



Zoning Commission
441 4th St NW
Suite 200
Washington, DC 20001

November 27, 2019

Chairman Anthony Hood & Commissioners,

I. Community Context and Outreach

Washington, D.C.'s Mayor Muriel Bowser has set a goal to add 12,000 affordable housing units in the city by 2025 with approximately 1,350 of those projected in the Upper Northeast area where ANC5D is located. Since 2010, D.C. has routinely seen population jumps over 1,000 people per month, though between July 2017 and July 2018, that increase slowed considerably. While much of D.C.'s recent population boom has been driven by new adult residents¹, the overall number of children born in the city has also been rising². This change in population growth and shifting demographics means the city will need to re-focus affordable housing efforts on family-sized units.

In light of these and other facts, ANC 5D has proposed the following changes. ANC 5D supports changing the following properties from zone RA-2 to zone RF-4:

- Square 4494 Lots 0038-0055, Lots 0075-0082, Lots 0085 -0090 and Lot 0843
- Square 4495 Lots 0002-0066
- Square 4506 Lots 0088-0139 and Lots 0141-0163
- Square 4507 Lots 0089-0101 and Lots 0143-0164

ANC 5D supports changing the following properties from zone MU-4 to zone MU-5A:

- Square 4506 Lots 0022, 0038 (southern portion), 0085-0087, 0164-0166, 0803, 0805, 0809, 0811, 0813, 0817, 0819, 0821 and 0823
- Square 4507 Lots 0119-0132, Lots 0138-0142, Lots 0166-0170, 0937, 0935, 0940, and 0938

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<https://ggwash.org/view/41082/who-are-dcs-1000-new-residents-per-month>

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<https://doh.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/doh/publication/attachments/2012-2013%20Births%20Statistical%20Report%209-30-15.pdf>



ANC 5D has conducted a thorough review of zoning as well as the Future Land Use Map in conjunction with neighbors and the Office of Planning. Both neighbors as well as the Office of Planning have expressed support for the proposed changes described above and detailed in the attached ANC resolution.

Comm. Sydelle Moore (ANC 5D05) and Comm. Bernice Blacknell (ANC 5D04) hosted nearly 10 meetings in regard to zoning and development before the commission voted unanimously to support changes on November 12, 2019. Representatives from the Office of Planning as well as the Office of Zoning attended several of these meetings. The commissioners hosted a sidewalk talk series to help make the community discussion as open and accessible as possible for all residents. During the sidewalk talk series, the commissioners hosted 6 sessions on corners throughout the neighborhood, knocked on doors and distributed flyers to elicit feedback. During those meetings two major issues emerged; the need for front setbacks to align new construction with the attached townhomes and the need for additional family-sized, affordable housing.

A. Lack of Front Setbacks

The most consistent concern expressed by residents has been the lack of front setbacks currently provided by the RA-2 zone. Several recently renovated townhomes have been converted to multi-unit buildings that are more than twice as tall as the adjacent townhome and extend 10-15 feet in front of the attached property. Although neighbors consistently expressed an openness to height increases, many have been perplexed by the footprint of buildings that could cover the same square footage without extending so far in front of the adjacent property. Under the RA-2 zone, rear setbacks are required for all property and side setbacks are required for corner lots. Front setbacks are not a requirement for any property in the RA-2 zone. Rear setbacks have served as parking pads which add very little value to the community, while causing considerable harm to the character, sightlines and sunlight for adjacent neighbors. The community has very reasonably suggested that these properties could be built with the same square footage while maintaining a consistent building line in the front of all properties on a given block.

B. Encouraging Family-Sized, Affordable Housing

The community also expressed an interest in adding additional units of family-sized, affordable housing. By increasing the lot occupancy, height and floor-area-ratio of properties on Benning Rd. to MU-5A, ANC5D believes we will significantly increase development on these blocks and maximize the use of current laws requiring inclusionary zoning.

In the proposed RF-4 zone, limiting the number of units to 3 while maintaining the same floor-area-ratio will encourage developers to build larger units suitable for families. More multi-bedroom units in a neighborhood with a growing population of children is an important way of addressing the future needs of our city and community. The current



capacity for most of the impacted lots under the current RA-2 zoning is typically 4-5 and most of those units have been smaller studio and one-bedroom dwellings that do not meet any of the city's affordability standards. Under the current zoning, these units do not meet the needs of a community and city in need of family-sized units.

II. Zoning Rationale

ANC 5D is seeking a change to the current zoning in order to make better use of affordable housing policies and new zoning designations to help maintain community character while planning for future growth.

A. Mixed-Use Redesignation

ANC 5D supports an upzoning of the aforementioned blocks on Benning Rd. NE from MU-4 to MU-5A. The proposed MU-5A zone is currently listed on the city's Future Land Use Map (FLUM) as being compatible with Moderate and Medium Residential uses. As part of its Comprehensive Plan review, ANC 5D has voted to redesignate this area on the FLUM to also include Low Density Commercial uses, so that it will match the designation for the south side of Benning Rd. The Office of Planning concurs with this suggestion. Whether or not this amendment to the FLUM is passed by the council, ANC5D's rezoning request is in line with the Comprehensive Plan and current city initiatives to increase affordable housing.

The new MU-5A zone would:

- Increase the floor-area-ratio from 2.5 to 3.5;
- Bring zoning of the specified blocks in line with medium-density designations on the south side of the street in the Future Land Use Map;
- Offer increased automatic triggers for inclusionary zoning in exchange for reasonable increases in floor-area-ratio for residential uses;
- Increase medium-density, compact mixed-use development with an emphasis on residential use; and
- Provide additional facilities for shopping and business needs, housing, and other uses

B. Residential Redesignation

ANC 5D supports a rezoning of the aforementioned residential blocks from RA-2 to RF-4. The proposed RF-4 zone is currently listed on the FLUM as being compatible with Moderate Density Residential which makes the RF-4 designation an appropriate alternative to the current zoning. The rezoning addresses community concerns and positions the District to better manage the burgeoning baby boom likely to impact housing patterns in our city and community.

The new RF-4 zone would:

- Maintain a floor-area-ratio of 1.8;
- Better position new construction within the property boundaries to maintain consistent front setbacks and townhome character on residential blocks;
- Allow three-story buildings and additional residential units;



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- Reduce the current over-emphasis on rear parking which creates unattractive front 'bump-outs' which extend 10-15 feet in front of adjacent townhomes while only adding a single rear parking space; and
 - Better integrate our established neighborhood of townhomes and small apartments into the landscape of adjacent high density zones at Hechinger Mall and on Benning Rd. NE

As should now be clear, ANC 5D's proposed zoning changes are in line with the current DC Comprehensive Plan, Future Land Use Map and current usage of the properties listed above. The proposed changes also help address important citywide initiatives to increase access to affordable housing and provide additional units of family-sized dwellings in response to the growing number of children in our city. In light of the facts and community concerns presented herein, ANC 5D urges the Zoning Commission to give great weight to its proposed changes to the official DC Zoning Map.

Respectfully,

Comm. A. Sydelle Moore,
Advisory Neighborhood Commission 5D05