

CLEVELAND PARK SMART GROWTH NEWSLETTER



Cleveland Park Smart Growth is a community of Cleveland Park residents who share an interest in promoting, sharing, and discussing urbanist and smart growth issues in Washington D.C., with an emphasis on Cleveland Park. Join us at cpsmartgrowth.com.

Comprehensive Plan Amendments: What You Should Know

By: Beau Finley, Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner for 3C04.

The [Comprehensive Plan](#) (Comp Plan) is a living document that is meant to embody the policy goals of the District as it braces for and embraces the city's future, as affected by expected demographic change, economic transformation, and now the climate crisis. The first Comp Plan was adopted in 1985, revised in 2006, amended in 2011, and is now undergoing another amendment process. With the District's population forecasted to grow to over one million people within the next 18 years, major changes must happen across our city: we'll need a lot more housing near transit, more schools, and better and safer infrastructure. And we'll need to do this in a sustainable way that enhances our city and helps our fellow Washingtonians.

How We Got Here

The Mayor is required to submit the District's "elements and amendments" of the Comp Plan to the Council of the District of Columbia for revision, modification, and adoption, "following public hearings." As part of this, in spring 2016, the District's Office of Planning (OP) issued an open call for proposed amendments to the Comp Plan. OP staff fanned out across the District hosting public meetings to discuss the process of amending the Comp Plan. After reviewing the thousands of proposals to the Comp Plan's maps and myriad elements submitted by residents, Advisory Neighborhood Commissions, and District agencies, the Office of Planning compiled those it felt best matched its data-driven view of the future of our city. Mayor Bowser released these proposed changes on October 15th. OP is accepting comments from the public through January 10th at plandc@dc.gov. Advisory Neighborhood Commissions have until February 14th to submit resolutions. In March, OP expects to submit the proposals and comments as a legislative package to the D.C. Council.

The Comp Plan attempts to balance these many policy priorities. It's inherently complicated, which is why the entirety of the Comp Plan makes up hundreds of pages. And even though it is not a zoning map, the Comp Plan's primary use is as a guiding legal document for land use in the District. The major affected elements

summarized in this article are Land Use, Housing, Historic Preservation, and the changes to the Rock Creek West Area Element that would affect Cleveland Park.

Land Use

In its [proposed amendments to the Land Use Element](#), the Office of Planning discusses how the District's land use policies must be modified - for example, by maximizing land use through policies of consolidation - to encourage transit-oriented development, while ensuring housing affordability and equity in supporting growth. The Land Use Element proposals also seek to push back against the forces of gentrification that have displaced many DC residents over the last decade of rapid and uneven growth across the city. Finally, the proposals identify challenges that will likely arise in the years to come as policymakers and courts evaluate the competing priorities in land use.

Housing

The Office of Planning [proposed changes to the Housing Element](#) based on District priorities, expected population growth, and public input during the amendment submission and public engagement process. The Housing Element calls for the development and maintenance of 50,000 additional residential units between 2015 and 2025, for a total of 360,000 units. This goal requires an accelerated production pace of 36,000 units between 2018 and 2025. That seems like a daunting task given the finite amount of land the District has. To aid in adding this needed housing, the Office of Planning looks to remove impediments to encourage housing production, achieve a minimum of 15% affordable housing by 2050, preserve existing affordable housing, and increase opportunities for large family-sized units.

Historic Preservation

The [proposed changes to the Historic Preservation Element](#) recognize the importance of historic preservation as an urban planning tool that can welcome new growth while protecting the city's historic character. This may seem revolutionary given how historic preservation is often spoken of, especially in Cleveland Park, where historic preservation is used to prevent or slow new growth. This has resulted in a patchwork of historic districts sometimes established to prevent a specific development from happening. But, through the proposed changes, OP seeks to make the Historic Preservation Element part of a forward-looking plan that balances preservation and growth, rather than an obstacle to growth. The proposed changes realign historic preservation in the District with overall urban planning to protect our cultural past while enabling growth as we attempt to chart our collective future.

Proposed Changes to the Comprehensive Plan affecting Cleveland Park

All of the aforementioned proposed changes to the Comp Plan work together to illuminate the path forward for the District as a whole. With diverse neighborhoods and competing priorities, it can be difficult to see what [these proposals mean for Cleveland Park](#). The three "policy focus" areas in the Rock Creek West Area Element are the Connecticut Avenue Corridor, the Wisconsin Avenue Corridor, and the Van Ness Commercial District. For Cleveland Park, this means growth and commerce.

