

Housing Priorities Coalition

DC Comprehensive Plan Fact Sheet



As the primary document that guides what and where development occurs in the District for the next few decades, the Comp Plan has the power to stem the tide of economic and residential segregation. Mayor Bowser and the DC Office of Planning (OP) issued a draft Comprehensive Plan (plandc.dc.gov) that, if approved, is a step in the right direction towards greater equity and opportunity.

How can the proposed changes increase housing affordability?

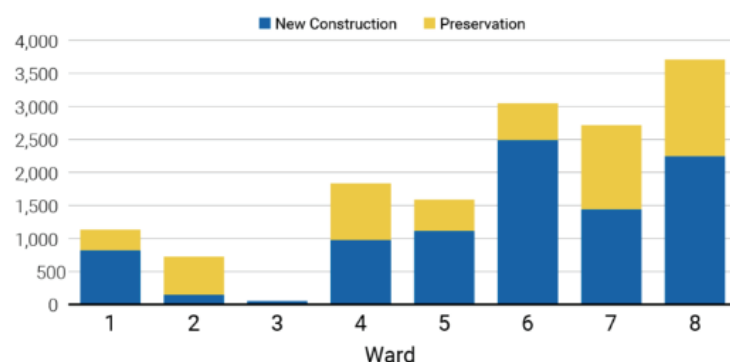
The potential for increased density in the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) can help create affordable housing opportunities in high-opportunity neighborhoods, much of which are traditionally restricted to high-priced single family houses. By contrast, the current version of the Comp Plan, which has not been updated in eight years, upholds and exacerbates inequities throughout DC by overly restricting a diversity of new housing opportunities in high-demand locations. Building affordable housing is expensive, so part of the way to make it feasible is by encouraging more homes of different types and sizes.

Do the changes to the FLUM mean changes to existing neighborhoods?

No, not directly. Increasing capacity in the FLUM does not change zoning, and the FLUM is not a zoning map. The FLUM acts as a guiding document for the Zoning Commission when zoning changes are proposed. Any zoning change would still need to go through a rezoning process. If a developer pursues significant changes to the zoning map, they would still go through the Planned Unit Development process, which includes community input and benefits. The FLUM needs to be updated because it currently has provided too little opportunity for considering zoning changes that could bring a diversity of housing choices to specific areas. Instead, the Comp Plan and FLUM have preserved the status-quo and avoided common-sense changes in high-opportunity areas.

Less Than 1 Percent of DC's New Affordable Housing Is In Ward 3

Affordable units completed since 2015, under construction, or in the pipeline.



Source: Affordable housing pipeline database compiled by DCPPI. Excludes public housing replacement units. Data is as of 9/5/2018.

dcfpi.org/all/affordable-housing-pipeline-interactive-map/

Will more planned housing potential automatically create more affordable housing?

Adding the potential for increased housing is a necessary but not sufficient condition of creating more affordable housing. In addition to adding housing potential, the District should link any increased capacity in the FLUM to greater set asides of affordability that go beyond the baseline requirements in the Inclusionary Zoning program. DC Office of Planning is already considering this option.

Do we really need more housing?

According to the Urban Institute, roughly 65,400 additional households are expected to live in DC by 2030, and the District must build 68,800 new housing units to meet the demand; most of the units will need to be affordable to low- and middle-income households.

Net Additional Households Projected by Income Level Between 2015 and 2030 for DC

Income level	District of Columbia
Lowest	8,500
Low	7,000
Low-Middle	5,100
Middle	13,500
High	15,800
Highest	15,400
Total	65,400

Source: Urban Institute, *Meeting the Washington Region's Future Housing Needs: A Framework for Regional Deliberations* (September 2019)

urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/100946/meeting_the_washington_regions_future_housing_needs.pdf

Why do we need more affordable housing if low-income families are able to use vouchers?

