



OFFICE OF PLANNING Testimony

Chairman Mendelson, Council members, and Committee of the Whole staff.

I appreciate you all providing the opportunity to submit comments today.

My name is Anthony Graham, and I am an associate broker and long-time resident of Washington, D.C. I am here today to testify on behalf of the D.C. Association of Realtors and our 3,000 professional members.

The Office of Planning, under the leadership of Director Andrew Trueblood and Mayor Bowser, strives to guide the future of Washington, D.C. to be a vibrant and equitable place to call home. This was especially apparent to DCAR, when Director Trueblood recently joined our Association for a webinar to discuss the Comprehensive Plan and other Office of Planning initiatives.

Throughout our conversation, it was crystal clear to our members what the Administration has in motion to promote home ownership, reduce individuals experiencing homelessness and increase the production and preservation of housing in the District. The Office of Planning understands that our local population is growing, and we require a brimming housing supply to meet that demand.

The Mayor's goal to produce 35,000 housing units by 2025 is an ambitious goal and we're seeing the Office of Planning and the Administration make significant strides to reach that goal. One tactic that DCAR was in full support of was allowing accessory dwelling unit—ADUs-- construction by-right in any single-family zone. ADUs provide more choices for District residents. It could be housing for an elderly parent wanting to age in place next to loved ones, or an affordable opportunity for a young Washingtonian on their way to owning their own home.

We understand that approving of ADUs in the District received some pushback, but DCAR believes that creative policy solutions like these are what will help us chip away at the housing production goal.

Lastly, we want to recognize the effort that the Chairman and his staff are undertaking on building out Bill 24-0001: The Comprehensive Plan legislation. We know that a tremendous amount of discussion and collaboration has gone into updating this document. And we simply want to say this, single-family homes have their purpose in the District, but we want to ensure that families can prosper and have equity in all neighborhoods and across all housing types.

DCAR would like to thank you all for allowing us to testify as part of the Office of Planning oversight hearing. We welcome any opportunity to partner with you all on building robust communities in the District. Thank you.

--DCRA TESTIMONY

Hello Chairman Mendelson, Councilmembers, and everyone working with the Committee of the Whole.

I appreciate you all providing the time to speak today. My name is Jean Poitevien with BBL Processors, and I'm a long-time Washingtonian.

Today I am speaking on behalf of the D.C. Association of Realtors. I know you all have heard from us quite a bit this afternoon, but our members truly care about the District of Columbia and want to see it thrive in the best aspects.

If there's one local government agency that our REALTOR members interface with the most—that serves a crucial function to our day-to-day activities—it's DCRA.

Our Association appreciates that DCRA has taken steps to improve its functions and services. I would like to begin by highlighting what DCAR has seen as commendable actions. First, the Pandemic has forced us all had to make big changes in how we conduct business.

DCRA has done a terrific job at accommodating customers' needs during this time. Virtual inspections provide a safe way inside homes to limit in-person contact; DCRA staff actively contacts customers to resolve any outstanding issues; and escalations are solved in a timely manner.

This past month, DCRA announced the launch of Permit Wizard. This modern approach to permitting received much fanfare from our members, claiming that this a promising, user-friendly tool with a step in the right direction. DCAR hopes that this new tool is successful and will be glad to provide more feedback from our members.

As I've said earlier in my testimony, we believe that DCRA is taking meaningful actions to improve its processes. Now, I'd like to spend some time discussing a couple of items that we hope receive more attention.

DCAR was disappointed to learn of a \$90 inspection fee that was not substantially communicated to the public. DCAR members who regularly interact with DCRA, myself included, were unaware of this fee, which leads us to believe that the average customer must not have known either. We were also disappointed to hear that the assessed fee was retroactively applied to 2020. DCAR believes that more can be done include the public on these types of changes.

Finally, we understand that DCRA is implementing tools to help streamline and simplify the online process, but for individuals who don't have experience dealing with DCRA, navigating the website is challenging. Customers should not feel lost when they're looking for answers.

DCAR is more than happy to offer itself as a resource when seeking to improve the necessary functions of DCRA. In fact, we have formed a task force of veteran DCRA customers to help provide recommendations on how systems and processes can be improved. DCAR thanks the Council for performing such an important review of the District's regulatory functions, which has a significant impact on DC residents and businesses. We are confident that DCRA will take the appropriate steps to improve its service to District customers. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and members for allowing me the time to share.