



Testimony in Support of Zoning Proposal 25-13 December 11, 2025

My name is Rick Rybeck. I live in Adams Morgan. I've lived in DC since 1979. I attend gym classes in Friendship Heights three days a week. I also go to Tenleytown from time to time.

I support the Wisconsin Avenue Corridor zoning proposal to encourage more housing options, including affordable housing. Implementing the proposal should result in greater economic vitality. The District's economy is under stress from the firing of federal employees and the reduction in office space utilization. Therefore, it is critical to provide residential support to the businesses along Wisconsin Avenue.

Since moving into DC in 1979, I've lived in several neighborhoods – Eastern Market in Southeast, Waterside Mall in Southwest, and Mount Pleasant and Adams Morgan in Northwest. Excellent transit and access to local businesses are key characteristics of these neighborhoods and central to my quality of life. Tenleytown and Friendship Heights share these same characteristics. Based on high home prices and rents there, it's safe to say that others find these attributes attractive also.

But the District's predominant residential zoning categories limit the number of people who can take advantage of these neighborhoods. This drives up prices and rents. This impoverishes some DC residents. And it prevents others from locating here altogether, forcing them into cheaper but more remote locations.

Increasing housing in Tenleytown and Friendship Heights enhances housing options for DC residents while allowing newcomers to live here also. New housing can soak up some of the demand for living in DC, thereby reducing displacement of existing households by more affluent ones.

Building more housing near Metro is so important. It allows residents to live with fewer or even no cars. This reduces pollution and saves households money. Money that isn't spent purchasing cars, fuel and insurance can be spent at local businesses instead. This enhances DC's economy. COVID and the subsequent reduction in downtown office use has been hard on businesses and some have closed. Adding more residents could help reverse this decline in local business opportunities.

Although increasing the supply of housing in the Wisconsin Ave Corridor will create some downward pressure on home prices and rents, more could be done. Getting more people to share expensive land should lower per-capita or per household land costs – a significant component housing prices. Yet, upzoning typically increases the price of upzoned land, thereby reducing the intended affordability benefit. However, this land price inflation could be reduced by enhancing “land value return.”

In other words, returning publicly-created land value back to the community, instead of giving it away as a windfall to private landowners, would reduce land price inflation. Several cities in Pennsylvania have successfully implemented this reform. The results have been more affordable housing and increased infill development. The Zoning Commission should advise the Council and the Mayor about land value return as a way to make zoning more effective and development more affordable. For more information, see <https://www.shareable.net/land-value-return-and-building-a-more-equitable-economy/>.

The proposed rezoning implementations the Comprehensive Plan Rock Creek West Element and the Wisconsin Ave. Development Framework. This rezoning facilitates the creation of needed homes on this high opportunity, mixed-use corridor. Up to 9,500 new housing units on the Wisconsin Avenue corridor could be produced as a result of these changes, of which 1,700 could be dedicated affordable, according to the framework.

Thanks for considering my views.

Sincerely,
Rick Rybeck