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To: DCOZ - ZC Submissions (DCOZ); Schellin, Sharon (DCOZ)
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Subject: Public Comments - ZC Case 23-25 - by Chevy Chase Voice

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Citizens of Chevy Chase Demand a Contested Hearing for Case 23-25

Public Comments Submission for Zoning Case 23-25

Residents of Chevy Chase seek and deserve a contested hearing for Zoning Case 23-25; to this end, in order to protect the rights of D.C. taxpayers, **Chevy Chase Voice** and other stakeholders have filed a lawsuit against Zoning Commission Chair Anthony Hood and Mayor Muriel Bowser. The lawsuit seeks to address the denial of fundamental rights such as cross-examining expert witnesses and appealing zoning decisions in court (see note 8 below).

The proposed upzoning across Ward 3, including Case 23-25, has been framed by the DC Office of Planning as a corrective measure to historic housing injustices and an effort to foster affordable housing. **Chevy Chase Voice** contends that these arguments are simply tactics to shame and intimidate residents into accepting harmful policies. The evidence underpinning these claims is, at best, unfounded and, at worst, outright false.

A recent report found that since 2010, segregation is on the rise in the Metro DC region and it is the worst within Washington, DC, itself. The affordable housing planning implemented since 2010 has signally failed to achieve its purported intention.

“The Dissimilarity Index values for Black/White populations are higher in the District than in the region as a whole....The Dissimilarity Index values across all racial and ethnic categories have increased since 2010.”

p. 29 “Metropolitan Washington Regional Fair Housing Plan” released Nov 15, 2023 by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

<https://www.mwcog.org/documents/2023/11/15/metropolitan-washington-regional-fair-housing-plan-equity-fair-housing-housing/>

Upzoning's Empty Promises

The urban planning policies of **upzoning, densification, and gentrification (U/D/G)** that are associated with New Urbanism have not delivered affordable housing in D.C. or elsewhere. To the contrary, these measures have escalated housing costs, displaced residents, and shuttered small businesses. A [draft report](#) acknowledging displacement is expected to be finished by early 2025, but the damage continues unchecked.

It is the position of **Chevy Chase Voice** that the D.C. Zoning Commission—a longstanding extension of mayoral authority—should halt any further upzoning that exacerbates displacement throughout the District, including actions affecting the Connecticut Avenue Corridor from Woodley Park to Chevy Chase Circle.

A Manufactured Crisis

Since its inception in April 2023, **Chevy Chase Voice** has uncovered a troubling pattern of deception by the D.C. government and its allies in the development industry. The claim of a housing unit shortage is a **false narrative**. D.C. faces a surplus of rental units—approximately 8% vacancy and growing—while the real crisis lies in the scarcity of **affordable** housing. Upzoning moderate-density areas with naturally occurring affordable housing (NOAH) or rent-controlled units erodes what little affordability remains.

The so-called "inclusionary zoning" (IZ) model is a scam. IZ units are smaller and more expensive than the NOAH units they replace. Moreover, D.C.'s housing policies fail to recognize older rent-controlled buildings as a crucial source of affordability, opting instead to perpetuate policies that prioritize new development over existing affordable units.

DC favors new buildings over existing affordable infrastructure, but older buildings provide a crucial piece of the housing puzzle in that they can charge lower rent. The rule applies not only to housing but also to business. This methodology echos Jane Jacobs' theory of the importance of mixed ages of buildings to urban vitality.