Throughout the proposed changes to the area element, OP discusses the need for more affordable and middle-income housing units. OP points to significant capacity across the Rock Creek West Area for added

mixed-income housing, particularly near Metro stations. (Cleveland Park ranks around 65th in ridership out of Metro's 90-plus stations, one of the lowest riderships in the District.) But what does this mean moving forward? If the proposed changes are adopted by the D.C. Council, then larger residential buildings will become permissible along Connecticut Avenue. As the [proposed Future Land Use Map](#) shows, this change would allow for a request to change zoning along the Cleveland Park business strip from low-density commercial to a high-density residential/moderate-density commercial mix - think mixed-use buildings with retail and restaurants on the first floor and residents above, similar to Cathedral Commons. This change dovetails with OP's review of the implementing recommendations from the [2016 Commercial Market Analysis and Enhancement Strategy for Cleveland Park](#), which seek to help address business retention and the increased competition for customers with other areas of the District and Montgomery County.

Make Your Voice Heard

Office of Planning

If you want to make sure your voice is heard with regard to the proposed changes, you have until Friday, January 10, 2020 to email OP to have your comments reviewed and included in OP's Comp Plan package that OP will present to the D.C. Council. Email your comments to plandc@dc.gov.

Council

The D.C. Council will be voting on the proposed changes to the Comp Plan sometime in the first half of 2020, but it's never too early to get your comments in (nor is there any issue with sending comments in more than once). If you live in Cleveland Park, you can email your Ward 3 Councilmember Mary Cheh (mcheh@dccouncil.us), Council Chair Phil Mendelson (pmendelson@dccouncil.us), at-Large Councilmembers Bonds (abonds@dccouncil.us), Grosso (dgrosso@dccouncil.us), Silverman (esilverman@dccouncil.us), and White (rwhite@dccouncil.us).

Advisory Neighborhood Commissions

Advisory Neighborhood Commissions (ANCs) have until February 14, 2020 to send resolutions and comments regarding the proposed Comp Plan changes. However, ANCs are under no obligation to pass your comments along or even incorporate your views into their advisory resolutions. In fact, ANCs aren't even required to share their draft resolutions with the public until they hold a vote. Nevertheless, if you're writing comments to OP and Council, sending a separate email to your commissioner or ANC isn't a bad idea. If you don't know who your commissioner is, check ancfinder.org. If you live in ANC 3C, make sure to send your email to all@anc3c.org.

ANC 3C Recommends Approval of the Macklin Redevelopment Plan



Aerial view of the proposed redevelopment

Velocity Property Management has sought permission from the D.C. Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB) to develop an existing site at Connecticut Avenue and Newark Street. The site currently contains the Macklin, a five story apartment building within the Cleveland Park Historic District. The proposal would add a new building with ground floor retail under four three-story townhouses at the corner of Newark St. and Connecticut Ave., and a 31-unit apartment building on Newark St. above the Macklin.

Six of the new apartment units will be affordable housing. The proposal also replaces a parking lot off Connecticut Avenue with a public plaza.

The developer revised its original proposal in response to questions and concerns raised by neighbors at numerous community meetings. The new plans include a staircase from Newark St. to the public plaza and a lower penthouse on top of the apartment building. After a [membership survey](#) showed overwhelming enthusiasm for the project, CPSG's Steering Committee adopted a [resolution](#) supporting it.

On December 16, 2019, the Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) 3C held a well-attended public meeting at which it adopted a [resolution](#) supporting the Macklin project site plan. Under D.C. law, such recommendations are not binding on the HPRB but are entitled to "great weight." In introducing the resolution, Commissioner Emma Hersh, whose district includes the proposed project, noted that the emails she had received ran 3-1 in favor of approval. Six Commissioners voted in favor (Commissioners Hersh, Reba, Fink, Dubois, Finley and Bradbery). Commissioners MacWood and Gersten were opposed. Commissioner MacWood introduced an amendment to reduce the height and massing of the apartment building, which was rejected. [A video](#) of the consideration of the ANC resolution can be viewed on the Cleveland Park in the City Facebook page.

The HPRB heard testimony from the applicants, ANC, and community organizations at its December 19, 2019 meeting, but had insufficient time to hear all testimony from individuals. ([CPSG's testimony](#) can be viewed here.) The HPRB record was therefore kept open and the case continued to the January 23, 2020 Board Meeting.

