

An Open Letter to Elected Officials and Candidates for Citywide Office from the People's of the District of Columbia

We the undersigned believe that DC government's planning and development agencies have been effectively captured by the industries they are supposed to regulate. Judged by any relevant standard -- the American Institute of Certified Planners Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct; the work product of planners in other American cities; responsible stewardship of public assets; and, basic principles of democracy -- our planning and development agencies are failing.

It is time for change. And, change -- in both personnel and institutional culture -- is urgent because unelected bureaucrats and Commissioners are making major decisions that will have lasting consequences for our city's future. Profoundly dysfunctional planning practices and poor decision-making across the City have resulted in the displacement of longtime residents; the loss of small businesses; a surge in homelessness; and, a crisis in housing affordability.

We expect our elected officials to take responsibility for this situation and to use their powers -- of appointment, confirmation, oversight, budgeting, and legislation --to ensure that policy choices are made democratically and with equal consideration for all neighborhoods; that agencies follow the law; that the preferences and interests of citizens are taken no less seriously than those of developers; that public land is used to serve public needs; and, that actual planning (e.g. data collection and analysis, coordination among agencies) precedes and informs decision making.

Toward that end, we request that:

- Any action on the proposed zoning regulations be deferred until after a robust public discussion of (and a Council vote on) amendments to the Comprehensive Plan,
- The incoming Mayor appoint a new Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development, a new Director of the Office of Planning, and a new member of Zoning Commission,
- The Council require, as a condition of confirmation, that candidates for these positions have a track record of, and a commitment to, constructive engagement with diverse groups of citizens, and that,
- Decisions on controversial public land PUDs be postponed until after these new leaders have been appointed and confirmed.

As signed,

Full Name / Title (for identification purposes only) / Address / Ward / Email / Phone