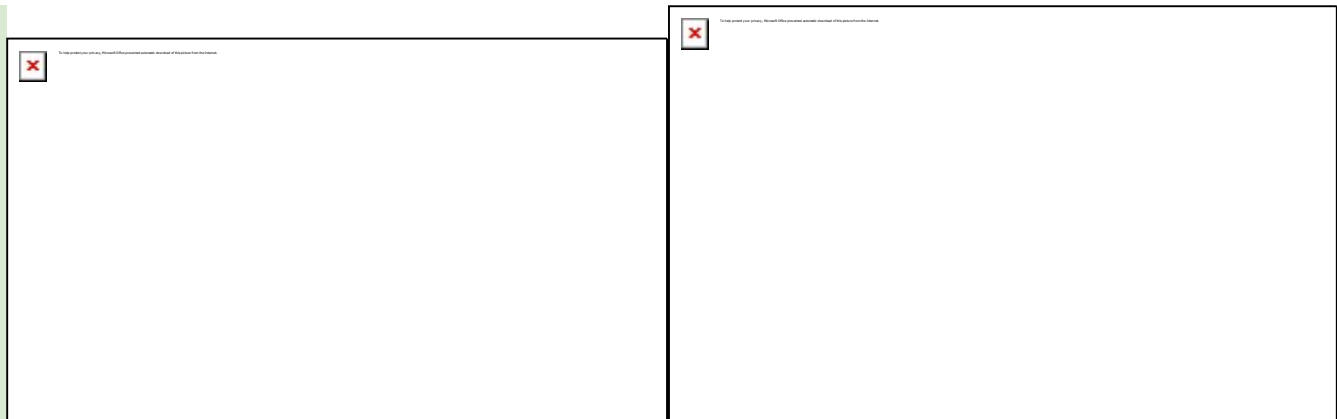
As urban design advocate Tocarra Nicole Thomas recently emphasized in a discussion with local New Urbanism supporters (<https://smartgrowthamerica.org/about-us/our-staff/>), including consultant Ellen McCarthy and Perkins Eastman developer Matt Bell, redevelopment should preserve a community's "**green and civic spaces**," which serve as its "**living room furniture**." Thomas highlighted the importance of **community input, architectural harmony with existing structures**, and supporting small businesses. We could not agree more. Yet the upzoning proposed for the Ward 3 Connecticut Avenue Corridor fails to meet these criteria. The D.C. Office of Planning has repeatedly neglected these core principles across the District, contributing to decades of failed redevelopment efforts.

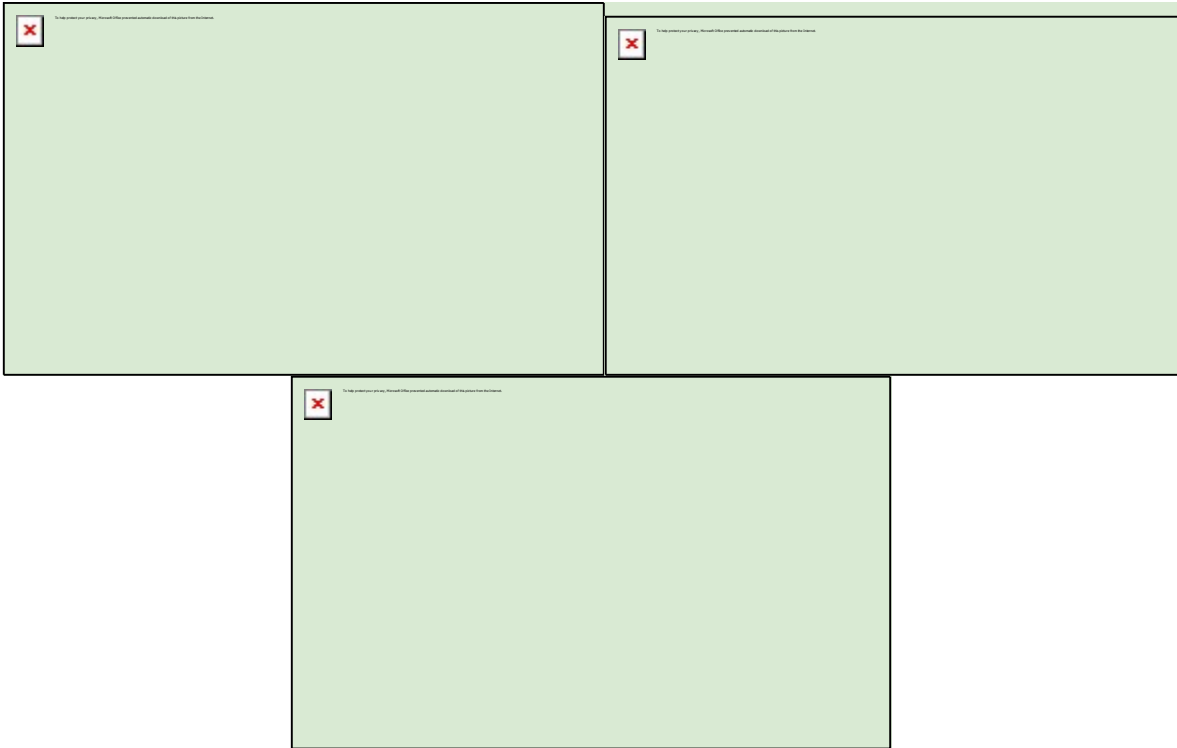
A Well-Planned, Proportional City at Risk with the Removal of R1

