

**Comments of Ann Lane Mladinov**  
**RE OP Supplemental Report of April 20 in ZC 25-13**  
**Map and Text Amendment for Upper Wisconsin Avenue**  
**May 14, 2026**

My ANC, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3A, adopted a resolution to submit to the Zoning Commission by the deadline today, expressing several concerns:

- A request for the Zoning Commission to extend the deadline for comments because two weeks was insufficient time for both of the affected ANCs (ANC 3A and ANC 3E) and other members of the community to review the OP Supplemental Report and submit informed comments.

- Concern that the proposed design review process is not sufficiently delineated to be able to understand how it would work, meaning that if it were adopted as currently proposed, without further information and further discussion, it would create more uncertainty among prospective developers, affected property owners, and other members of the community. That is the opposite of what a regulators would normally want to do; uncertainty is a major contributor to unease and hesitation about launching a project, because funders and potential supporters do not have sufficient confidence of how their proposal might be affected.

I would like to add a few points on those and related concerns about the OP Supplemental Report:

Insufficient time for public review and comments

Setting the due date for comments as May 14 at 3 pm did not allow enough time for the ANCs to review OP's new materials, share information as widely as we would wish with residents and other interested parties, or develop an official position based on a sound understanding of the proposed changes, discussion and informed vote by the ANC at a duly noticed public meeting. The deadline does not appear to have been with consideration of the meeting schedule for the two affected ANCs. ANC 3A would usually be meeting on May 19 this month, but we needed to change the schedule because of a conflict with our usual date, so we met on May 12 instead and were able to adopt a resolution expressing several basic concerns. Otherwise we would not have met in time to make the Zoning Commission's May 14 deadline. And ANC 3E is not meeting until May 14 at 7 pm, so it would not be able to meet the deadline.

We had a few questions about the proceeding at our May 12 meeting. At the time of that meeting, two Ward 3 residents (not from ANC 3A) had submitted very brief statements to the Zoning Commission expressing a hope that ZC 25-13 would go forward. And Patrick McAnaney of Somerset Development had submitted two pages with thoughtful comments about deficiencies in OP's proposed "design review." More submissions of that kind by others paying close attention to the Text and Map Amendment would be useful. But the small number of comments, especially in comparison to the relatively large number of witnesses and commenters expressing concerns about OP's original proposal at the December 11, 2025, hearing would strongly suggest that members of the public have not had a chance to hear of the proposed changes.

Other General Concerns

2. No illustrations of the effect of the higher allowed height and density on surrounding residential blocks. No requirement for light and shadow studies when the highest density projects are proposed.

3. No accommodation for the pleas at the December hearing that the proposal consider the importance of open space along the corridor, in larger amounts than just sidewalk or a mid-block passage or small rear yard at the back of the properties along Wisconsin Avenue, which would be private, probably fenced and of minimal use to occupants of the building itself or the larger community.

4. No clear justification for the selection of the particular zoning codes to adopt on the Wisconsin Avenue corridor, which appear to be the highest that could be proposed within the District's height limits (MU-10/FHM for the zoning at Friendship Heights, or 130 ft. when MU-9 or MU-10/TTM could have been chosen. Is there demand for projects of that height? The descriptions in the 2021 amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, including the Framework Element and the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) provided for greater density as a "matter of right" than existing zoning, but not to the extent that OP is proposing in ZC 25-13.

When OP released its draft FLUM as part of "DC 2050," the current project to update the Comprehensive Plan, the FLUM highlighted as changes from the 2021 Comprehensive Plan the areas along upper Wisconsin Avenue identified in ZC 25-13 as higher density Commercial Centers or Neighborhood Centers, the new "place types" that OP is discussing in developing the new Comp Plan. That would suggest to observers that OP does not consider that ZC 25-13 is actually carrying out what was included in the 2021 Comp Plan, which is supposed to be guiding development and zoning until a new Comp Plan is developed, but that it will be necessary to adopt a new FLUM in the next Comp Plan to reflect the level of height and density OP wants to see adopted in ZC 25-13. The 2021 FLUM allowed for considerably more development and density, but not as much as OP is now asking the Zoning Commission to approve in key areas on the Wisconsin Avenue corridor, particularly around the Friendship Heights and Tenleytown Metro stations. That is not to say that projections of demand and careful analysis of planning considerations at those locations might not indicate some higher density ">

