

Comp Plan Priorities Statement - Overview

What is the Comprehensive Plan?

The Comprehensive Plan lays out policy goals and statements on everything from housing to arts and culture to sewage. Inside each chapter are guidelines, goals, and recommendations that spell out a vision for what DC is supposed to look like in the coming decades.

What's the role of the Comprehensive Plan? Who uses it?

The plan is not zoning nor prescriptive, but is supposed to guide everyday decisions and act as a measurement tool for the city as it grows. It's kind of like the bible: it is full of fairly general priorities and policies that are sometimes contradictory. It's the job of District agencies to interpret and implement those goals.

No other agency uses the Comp Plan as much as the Zoning Commission. They interpret the policies and maps in the Comp Plan and execute those decisions in zoning cases.

Timeline:

The first Comprehensive Plan was adopted back in 1985. In 2006, DC re-wrote the plan and set a schedule for ongoing amendments every five years. There was a minor update in 2011-2012. Now, the Office of Planning is undergoing another amendment cycle. By the end of 2017, they will submit their amendment package to DC Council, who then make changes and vote their approval in early 2018.

Why does it matter?

A good Comp Plan can guide a changing city's growth in positive ways. A bad Comp Plan can misdirect or mismanage growth, or try to freeze the city in amber and hamper agencies or laws that could address our region's growth.

What does changing the Comp Plan mean for my neighborhood?

Nothing right away. This is a long term document. Lots of ANC commissioners and housing advocates are tired of fighting against decisions that seem to have been made 15 years ago. Well, this is the document that helps make those decisions for 15 years from now!

What is this Priorities Statement, and who came up with it?

While the Comp Plan focuses on lots of things, this Priorities Statement focuses on housing and development because: 1) It is the most enforceable topic of the Comp Plan, and 2) we fundamentally believe there is a shortage of housing and affordable housing options in DC.

Greater Greater Washington gathered with a group of housing and development stakeholders together who agreed with #2, and over the last 8 months have developed these priorities for the upcoming Comp Plan Amendment cycle.

What is powerful about this coalition is that it includes an incredibly wide spectrum of housing stakeholders: for-profit & non-profit developers, low-income tenant advocates, policy experts and community organizations. Some of the participants have actively lobbied against each other in the past, but they came together for this document and process. See full list of coalition supporters at <http://dchousingpriorities.org>.

Why these statements?

The Priorities Statement represents points of agreement for these stakeholders that they believe should exist in the new Comp Plan.

It is not meant to be a comprehensive list! There are lots of things that you might believe should be included in the Comp Plan (and we encourage you to talk to the Office of Planning about your views!), but this list represents the group's best effort at identifying what needs to be prioritized in the Comp Plan based on the current political, demographic and economic realities surrounding housing and development in DC. It includes priorities that we felt needed to be made stronger in the current Comp Plan, and areas that we felt were missing altogether.

DC Housing and Development Priorities Statement

We are a diverse group of DC-area organizations and companies who build housing (for-profit and not-for-profit), advocate for policies that increase affordable housing, support the needs of disadvantaged communities, strengthen neighborhood commercial corridors and locally owned businesses, and educate the public on planning issues. We have agreed on the following priorities for DC's Comprehensive Plan revision:

- **Meet the housing demand.** Through the Comprehensive Plan, the District should forecast, plan for, and encourage the creation and preservation of a supply of housing (market-rate and subsidized affordable) to meet the demand at all income levels. The supply of housing should be sufficient to slow rising costs of rental and for-sale housing.
- **Equitably distribute housing.** Through the Comprehensive Plan, the District should fight against segregation, foster equitable access to opportunity, and comply with Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) priorities. The District should require that every part of the city participate in adding housing to meet the need for all income levels, with an emphasis on transit and commercial corridors.
- **Best utilize areas near transit.** When redevelopment occurs on blocks surrounding Metrorail stations and priority transit corridors, the District should, through the Comprehensive Plan, permit and encourage mixed-use developments of medium to high density. To the extent feasible, redevelopments involving increased zoning should include affordable housing in excess of what is required by inclusionary zoning.
- **Include families.** The District should be a city that houses people of all income levels and of all household sizes, including families. Through the Comprehensive Plan, the District should promote the creation and preservation of 3+ bedroom units along with other housing types.
- **Prioritize affordable housing as a community benefit.** When rezoning or granting significant zoning relief, the District should affirm through the Comprehensive Plan that affordable housing (in addition to any underlying requirement) is the highest priority benefit and that other community benefits should be long-lasting.

- **Preserve existing affordable housing.** When redevelopment occurs on properties with housing made affordable through subsidy, covenant, or rent control, the District, Zoning Commission, and neighborhoods should work with landowners to create redevelopment plans that preserve such units or replace any lost ones with similar units either on-site or nearby. These entities should provide the necessary density and/or potential funding to ensure it is financially feasible to reinvest in the property with no net loss of affordable units.
- **Protect tenants.** Through the Comprehensive Plan, the District should ensure that when affordable housing is undergoing redevelopment, tenants have a relocation plan, are allowed to continue their tenancy with minimal disruption, and will have the right to return to their units or an equivalent replacement. Whenever feasible, redevelopment should observe build-first principles.
- **Support neighborhood commercial corridors.** Through the Comprehensive Plan, the District should encourage the success of neighborhood commercial corridors and locally owned businesses, especially in disadvantaged communities. This includes increased housing density that supports businesses and providing equitable opportunities for locally owned businesses in mixed-use and commercial developments.
- **Clarify zoning authority.** Through the Comprehensive Plan, the District should affirm that the Zoning Commission has the purview to allow increased density for Planned Unit Developments that supersedes the levels in the Comprehensive Plan's maps in exchange for community benefits.
- **Improve data collection and transparency.** The District should provide the highest quality public data. It should standardize housing-related data collection across agencies, and release all data and forecast analyses to the public, to facilitate transparency and regular reporting on the status and progress of housing-related programs. Data should include a comprehensive housing database and demand-based forecasts alongside existing supply-based (pipeline) forecasts.

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