D.C. was once celebrated for its elegance and vision—grand boulevards, iconic architecture, and vibrant communities. But decades of corruption, neglect, and misguided policies have stripped the city of its charm and functionality. The city’s population peaked in 1950 at nearly 900,000 residents; since then, unchecked development, poor planning, and a disregard for neighborhoods have displaced thousands of residents, and left much of the city’s aesthetic and infrastructure in disrepair. Meanwhile, multifamily buildings languish vacant or distressed, even as reckless development continues.

The DC Policy Institute and Greater Greater Washington, funded by major banks, real estate companies and large developers, many who do not even live in DC, seek to abolish R1 single-family zoning in the 2025 Comprehensive Plan rewrite, affecting tens of thousands of people and small property owners. This would mark a turning point, driving away taxpayers who have long provided financial stability in all wards throughout the city. Abolishing R1 single family zoning, RA1 and RF1 zoning would have a profound effect, perhaps most of all, in Wards 7 and 8, spearheading densification and gentrification and will become *the* engine for displacement. When developers and banks talk about abolishing R1 zones, they are also talking about abolishing RA1, RF1 and similar zones throughout the city. “Smarter growth” proponents also advocate for “Form-Based” zoning to replace our current land-use “Euclidean” zoning. With the removal of zones like R1 and the advent of Form-Based zoning, there will be no guardrails against unchecked development and the displacement of residents and small local businesses in previously stable neighborhoods.

DC Policy Institute Board:





The Case for Change

Chevy Chase Voice has spent the past year gathering data that underscore the devastating displacement and other negative effects of current policies. (See CCV research notes, below.) Ongoing displacement should compel leaders to rethink their approach. Some experts are even calling for Congressional oversight of D.C.'s developer-driven planning policies. DC Zoning measures its actions through a racial lens, but without a doubt, decades of increased segregation are not what anyone wanted or expected. Now that the Zoning Commission is aware that segregation has increased in D.C. as a result of years of failed upzoning and densification planning policies, Chevy Chase Voice wants to know how the Mayor and the Zoning Commission plan to proceed?

We urge the D.C. Zoning Commission to do the right thing:

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- **Rehear Case 23-25 as a contested hearing.**
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- **Honor the legal precedents and the voices of residents.**

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Ignoring your duty to serve the public is not an option. If the Commission fails to act, the courts will ensure justice prevails.

Submitted by Chevy Chase Voice, a grassroots non-profit with over 1500 supporters in the Chevy Chase DC area.

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<https://www.ccdcvoice.org/>

Chevy Chase Voice research sources on the hidden costs of upzoning: displacement, inequality, and the erosion of affordable housing in D.C.

