

Cochran, Patricia (DCOZ)

From: Alex Baca <abaca@ggwash.org>
Sent: Friday, February 9, 2024 12:30 PM
To: the1617project@savедcpublicland.org
Cc: Bnadeau; DCOZ - ZC Submissions (DCOZ)
Subject: Re: Press Alert: DC Office of Planning Has Abandoned Racial Equity at 17th & U Street NW Luxury Upzoning

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Hello! Thank you for giving me some airtime in this email. Please note that, in my back-and-forth with Chair Hood and Mr. Ritting, I *also* said that the commission's racial-equity tool should be in the zoning code, which it is not currently, so that the applicant in this case—and any future applicants, in any future cases—would be required to do what many witnesses opposing the map amendment seem to desire: more public outreach. This is not currently required in any way by zoning or the Comprehensive Plan, only suggested by the commission's tool. Though the commission itself chose not to make the tool's suggestions a legal requirement for development-review applicants, I believe that that should change, and said as much at the Jan. 29 hearing. I would think on this point—mandating public outreach—we might agree, but of course understand if that is not the case.

I've cced zcsubmissions@dc.gov so that this can be added to the record for ZC 23-02. Many thanks!

On Fri, Feb 9, 2024 at 12:18 PM <the1617project@savедcpublicland.org> wrote:

Press Alert, SaveDCPublicLand.org/the1617project
202-854-1822, the1617project@savедcpublicland.org
Feb 9 2024

17th & U Street NW Luxury Upzoning: Everyone is Saying the DC Office of Planning Has Abandoned Racial Equity,

Except Ward One Councilmember Brianne Nadeau and Greater Greater Washington

Wards 1 & 2, Washington, DC -- This coming Monday, February 12, 2024, a fourth in a series of hearings will be held by the DC Zoning Commission with regards to the high-density rezoning of 1617 U Street -- a 2-acre public site that is the current home of the 3D MPD station and Engine 9 fire department.

If the zoning application is approved, Councilmember Nadeau and the Mayor would be able to green light the transfer of 1617 U Street (2-acres of public land) to a yet-to-be-named developer who could then construct and profit from a very dense 10-story + penthouse building “by-right.”

At all prior hearings nearly everyone has said the Office of Planning (the rezoning applicant for the Mayor) has admittedly failed at community engagement, especially to the nearby directly affected Black community that remain in the community.

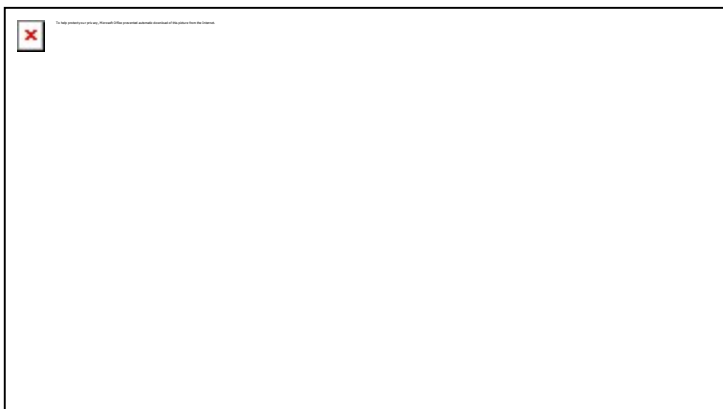
- The [Chair of the Zoning Commission](#) as well as other Commissioners have said it,
- former [Ward 2 Councilmember Jack Evans](#) has said it,

- lawyers with the [DC Attorney General](#) have said it,
- and the DC Office of Planning themselves have admitted it under questioning.

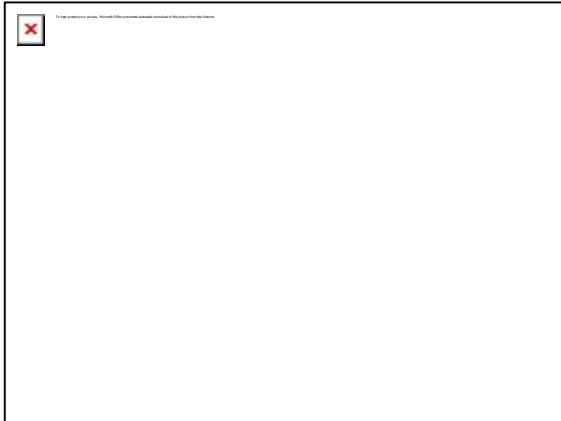
The Office of Planning has not done the public engagement necessitated by a very dramatic change in land use (allowing dense downtown-sized buildings standing 100+ feet tall) that will permanently change the west end of the U Street corridor and threaten to continue the displacement of housing-vulnerable residents nearby.

