

The Maps of the DC Comprehensive Plan

Background

There are two Maps that are part of the Comprehensive Plan: The Generalized Policy Map (GPM) and the Future Land Use Map (FLUM). Both maps cover the entire city and they map out in different color-coded categories desired land-use (or mix of land uses) and density across the city. They are integral to the Comprehensive Plan and they carry the same legal weight as the text of the Plan.

The Generalized Policy Map - "tells the story" of how the District is expected to change over the next two decades. It uses broad land-use categories like "neighborhood conservation", "commercial areas" and "institutional uses".

The Future Land Use Map - commonly known as the "FLUM" - depicts the intended density of locations across the city using categories like low, moderate, medium and high residential and commercial. The FLUM also identifies the typical density and character of buildings associated with each category, as well as representative zoning districts.

Mayor Bowser's Office of Planning is proposing hundreds of changes to the GPM and the FLUM. Many of these changes were proposed by developers and most, if not all, propose a change that sets the stage for denser development.

The GPM and FLUM are not zoning maps, but they are an important guide for re-zoning. Once the Council approves the Comp Plan amendments with the Map changes, developers will rush to the Zoning Commission with property re-zoning applications seeking denser, more profitable zoning for their properties. The Zoning Commission will consider the applications and will approve them if they find they are "not inconsistent" with the Comprehensive Plan and Maps. Once approved, developers can develop, matter-of-right, according to the denser zone development standards that apply.

Over-Arching Concerns

There are several overarching concerns with Mayor Bowser's proposed Map changes that Councilmembers should be aware of before they approve them:

- Nearly all the changes were submitted piecemeal to the Office of Planning by developers and property owners. In many cases, there was no considered planning involved, no examination of city-wide or site-specific implications, and no community process associated with them. They were accepted without explanation other than the words "Accept", "Not Recommended", "Accept with Modification" and, "No Action Needed".

- If the changes are approved by the Council, they will accelerate developer-driven growth that places the highest premium on developing what's most profitable. This is a model that potentially forecloses other higher-value land uses such as city-owned affordable housing, parks, and other public institutional uses. This is also a model that has led to many of the problems DC is now struggling with: sky-rocketing housing costs, gentrification, retail rents that drive out local small businesses and non-profits and displacement of native Washingtonians.
- Map changes to higher density categories incentivizes matter-of-right development and, in turn, undermines the Planned Unit Development (PUD) process and the opportunity PUD processes offer to exchange valuable density for valuable benefits to the city and its residents, like affordable housing, quality jobs, and infrastructure improvements.
- Matter-of-right development forecloses the opportunity for Advisory Neighborhood Commissions and residents to have any legitimate voice in development decisions that affect them and their neighborhoods.

What Can You Do?

1. Examine Mayor Bowser's proposed Map changes for your neighborhood closely. If you have concerns, now is the time to express them to DC Councilmembers with any specific additions, deletions or modifications.

Go here >> <https://plandc.dc.gov/page/future-land-use-map-and-generalized-policy-map>

3. Major Map changes should not be approved until they reflect the recommendations of a Small Area Plan (SAP). SAPs are facilitated processes that involve residents, property owners and community stakeholders in identifying priorities and developing equitable strategies for growth. Once approved by the Council, SAPs offer supplemental guidance to the Comprehensive Plan. Ask Councilmembers to require the Office of Planning to work with you and community stakeholders to develop Small Area Plans before they approve Map changes that could significantly affect where you live.

FOR MORE INFO:

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