself. In this case, OP's amendments severely weaken the specific language in the plan, making it especially squishy and easier for developers to work around limits to overdevelopment in your neighborhood.

GET INVOLVED! READ THE FRAMEWORK ELEMENT AND CHANGES PROPOSED BY OP. GET YOUR NOTES TOGETHER AND TALK WITH FRIENDS ABOUT THE OFFICE OF PLANNING'S CHANGES TO THE DC COMPREHENSIVE PLAN.

THEN BE READY TO SEND LETTERS AND TESTIFY AGAINST THIS DRAMATIC ELIMINATION OF PREDICATBLE DEVELOPMENT IN YOUR COMMUNITY AND AN AMPING UP OF GENTRIFICATION AND DISPLACEMENT OF DC'S LONGTIME WORKING FAMILIES AND RESIDENTS WHO CAN'T KEEP UP WITH RISING COSTS OF HOUSING AND COMMERCIAL/RETAIL SERVICES AND GOODS.

- Contact the Council Chairman and ask that he send Eric Shaw's proposed amendments back to the Office of Planning to compel them to live up to their promise of public review of these changes before Council review and action. pmendelson@dccouncil.us
- Contact Eric Shaw to inform him how gross his amendments are as it relates to gentrification of black families and residents from the District. People did not choose to leave DC for greener pastures, they were forced out! The overdevelopment crisis in the District has increased rents, housing costs, taxes, and has resulted in new segregated luxury enclaves and businesses with unaffordable and unnecessary luxury services and goods. We do not desire a city with one-million people. We are tired of planning decisions solely based on profit motives of the developer-class that pay off city officials. eric.shaw@dc.gov
- Join the Grassroots Planning Coalition to organize at your Ward-level with friends and neighbors who will not stand for ignorance, racism, classism, and greed at the expense of existing longtime District residents and families. [fb.me/GrassrootsPlan](https://www.facebook.com/GrassrootsPlan)