The [2020 Census shows Ward 1](#) with the greatest displacement of Black residents in the past decade, 25% of the population has been made gone.

The only ones defending OP's lack of community outreach particularly to the affected Black community is Ward One Councilmember Brianne Nadeau and Greater Greater Washington.



At a recent community gathering, [Black neighbors have heard Councilmember Nadeau](#) suggest that there's been more than enough outreach done and [Nadeau's letter to the zoning record](#) makes nary a mention of OP's missing engagement for this luxury upzoning.



And at the last zoning hearing, [Alex Baca](#), lead staffer at the pro-growth advocacy group Greater Greater Washington downplayed and defended the lack of outreach to the Black neighbors around the site:

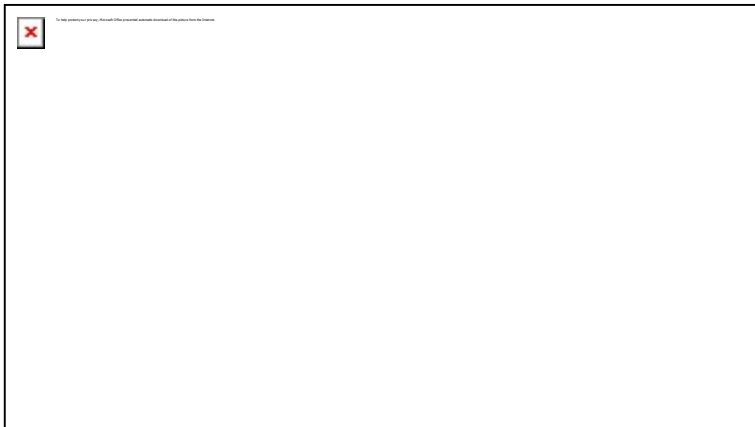
"... I have been somewhat distressed to hear ... that [OP's] lack of a certain volume and type of outreach beyond the zoning code's notice of intent requirements for map amendments is a cause for concern and further that targeted outreach [to Black residents] is tantamount to a map amendment application being racially equitable." Baca went on to proclaim that she could find no such racial equity outreach mandate requiring the DC Office of Planning to "conduct more outreach [to the affected Black community] than it has."

Clip --> <https://www.youtube.com/live/rmB-8bjfVQ4?si=kFRPRG7QCPv8h7b6&t=9175>

In response to Alex Baca's "distress" about the need for more outreach to Black neighbors around 1617 U Street, the attorney for the Office of Zoning states:

"The way I understood Ms. Baca's question was what was the source of any heightened community outreach obligations [to the impacted Black neighbors] in this situation... and my understanding [is] the Zoning Commission's Racial Equity tool does include a community outreach component. It's part two of the Racial Equity tool [which] can be accessed on the Office of Zoning website."

Clip >> <https://www.youtube.com/live/rmB-8bjfVQ4?si=NwgdpUjNQDSMHm5-&t=9384>



Zoning Chair Anthony Hood furthered explained:

I want to thank Councilman McDuffie, the Mayor, and the [public] for instituting [the Racial Equity tool] because ... we needed some teeth ... to try to level ... the playing field. ... [E]ngagement is a big piece [of racial equity] because as I've always said, Ms. Baca, the people who are going to endure whatever is done in this city are the residents who live here ... because the developers [are] going to

come and do it and then they are gone so I don't know if that answers your question.

Clip >> https://www.youtube.com/live/rmB-8bjfVQ4?si=RnZfyn_gBfIL5eCY&t=9452

The next Zoning Hearing is set for February 12, 2024, starting at 4PM. The public is invited to submit comments and testify: www.SaveDCPublicLand.org/testify

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Alex Baca

D.C. Policy Director

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"...driving may kill a lot of people, but it also helps a lot of people get to work on time, so, it;s impossible to say if its bad or not," —[@dril, 2014](#), and, also, in essence, many American political leaders