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Written testimony in opposition to Office of Planning's proposed
upzoning of Wisconsin Avenue Corridor

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TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO THE OFFICE OF PLANNING'S
PROPOSED UPZONING OF THE WISCONSIN AVENUE
CORRIDOR (ZC 25-13)

My name is Chris Schumann. I am a resident of Tenleytown and vice-president of Tenleytown Neighbors Association. I am testifying in support of the resolution TNA has submitted opposing OP's proposed upzoning of the Wisconsin Avenue corridor in its current form.

As detailed in its resolution, TNA opposes OP's proposed upzoning on three grounds: (1) that OP's proposal fails to provide for any public input on most and probably all proposed developments; (2) that OP's proposal fails to provide any meaningful analysis of the impact of its proposal on nearby neighborhoods; and (3) that OP's proposal fails to provide any meaningful guarantee of affordable housing. In my testimony, I will address the first objection.

Let me start by describing Tenleytown. Tenleytown is what its name suggests: a town within a city. It is a thriving and vibrant community. It includes neighborhoods lying next to Wisconsin Avenue – neighborhoods that include young residents and not-so-young residents, newcomers and old-timers, residents with children at home and residents without children at home, residents who care about each other and look out for each other. It also includes businesses on Wisconsin Avenue itself – businesses that are regularly patronized by many neighborhood residents and that in many instances are small businesses and have been located at their present sites for many years.

Of critical importance, neighborhood residents and neighborhood ANCs, working with each other, have provided valuable input on proposed developments over the years. We sometimes hear the phrase “smart

growth.” I prefer to describe the product of resident input and ANC input as “thoughtful growth.”

OP’s proposal effectively eliminates resident input and ANC input. In addition, it effectively eliminates Zoning Commission input. The effect of OP’s proposal in Tenleytown will be that as long as a proposed development is not higher than 130 feet – a height that is over 30 percent greater than the height limit in the Comp Plan and that will include most and probably all proposed developments – neither neighborhood residents nor neighborhood ANCs, nor the Zoning Commission, will have any right to comment on the development.

OP’s proposed elimination of resident input and ANC input has no basis in the current Council-approved Comp Plan and no basis in any other enacted legislation. In this regard, it is significant that the Council recently declined to enact legislation that would have restricted the right of residents to appeal Zoning Commission and BZA decisions by authorizing the Court of Appeals to require appealing parties to post indemnification bonds. The Zoning Commission should reach a similar result here. At a time when powers beyond the District are working to restrict the right of District residents to have a voice in their own government, approving OP’s proposal in its current form would send a terrible message with terrible timing.