Voices in Support of a Public Plaza on Connecticut Avenue



Schematic View of Macklin Development Plaza

“Wow! What a great way to convert an auto-driving design to a more people-centric proposed design of a Public Plaza environment. The new building frames the plaza beautifully. If this development comes to fruition, a lot of people will hang out here since most of Cleveland Park and the District sidewalks are more utilitarian (Walk to Point A to B) than social places of connections. While not at the architectural level of Michelangelo, this design reminds me of how he designed the Piazza del Campidoglio. <https://en.wikiarquitectura.com/building/piazza-del-campidoglio/>.” *Jose Ayala, Urban Planner and CPSG Board Member*

“From a Main Street perspective, the activation of both public and private space is very important to creating a vibrant commercial corridor. The proposal of the plaza in the Macklin redevelopment project presents a tremendous opportunity to have a space that invites and engages the community to spend more time in and around Cleveland Park. Partnering with the developer from the beginning can ensure that the plaza is designed and programmed in a way that will have a cascading positive impact on the Cleveland Park commercial corridor.” *Brianne Dornbush, Executive Director, District Bridges (Group Organizing Cleveland Park’s Main Street)*

“As a Cleveland Park resident with kids, I am excited for the Macklin project to get underway. Right now that Comcast parking lot isn’t doing anyone any good and is just another street/driveway to cross on the way to the library. Once that is turned into a nice pedestrian area, with a few benches and maybe some trees, it will be nice to walk around, maybe grab a coffee from Firehook while the kids play around that area, when going to/from the library or running errands. I, for one, am excited that there will be some additional shops and residents added to the neighborhood!” *Anna Ravvin, Cleveland Park Neighbor*

“I’m really excited to see housing added directly on top of the Cleveland Park Metro station. These new town homes and condos will help D.C. make progress in our fight against climate change by allowing more people to live without a car and with a smaller carbon footprint. But the truth is, I’m most excited about the public plaza. I can’t tell you how many times I’ve walked out of Vace or Fresh Med with lunch on a nice day, looked around and realized that there is nowhere to sit down and eat lunch outside in Cleveland Park.” *Ed Carley, Cleveland Park Neighbor*

What's Happening in the Neighborhood? Construction Projects In and Around Cleveland Park



Hearst Park Construction Progress as of December 12, 2019

Hearst Park Renovation

Located between Idaho Avenue, 37th Street, and Quebec Street, Hearst Park is currently undergoing a major renovation and redesign. The completed park will include a playground, two tennis courts, soccer fields, and Ward 3's only public outdoor swimming pool.

The pool proposal generated some vocal opposition. But after two surveys demonstrated overwhelming public support, the plan was funded and approved. Excavation and site work began in the summer of 2019. Construction is on track and the pool is scheduled to be complete and ready for use for the 2020 Summer season. Further information can be found [here](#).



Ward 3 Short-Term Family Housing

Construction is almost completed on the Idaho Avenue Short-Term Facility for families experiencing homelessness. The new building contains 50 housing units. It was constructed as part of a broader plan to replace the old shelter at D.C. General with smaller facilities located in each of the city’s wards.

The Idaho Avenue building occupies space previously used for parking by the Metropolitan Police Department’s Second District Headquarters. A new garage for the Police Department has also been constructed. Move-in is scheduled for March 2020. For further information, go [here](#).

View on December 12, 2019



Renovations to John Eaton Elementary School

John Eaton Elementary is located at 3301 Lowell Street, NW, within the Cleveland Park Historic District. The school has been slated for a modernization and addition intended to increase the building size, improve ADA accessibility, and preserve green space. Initial plans prompted some neighborhood opposition, with many nearby yards sporting signs demanding “Reasonable Renovation No Big Box School.” An SIT Advisory group that included school staff, families and community members provided input and suggestions on the design, resulting in significant revisions. Detailed information about the final renovation design is available [here](#) and up-to date news about the construction is available [here](#). Students have been moved to modular trailers located on UDC’s Van Ness campus. The school is scheduled to reopen in August 2021.

John Eaton School as of January 2, 2020

Q and A with Bob Ward, Cleveland Park Neighbor and Smart Growth Advocate

Bob Ward, a long-time Cleveland Park resident, has been a tireless advocate for positive change on Connecticut Avenue and throughout the neighborhood. Here, he discusses his urbanist perspective on the future of Cleveland Park.

What brought you to Cleveland Park? I came to Washington, D.C. in the mid-1980s to attend college. After living in Dupont Circle, my wife and I bought our Cleveland Park house in 2004. We were attracted by the commercial area (especially Palena) and its walkability. We didn't want to drive after we came home from work. And we loved the old houses.

How did you get involved in neighborhood issues? After we moved, I began to focus on the controversy over redeveloping the Giant site on Wisconsin Avenue. I found myself disagreeing with "preservationists" who viewed Cleveland Park as a suburban enclave and opposed new housing. Later, in 2013, when the city considered widening the sidewalk on Connecticut Avenue, two neighbors (Herb Caudill and Collins Roth) encouraged me to get involved. My interest took off from there. In early 2018, I helped found Cleveland Park Smart Growth (CPSG), which now has nearly 500 members and continues to grow. In addition to CPSG, I serve on the steering committee for Ward 3 Vision, a group that has a similar urbanist mission across all of Ward 3. I've also been involved in the commercial revitalization effort and helped in setting up the new Cleveland Park Main Street. Currently, I spend 6-30 hours a week (in addition to my full-time job) on these issues.



