



## OFFICE OF COUNCILMEMBER ROBERT C. WHITE, JR

CHAIR, COMMITTEE ON HOUSING

THE JOHN A. WILSON BUILDING

1350 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, NW, SUITE 107

WASHINGTON, DC 20004

**October 19, 2025**

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

**Re: Opposition to ZC Case 24-11 (Montana Triangle Rezoning)**

Dear Chairperson Hood and Members of the Commission,

I write in opposition to ZC Case 24-11, which proposes to rezone the Montana Triangle—the area bounded by New York Avenue, Montana Avenue, and Bladensburg Road NE—from its current mixed-use classification back to single-use industrial zoning. This proposal would reverse years of intentional planning, community vision, and District policy designed to bring new homes, jobs, and amenities to one of our city’s most visible corridors.

As Chair of the Council’s Committee on Housing, I am deeply concerned about the precedent this case sets for how we value land in a city that remains in the midst of an affordability crisis. While much has been made of the District reaching its 36,000-unit housing production target, that milestone does not mean our work is done. The reality is that our housing pipeline remains constrained, our affordability challenges are intensifying, and too much of our new housing continues to be concentrated in a handful of neighborhoods west of the river. If we start taking land already zoned for housing and converting it back to exclusive industrial use, we will only deepen the inequities that have defined this city’s growth for generations.

The Montana Triangle is precisely the kind of site that should be part of our housing and land use future. It sits along a major transportation corridor, surrounded by existing infrastructure, and has long been designated for mixed-use development to create a transition from heavy industrial uses to more inclusive, neighborhood-serving spaces. The current MU-5B zoning allows that balance—retaining opportunities for light industrial activity while supporting housing and retail that bring life and economic vitality to the corridor. The proposal before you would erase that balance entirely and restrict this land to a single, exclusionary use.

The Office of Planning’s own Production, Distribution, and Repair (PDR) Land Use Report, issued last year, explicitly cautions against this approach. That report calls for retaining roughly 70 percent of the city’s existing PDR land for essential government and utility operations and transitioning the remainder to new mixed-use zones that allow housing alongside low-impact production uses. The report recognizes what Ward 5 residents have been saying for years—that the city’s industrial footprint is not equitably distributed, and that these zoning choices have lasting health, economic, and racial impacts. Yet the Office’s recommendation in this case does the opposite. It expands exclusive PDR land in Ward 5, the very area already overburdened by such uses, and preempts the broader policy process now underway through the DC2050 Comprehensive Plan rewrite.

The data are unambiguous. Seventy-six percent of residents who live near PDR-zoned land are Black, their median household income is roughly half the citywide average, and their life expectancy is up to eighteen years shorter than residents in wealthier parts of the city. These outcomes are not accidental—they are the direct result

of decades of planning decisions that placed industrial facilities in communities of color while reserving cleaner, higher-value land for other neighborhoods. The District has an obligation to stop repeating those patterns.

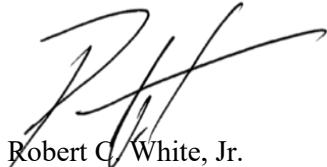
Rejecting this case is not about denying space for industry; it is about affirming a smarter, fairer model of coexistence. The city needs production and repair facilities, but they should be integrated with, not isolated from, the communities they serve. Modern planning recognizes that low-impact industrial uses—such as small-scale manufacturing, logistics, and creative production—can coexist successfully with housing and retail when designed appropriately. That is exactly what the current zoning allows, and it is consistent with where District policy is headed.

This case also raises a broader question of stewardship. Zoning decisions are not short-term development choices; they shape the city’s land use patterns for decades. Once land is downzoned to PDR-1, it will likely remain so long after the current project has ended. The opportunity to bring housing and mixed-use activity to this corridor will be lost for a generation. At a moment when we are struggling to keep up with population growth and maintain affordability, we cannot afford to make that mistake.

For these reasons, I urge the Commission to reject ZC 24-11 or, at minimum, defer action until the Office of Planning completes its DC2050 Comprehensive Plan update. That process offers the appropriate venue to evaluate how best to balance industrial retention with housing and equitable land use. Moving forward on this case now, in isolation from that citywide policy framework, would be premature and inconsistent with the District’s own stated goals.

I want to echo the position of my Council colleague, Ward 5 Councilmember Zachary Parker, and stand with Advisory Neighborhood Commissions 5C and 5D in their opposition to this proposal. Their leadership and advocacy reflect the deep and consistent concerns of the residents who live closest to this site and have borne the heaviest burden of the city’s industrial land use decisions. I share their vision for a healthier, more balanced, and more equitable future for this corridor, and I urge the Commission to honor that vision by rejecting this case.

Respectfully,



Robert C. White, Jr.  
Councilmember At-Large  
Chair, Committee on Housing  
Council of the District of Columbia