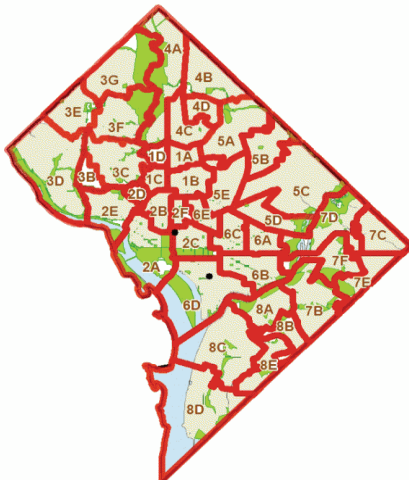
Just a fraction of households that are eligible for household supports receive them. The DC Housing Authority's waiting list for Housing Choice Vouchers is also closed with approximately 40,000 prospective applicants. Further, due to discrimination tied to source of income, many families are unable to successfully utilize their voucher. That is why we also need to support construction or renovation of new affordable housing as well. We need all landlords to accept vouchers so that voucher-holders have a broad array of options of where to live and are not concentrated in certain buildings or neighborhoods. Families are most likely to use vouchers in Wards 7 and 8 in neighborhoods with fewer employment opportunities and lower-performing schools.

Why do we need more affordable housing if we already have rent-controlled units?

Rent control is one of the most effective tools we have to promote neighborhood stability and prevent displacement. But rent control is intended to keep housing at a reasonable rate; it is not intended to create new affordable housing. We need every tool at our disposal to address the vast affordable housing shortage that the District faces. Further, DC is losing thousands of rent-controlled units each year under the current rent control law due to loopholes such as voluntary agreements and vacancy price increases.

How can we accommodate more homes when our schools are already overcrowded?

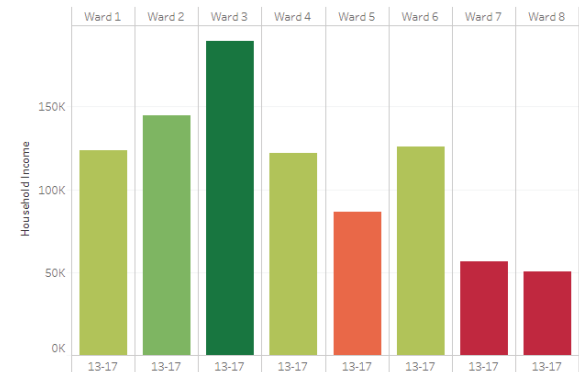
If schools are already over-capacity, part of the solution is simply to build more schools — and that would need to be addressed with or without new housing units. Another part of the solution of over-capacity schools in one part of the city is to provide transportation and comparable programming (academic, co-curricular and athletic) at nearby schools that are under-capacity. Also, DCPS facilities and land should always be maintained and controlled by DCPS, and not leased or managed by another agency to ensure capacity to address current and future needs.



How does the Comp Plan support broader principles like fighting climate change, supporting local businesses, and advancing racial equity?

The Comp Plan adds potential for new housing near major transit corridors. Not only can the increased density help create more affordable homes, transit-oriented living relieves traffic congestion and reduces pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. As the climate crisis becomes increasingly urgent, research demonstrates that simply increasing housing opportunity in compact, transit-accessible areas can have profound positive impacts. According to a London School of Economics study, a “modest blend of pro-density housing and transit policies,” could cut their emissions by a third by 2030.

Mean Household Income by Ward



Notes and Sources: Data are from the 2008-2012 and 2013-2017 U.S. Census Bureau 5-Year Estimates. Data are based on a sample and are subject to sampling variability.

<https://dceconomicstrategy.com/household-income/>

Research by the Urban Land Institute found that mixed-use development near transit areas have significant economic and social benefits. For example, increased density could help small businesses access more local customers.

Lastly, but perhaps most importantly, the amendments to the Comp Plan could help curb racial and economic segregation. Currently, Ward 8 is 92% Black with a median household income of less than \$35,000; Ward 3 is 82% White with a median household of \$137,000. The average life expectancy in Ward 3 is 15 years longer than in Ward 8. Increasing the types of housing available and where such housing is located could help integrate these areas and create opportunity for all District residents.

Okay, I'm convinced! What now?

ANC input is due to the Office of Planning by Feb. 14. You should tell your ANC that you support the language in the amendments to increase and prioritize affordable housing, and commissioners should work to pass resolutions that reflect that support.

Learn more about the DC Comprehensive Plan at <https://plandc.dc.gov/>