

# DC Zoning Changes Network

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## ***DC Zoning Rewrite: Special ANC-Only Forum Depicts “A Tale of Two Cities”***

**Washington, DC** – On Thursday, January 30, 2014, Councilmember Phil Mendelson offered the DC Zoning Commission an open room at the John A. Wilson Building to host a special ANC-only forum on the DC Zoning Rewrite. ANC Commissioners from around the District testified at this four-hour hearing.

Most ANC Commissioners testified in support of extending the Zoning Rewrite hearings for more public review and reminded the Zoning Commission about the importance of ANC input. However, ANC testimony describing the process and relationship with the author of the 1,000+ pages of zoning changes, DC’s Office of Planning (OP) diverged as the night wore on.

Commissioner Kathy Henderson, ANC-5D, stressed that the Zoning Rewrite process is one that “smacks of disenfranchisement.” Henderson argued, “We demand the right to go through these thousand pages and get our feedback in a meaningful and *thoughtful* way. This is not a frivolous request.”

In contrast, other ANC Commissioners, like Brian Flahaven, Chair of 6B (Capitol Hill), wanted to speed the process up because their ANC had “ample time to weigh in,” and noted that “[a Deputy Director at OP] Jennifer Steingasser attended our ANC meeting” to directly hear community input and answer questions. Commissioner David Garber for ANC-6D (Southwest) similarly said that multiple OP staff came to answer questions and were very helpful.

Commissioner Sara Green for 4B (Takoma) testified that OP staff had also visited their Ward -- but they were less than thorough, unfamiliar with her neighborhood, spoke largely using zoning jargon, and ultimately left people “as confused as when they came in.”

But what of “the least, the lost, and the left out?” declared ANC Chair Anthony Muhammad of 8E (Congress Heights), who argued that the Zoning Rewrite would leave his Ward and his constituents even worse off. Muhammad further pointed out that 85% of Ward 8 residents are renters, so they are not naturally inclined to follow zoning or be familiar with these regulations, jargon, and process like homeowners in Northwest.

“We know Georgetown had more than just a week or two [to understand the Rewrite, have a back-and-forth with OP, and provide input], and we should have that too.” Muhammad continued, “Are we being disenfranchised again?”

Starting in 2012 and extending into 2013, Georgetown residents were encouraged and assisted by staff at the Office of Planning to tailor zoning rules to fit their specific future neighborhood planning desires, and these custom regulations are part of the latest draft of the Zoning Rewrite documents now before the Zoning Commission.

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Deputy Director of OP, Jennifer Steingasser weighed in on the Georgetown comparison, which had been made several times, justifying this special treatment with the fact that they were a Historic neighborhood with wholly separate regulations applied to them.

Commissioner Linda Green of 7E (Marshall Heights), yet another to charge the DC government with “disparate treatment”, proclaimed, “People want to maintain their communities, *historic or not!*” and implored the ZC to do another revamping and review of what is in the proposed Rewrite.

While others in wealthier neighborhoods seemed unaware that their privileged treatment might not have been afforded to all neighborhoods in the District, Commissioner Henderson drove home her point for the Zoning Commission: “We have the same rights in this city as everyone else”.

Back in November and December, many ANC's across the City passed official resolutions asking the Zoning Commission for time for more public review, mainly as notice to Harriet Tregoning and her staff at the Office of Planning to make time to visit and engage concerned ANC's and their constituents. Despite these red flags, the Office of Planning has not even acknowledged these official requests in direct contradiction of ANC law.

Video of the January 30, 2014 ANC-only forum is still not available online either at the Office of Zoning Website or the Office of Cable and Television site.

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## Upcoming Ward-level Zoning Rewrite Forums

<b>Date/Time</b>	<b>Wards</b>	<b>Location</b>
Saturday, February 8, 2014 9:00 a.m.	5 & 6	Dunbar High School Auditorium 101 N Street, N.W.
Tuesday, February 11, 2014 6:00 p.m.	3 & 4	Wilson High School Auditorium 3950 Chesapeake Street, N.W.
Wednesday, February 12, 2014 6:00 p.m.	7 & 8	Department of Employment Services 4058 Minnesota Avenue, N.E.
Thursday, February 13, 2014 6:00 p.m.	1 & 2	D.C. Housing Finance Authority 815 Florida Avenue, N.W.

Fore more information >> <http://dcoz.dc.gov/news/2013/news122013.shtm>