

Title : Response to Park Morton Exhibit 363

In a letter to Council Chairman Phil Mendelson on August 5, 2020, Anthony Hood stepped out of his independent Zoning role to advocate for expedited passage of the ComPlan amendments so that the Zoning Commission could advance ‘the backlog of zoning cases that are in limbo’ until the CompPlan amendments pass.’ He further says “the updates to the CompPlan...are needed to counteract adverse decisions by the DC Court of Appeals in zoning cases. (See DCFeedback.com "Fit to Print DC" webpage, "RELEASE: Zoning Head Crosses Ethical Bounds" published on March 17, 2021, by the DC Grassroots Planning Coalition, <http://www.dcfeedback.com/fit2print/dc/536> (last accessed on November 1, 2021).

To contend with the very real planning issues highlighted by Bruce Monroe Park Neighbors, and evidenced in the DC Court of Appeals judgment that vacated Zoning Order 16-11, planning has been perverted by this hurry-up offense. As pointed out by the Park Morton analysis on racial equity (Exhibit 363, Point 11 of "What Racial Equity is Not" at page 30), it is bypassing the law that requires impact analysis prior to approving these amendments. See DC Code 1-306.04(d) & 10A DCMR 2515.3 (e).

This choice to ignore planning fundamentally disadvantages all neighbors who have invested in this community. We have expectations of how our community is to be and how it will grow. No one anticipated a 9-story downtown sized apartment to be built on the neighborhoods only public green space in an area already defined as a ‘heat island’ by NOAA. Seen here on the climate.gov website (<https://www.climate.gov/news-features/features/detailed-maps-urban-heat-island-effects-washington-dc-and-baltimore>) zoom in to the red dot in the center of the map, just below the marker for ‘Armed Forces Retirement Home.’ As a resident of this city, I would expect those responsible for planning to consider the environmental impacts of such a design. Yet the Mayor’s Office of Planning, the ANC, and the DC Council bypassed the laws that require environmental analysis of the amendments to the ComPlan.

The site will be bordered by two one way streets-- westbound Irving Street, and eastbound Columbia Road—both of which service the only level one pediatric trauma center (Children’s National). This development calls for an additional 270 units, and up to 99 parking spaces. No studies have been conducted to date to account for the effect that cars going to and from this building might have on emergency response times through the area, especially with the addition of dedicated bus lanes approved by in the Section 2000.11 of the amended Mid-City Element of the CompPlan. It’s as if planning is done in a vacuum.

No one should get sucked into this situation, especially the residents of Park Morton who have had to endure decades of institutional neglect. This building is touted as ‘building affordable housing’ and reducing the concentration of poverty. It fails on both accounts. The project claims that 90 replacement units will be built at this development of Bruce Monroe Park. The truth is the definition of ‘unit’ applies to any apartment regardless of the number of bedrooms. So, 54 Public Housing Affordable (PHA) will be in the apartment building, 33 in the senior building, and 3 townhomes. What is not mentioned is that all apartments in the senior building will be one-bedroom ‘units.’ According to DCHA (page 4 of) https://dcha.us/img/guest_uploads/temp_0k9R6ArlR21588602194TC3fEQWKQ1F7IgxN48U0.pdf

There are 27 seniors living at Park Morton of which ten (10) are single member households." So only 10 of the 90 households are single seniors who could actually move into one of the 33 available PHA senior apartments at Bruce Monroe considered as 'replacement units'. That leaves 23 households of 2 or more currently residing at Park Morton who could not be housed at BM. That's not exactly a one for one replacement.

The Park Morton Site is 174 Apartment units on 4.8 acres (209088 sqft) of property for 36.25 apartments per acre. The Bruce Monroe site would, ideally, replace 90 of these units on 1.78 acres for 50.6 public housing units per acre. This is not exactly 'reducing the concentration of poverty.'

And yet these are issues with the design. Never mind the loss of transparency in the process of developing them. No one who lives in the neighborhood deserves to have these map changes happen this way, discretely, devoid of real planning and study. It is unrefuted that neither the required impact studies nor the evaluations associated with the FLUM and GPM changes in the 2020 Comp Plan have been completed. Indeed, it was first noted in Exhibit 181. Yet the Applicant is now relying on them for zoning approval.

Neighbors who are getting wind of both the discrete and unlawful FLUM/GPM changes and this purposely limited-scope PUD zoning hearing are now stepping up and contesting how this PUD is being processed under the new Comp Plan. Chapter 25 of the Implementation Element specifically expects an impact analysis to be done during PUD review for major community-changing developments.

Nowhere in the amendments to the Comp Plan does it say to the the Zoning Commission, or the Office of Planning, or to the Applicants are NOT to plan for the future of the city, or take into account the neighborhoods where substantial new projects are being considered, like around Bruce Monroe. None of the Comp Plan changes say to not consider impacts on existing neighborhood needs, services, utilities, transportation, and the capacities therein. None of the Comp Plan changes say to ignore existing community amenities that may be lost under new proposed projects. The Comp Plan and land map changes themselves required impact analysis pursuant to the law (DC Code 1-306.04[d] & 10A DCMR 2515.3 [e]).

The independent DC Zoning Commission must demand that the map changes be studied, the PUD impacts be considered transparently and genuinely, and that proper reporting be provided for the record as a fundamental matter of due process and equity for all parties and affected neighbors.