5. No response to our request for additional illustrations if projects reached the maximum "matter of right" height and density, particularly around the Metro stations  
What would the effect of projects of the proposed maximum height and bulk on the corridor and on surrounding residential blocks in particular? In December, ANC 3A had urged that the Zoning Commission ask OP to provide better illustrations of what projects at the maximum size that OP is proposing as "matter of right" would look like from the perspective of a person on Wisconsin Avenue near the Tenleytown or Friendship Heights Metro stations, or on one of the surrounding residential blocks?

6. No response to our request for clearer information and graphic presentation on how the numbers would work:

- a. share of affordable housing that would be required on each property on the corridor if the proposed height and density and IZ+ standards were applied
- b. How much the proposal would increase the "matter of right" density on each property.  
Would the new maximum "matter of right" density be 125% of "matter of right" under existing zoning, or would it be 200% or 300% or more compared to the existing maximum?

NOTE: Right now 125% of the existing "matter of right" density is the maximum "bonus density" currently offered for a project on a property covered by IZ+ requirements, in return for creating the highest contemplated share of affordable housing, which is 20% for concrete and steel construction, 18% for wood construction.

### 7. Design Review

OP's Supplemental Report has added a proposed "design review" process within the Zoning Commission that is not fully described and leaves open a great many questions. The proposed design review would apply only to projects in the Friendship Heights and Tenleytown commercial areas around the Metro stations. OP also suggests that the design review process could include an additional factor to be considered in assessing a project: the number of affordable housing units that would have 3 or more bedrooms, to accommodate households with several children. In the ANC 3A comments submitted for the December 11 hearing, the ANC supported some incentives to developers to include affordable units with 3 bedrooms or more to be more suitable for larger households. At the April 30 meeting, members of the Zoning Commission recognized that as a positive step to serve families with children and/or multiple generations.

As ANC 3A said in its resolution adopted at its May 12 public meeting, the design review proposal is too vague for us to be able evaluate how it would work. Who would be part of the review, what would the timeline be for a decision, what weight would be given to the design review findings, would there be any recourse or any flexibility on its decisions? As it currently stands, the design review proposal would likely create more uncertainty for property owners, developers, and others in the community. What we need in zoning is clear guidance on which plans can be based and regulatory decisions can also be made, without confusion or conflict in interpretations that could lead to additional delays and other obstacles to completing a project.

### 8. Affordable housing

Creating additional affordable housing is a priority interest and commitment for ANC 3A, including affordable housing units of different sizes and cost levels to accommodate different household income, from 80% AMI, 60% AMI, 50% AMI, 30% AMI, or less. It is good to see that the request for some provision to encourage construction of affordable units with 3 bedrooms to accommodate families with several children, or households with large multigenerational families. OP's Supplemental Report calls for adding provision of affordable units with 3 bedrooms to the considerations in the suggested design review process for projects in the high-density areas around the Friendship Heights and Tenleytown Metro stations.

But there is nothing to reward or recognize the value of providing a higher share of affordable housing, than the IZ+ standard, or providing more 2-bedroom units rather than 1-bedroom units or studios, creating units that are affordability at 60% AMI or lower, or providing any other amenities for households residing in the affordable units who need additional economical services such as day care facilities. There is also no provision in the design review to incentivize creative coordination and partnerships with non-profits to build affordable housing, including senior housing or worker housing.

