

November 20, 2024

Mr. Anthony Hood
Chair, Zoning Commission of the District of Columbia
441 4th Street, NW, Suite 210S
Washington, DC 20001

RE: **Support** for Proposed Rulemaking, ZC Case No. 23-25, published in the DCR Issue:
Vol.71 - No.44 - November 01, 2024

Dear Chair Hood and members of the Commission:

Please accept this testimony on behalf of the Coalition for Smarter Growth. CSG is the leading organization advocating for walkable, bikeable, inclusive, transit-oriented communities as the most sustainable and equitable way for the Washington, DC region to grow and provide opportunities for all.

We wish to express our support for the decision by the DC Zoning Commission for Case No. 23-25, rezoning parcels along Connecticut Avenue from Chevy Chase Circle to Livingston Street, NW. The decision was made after years of community engagement. These zoning changes are consistent with, and implement the policies of the Comprehensive Plan, the Chevy Chase Small Area Plan, the Housing Equity Report, and the Rock Creek West Roadmap.

Overall, these zoning changes will foster a more walkable street environment with future potential redevelopment that relates to its neighbors, fosters space for small businesses, helps support existing businesses with new residents and vitality, and would add much needed mixed income affordable housing.

While significant development is not imminent nor has occurred in decades, the design guidelines in the text will assure that, when redevelopment comes, the street level along Connecticut Avenue will retain and enhance its texture and vitality. The zoning provides for maintaining a retail frontage for smaller retailers, retaining existing facades and stepping back appropriately. It also requires that massing in the rear be stepped back to be harmonious with the scale of the adjacent single family residences.

What will occur in the near term with the support of this rezoning is the planned redevelopment of the District-owned civic core site with a state-of-the-art new library, community center, public spaces, and the addition of affordable, mixed income housing. By law, public land redevelopments require a 20-30 percent set aside of permanently affordable housing at deeply affordable levels (at 30% and 50% median family income). But this is a minimum set aside, with the potential that all the new homes on this site could be affordable to low income households.

The [Rock Creek West Roadmap](#) reminds us: “Historically, discriminatory land use and financing tools have been used for the exclusion of Black residents from Rock Creek West.” The rezoning will not only expand greatly needed affordable housing opportunities in this high opportunity neighborhood, where no dedicated affordable housing currently exists, it also contributes to addressing a legacy of exclusion for African American residents. Given DC’s budget challenges and limitations on housing subsidy programs, leveraging the value of public land is even more important to create new dedicated affordable housing. Using public land in the Chevy Chase neighborhood to build permanently affordable homes is a rare opportunity

that should be fully realized to address persistent residential segregation as well as the overall need for more affordable homes. Given that most new affordable housing is built on the East side of the city, this upper Northwest location should be fully utilized to meet District goals.

This rezoning addresses the District's important housing equity goals while also facilitating modernized public facilities, and guiding future development to create a more walkable, vibrant, and inclusive main street. This decision is good for everyone.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cheryl Cort', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Cheryl Cort
Policy Director