What motivates you? I love city living and I want to see good things happen here. For me, that means a commercial area that is pedestrian-friendly and a neighborhood population sufficient to support local businesses. I also believe that countering climate change means putting more people near metro and improving safety for pedestrians and bicycles. I have a car. I drive. I try to drive less and would like our public policy to keep pushing me in that direction. And given the current price of homes in the neighborhood, I'd like to see more opportunity for it to be accessible to additional people.

What are you working on now? The biggest issues facing Cleveland Park right now are the proposals to amend the Comprehensive Plan and to redevelop the Macklin site at Connecticut Avenue and Newark Street. Both proposals could help spark gradual and organic growth along Connecticut Avenue, providing new residential and commercial spaces and additional affordable housing.

What other changes you would welcome? We should focus on how to get people down to Connecticut Avenue without driving. Possible solutions include bike lanes, scooters, and Olli, a self-driving shuttle service. I'd also like to see more public spaces, including playgrounds and plazas. The Macklin redevelopment, which would transform part of the Comcast parking lot into public space, would be a great start. The Park and Shop parking lot also has tremendous potential. If the site isn't a candidate for an adaptive reuse development, I would love to see a Borough Market-style food hall at one end and a public park at the other. Finally, Cleveland Park needs new housing to serve people at different income levels. We can achieve this goal by gently increasing density, relaxing single family zoning, and encouraging more accessory dwelling units.

Is Cleveland Park's Commercial Overlay District a significant factor for the neighborhood's businesses?

The overlay caps the number of food establishments to no more than 25% of the linear footage fronting Connecticut Avenue's commercial strip. Although the neighborhood is currently about 101' short of the mandated limit, the overlay still poses a potential problem. Unlike retail establishments, food service and entertainment businesses are a growth area in the current economy. Restricting them from opening in Cleveland Park puts our commercial area at a disadvantage.

What do you think of the completed Cathedral Commons development? I think the project constitutes a missed opportunity. Cathedral Commons has too little housing and too many vacant parking spaces. But I love the project's vibrant streetscape. And we enjoy visiting the wonderful new restaurants and, especially, eating the octopus at Barcelona!

Do you see a generational divide on these development issues? To some extent, I do. Long-time residents are typically more car-centered while younger ones are more inclined to favor new housing and different forms of transportation. Exceptions exist of course but I see a difference in perspective and acknowledging this fact is not "ageist."

Cleveland Park is known for its vocal opposition to development. Do you see those attitudes changing?

Definitely, and that goes back to the point about generational change. I think most recent arrivals to Cleveland Park are opting for a more urban lifestyle. They appreciate a variety of densities and aren't as singularly focused on the car and parking. I think they also appreciate good design, and we can influence that here. The vocal opposition doesn't want anything to change and they rail against greedy developers. But I think more people could care less about the developers and are focused instead on the positive benefits thoughtful development can offer. They are concerned that Cleveland Park is, in some ways, being left behind by other D.C. neighborhoods.

Can our commercial district can be maintained if neighbors just "shop local?" I think efforts to shop local are great. I run the Cleveland Park in the City Facebook page and try and boost our local restaurants and merchants. But I'm also a believer in the market. You cannot will a successful business into a sustained existence if there is not the market to support it. Today, with online commerce and more competition from other neighborhoods, you need to offer something better, that more people want. I'd rather that people want to be in our neighborhood, than be shamed or prodded into it. Density, foot traffic, placemaking all come into play in making that transformation work.

How do these views square with Cleveland Park’s identity and designation as an historic district?

I consider myself a preservationist. I helped found and still run the Cleveland Park Club Foundation, which raised funds and issues grants for preservation projects in the neighborhood, focused largely on the historic Cleveland Park Clubhouse. But I’m not a purist. Preservation is one public policy objective. It’s not the only one. It needs to be balanced with other priorities: equity, housing and sustainability. We need to live in our time while preserving parts of the physical past.

Final thoughts? Change is natural and can be healthy but thoughtful design remains critical. Great neighborhoods don’t happen by accident, especially when the existing rules were designed to thwart change. If you support smart growth in Cleveland Park, join us and get involved. Your participation matters.



Rainbow Over Cleveland Park, 12/30/19

Important Dates	
1/22/20	ANC 3C Public Meeting Cleveland Park Library 7 PM
1/23/20	Continued HPRB Hearing on Macklin Project 441 4th Street, N.W. Room 220-South



CP Smart Growth Steering Committee

J.C. Ayala
Liza Colley
Megan Draheim
Ellen Herr

Nina Shiffrin
Glenn Stanley
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