At the time of the December 11 hearing, it was a key interest of ANC 3A that ZC 25-13 provide for affordable housing more commensurate with the increase in "matter of right" density on the Wisconsin Avenue corridor. OP's Supplemental Report states that the requirements in the IZ+ program were set to match conditions in the local housing market and developers could not afford to have more than 20% affordable units as a share of the total units in a new residential project, even if it is built to have 150%, 200% or 300% more density than existing "matter of right" standards—far more than the 125% "bonus density" allowed under the District's current IZ+ program.

The OP Supplemental Report does conclude that the District should take a new look at the IZ and IZ+ standards, and that analysis could find that the share of affordable units should be changed. OP opines

that if that is done and the recommendation is that IZ or IZ+ standards be raised or lowered, that could be done at that time and the results could be incorporated in the requirements for properties on the Wisconsin Avenue corridor that are covered by IZ. We understand that factors such as inflation have been concerned that property owners would have a claim that the District was taking away rights and legal authority that they had every reason to expect would continue with their properties when they purchased them. It is more common and legally more straightforward to increase the opportunities for property owners rather than reduce them, but that would be for lawyers and adjudicators to determine.

There are multiple and sometimes conflicting interests but further analysis of the basic variables in the real estate development and affordable housing sectors would seem to be in order. But a review of the IZ+ standards, market conditions, and projected costs and supply and demand would be useful.

### 9. Open Space

Several of the witnesses at the December 11 hearing offered thoughtful points on the lack of provision or any encouragement for substantial open space including green space on the Wisconsin Avenue corridor, especially in the areas around the Friendship Heights and Tenleytown Metro stations where the “matter of right” height and density would be particularly increased. OP’s proposed Text Amendment calls for facades to be built to open right to the front property line, opening onto the public sidewalk and the street face, unless a project is granted a special exception. The Wisconsin Avenue Development Framework featured many illustrations showing green areas at many locations on the corridor and some large open areas that would provide a visual break from the surrounding structures and help avoid a canyon-like appearance. But the current text for ZC 25-13 does not appear to encourage or facilitate potential coordination among projects across several properties to combine open areas into a larger park or plaza area at intersections or mid-block, adding to the visual appeal and human scale features and interactions that people have said they would like to see in the community.

Could this be another consideration for a design review process, along with other items such as additional number of affordable housing units, larger number of affordable units with more than one bedroom even if not 3 or more bedrooms, affordable units for households with lower levels of income compared to area median income, other affordable amenities such as affordable child care or recreation/play areas, larger open space particular for public use, etc.?

It would be unfortunate to drop a key recommendation that OP made in the Wisconsin Avenue Development Framework to achieve the urban design vision for the corridor—i.e., to provide for design review for projects in the two high-density mixed-use areas near the Friendship Heights and Tenleytown-AU Metro stations—just because there was insufficient detail in the OP Supplemental Report or because the Zoning Commission allowed too little time to gather further input and develop the concept so it could be effective at achieving the objectives. I would urge the Zoning Commission not to rule out design review in this case because in the moment it seems too difficult to formulate a good way for carrying out that process.

In the revised Text Amendment, OP notes that the Design Review process would also help support other purposes including flexibility in “Setbacks, Angular Planes” and “Adaptive Reuse” as well as encouragement of affordable units with 3 bedrooms. There are no other provisions of ZC 25-13 that would support that latter purpose, without the proposed Design Review. The purposes of attractive design and affordable housing for families are both important in the Wisconsin Avenue corridor and it is important to maintain provisions for both in the Text Amendment, as OP also favors.

At this time, there is not significant pressure in the commercial real estate market to get new zoning in place so that major projects can proceed. The market has been slow and current inflation levels, interest rates, construction costs, and stagnant economic activity and population growth suggest that there is time to think through the details of the plans for Wisconsin Avenue. Rushing through the approval of the Text and Map Amendment is not likely to be a long-term benefit for the area's development or the community.

All these considerations point to the need for further discussion, additional information and public communications, and additional time for ANCs, property owners and community members to become more familiar with how the proposed changes in ZC 25-13 would work and what the effects would be, especially in helping or impeding progress toward desired objectives of plans for the Wisconsin Avenue corridor and the areas we serve.