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3. **Upzoning, Densification, and Gentrification:**
4. Evidence suggests these policies, driven by private developers, often exacerbate displacement and increase land value, which can reduce affordability in surrounding areas. Gentrification in D.C. has displaced over 20,000 Black residents from 2000 to 2013,
5. with the city experiencing the nation's highest intensity of gentrification. (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/transportation/2019/03/19/study-dc-has-had-highest-intensity-gentrification-any-us-city/>)

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4. **Remaining Affordable Housing in D.C.:**

5. Naturally occurring affordable housing (NOAH) is concentrated in "Residential Medium Density" areas, but such units have been significantly reduced—18,300 fewer affordable units existed in 2017 compared to 2006.

(<https://dcgis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=0470b35d5da54ad1a64235b8d95ef5cc>)

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5. **Displacement Effects:**

6. From 2000 to 2016, economically expanding areas of D.C. saw a 24% decline in low-income residents and a 23.4% drop in Black residents, alongside a 20% reduction in families. Most displaced residents moved to Maryland or Virginia, with over 33,000 relocating
7. to Maryland from 2021 to 2023. (<https://ncrc.org/study-gentrification-and-cultural-displacement-most-intense-in-americas-largest-cities-and-absent-from-many-others/>)
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6. **Impact on Land Values Post-Upzoning:**
7. Upzoning increases land value, particularly in areas like Connecticut and Wisconsin Avenues NW, further pressuring affordable properties and leading to redevelopment of smaller, older multifamily buildings. (<https://dhcd.dc.gov/publication/fy2024-pathways-removing-obstacles-housing-pro-housing-program-draft>)
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7. **Homelessness and Affordable Housing Loss:**
8. Homelessness has grown alongside a loss of affordable housing. For example, rent-controlled units are declining due to redevelopment pressures, and private multifamily developments have not significantly reduced housing costs, even with inclusionary zoning
9. requirements. (<https://dc.urbanturf.com/articles/blog/the-severity-of-displacement-in-dc-by-the-numbers/15266>)
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8. **Demographics in Ward 3 NOAH:**
9. Ward 3 has the second-largest number of rent-controlled units in D.C., primarily serving moderate-income residents. Voucher holders in these buildings face displacement when upzoning leads to redevelopment. (<https://www.dcpolicycenter.org/publications/20230406-axiosdc/>)
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9. **Demographic Shifts (2000-2024):**
10. The Black population in D.C. has dropped from 60% in 2000 to 42% by 2022, primarily due to gentrification, rising living costs, and suburban migration. White and Hispanic populations have increased, altering the city's racial and ethnic composition. (<https://nchstats.com/washington-dc-population/>)
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10. **“Congress Must Intervene to Restore DC Citizens’**
11. **Rights”**, Opinion by Richard Striner that explores local
12. tyranny, graft, cronyism and corruption. (<https://thehill.com/opinion/finance/4216761-congress-must-intervene-to-restore-dc-citizens-rights/>)
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11. **DC Draft report establishing and acknowledging the loss of Naturally**
12. **Occurring Affordable Housing and Displacement.** Displacement Pressures: Market
13. pressures, particularly in high-opportunity areas, are leading to the displacement of low-income residents through conversions of older smaller multifamily buildings into condominiums or larger-scale redevelopment projects. Smaller buildings are particularly
14. vulnerable due to financial inefficiencies and higher operating
- costs. https://dhcd.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/dhcd/publication/attachments/PROHousing24_Outline%20draft%20application%209.30.24.pdf
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12. **The failure of DCHD oversight**; it’s so far beyond incompetent that it seems
13. to be intentional.
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<https://dcauditor.org/report/stronger-dhcd-oversight-needed-for-inclusionary-zoning-program-to-reach-housing-goals/>

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13. **Colbert King, speech to**
14. **the Committee of 100** “The backbone of our black community was our churches;
15. displacement broke our backs. The psychosocial [effects] of breaking up tight-knit communities that shared family obligations and cultural values and moving and scattering them to largely impersonal, often hostile parts of white neighborhoods in the district
16. had consequences that span generations.”
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=US30RYLgoWo>
- 17.