

The Comprehensive Plan Amendment

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Comprehensive Plan?

The District of Columbia's Comprehensive Plan is a 20-year framework and guiding document for the future planning and development of Washington, DC. The Comprehensive Plan addresses the topics of land use, economic development, housing, environmental protection, historic preservation, transportation, and more. The Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: District Elements was originally adopted in 2006 by the DC Council and was amended once in 2011. In 2016, the DC Office of Planning (OP) launched an effort to amend the Comprehensive Plan a second time to ensure that the Plan aligns with recent planning efforts, population and demographic projections, and remains responsive to the needs of the District. This effort was completed in 2020 an extensive ANC-centric public review. In April of 2020, Mayor Bowser and the Office of Planning transmitted the proposed amendments of the District Elements of the Comprehensive Plan for Council consideration and approval.

The Home Rule Act requires that the District government develop a Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan of the National Capital is comprised of two parts: the District Elements and the Federal Elements. The District's Comprehensive Plan constitutes the District Elements and OP serves as its steward. The National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) develops the Federal Elements.

How is the Comprehensive Plan used?

The Comprehensive Plan is the guiding document that District agencies, residents, employers, developers, and other stakeholders use to ensure that Washington, DC evolves in line with our collective vision for "Planning an Inclusive City." For example, the Office of Planning uses the Plan to evaluate projects, developers use the Plan to guide their proposals, and the community uses the Plan to hold District government accountable. Having a visionary and up-to-date Comprehensive Plan is critical to the long-term success of the District.

Why was the Comprehensive Plan amended now?

Extensive planning work has been completed by OP and other agencies, since the first amendment cycle, that is not currently reflected in the Comprehensive Plan.

This amendment process also addresses new challenges; including policies to promote the role of smart cities, their need for resilience to climate change and social issues; and align our collective vision and goals for today's needs. Furthermore, the Comprehensive Plan includes an Implementation Element that provides guidance on amending the document. This section recommends that the Comprehensive Plan be amended approximately every four years and that a major revision/update be developed approximately every 12 years.

The Comprehensive Plan is meant to be long term. OP is committed to ensuring the Comprehensive Plan reflects the changing conditions and community priorities throughout Washington, DC. This reflection will allow the District to continue planning for the future with confidence, accuracy, and sensitivity to the needs of the community. The District has experienced significant population growth—100,000 new residents since the Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2006. The District has also experienced the 2020 public health emergency, its economic effects and the civil unrest. These events highlight the need for the

amendment to be adopted so that we have a Comp Plan that can appropriately guide the city through and beyond these events. The current Comp Plan is out of date and not in line with our values, especially those that have been raised through recent events, including racial equity and health equity.

What types of amendments were made during the amendment process?

While amendments were made to the existing plan and not a new plan, any type of amendment proposed by the public, ANC or a District agency was considered. Generally, the amendments fell into four categories.

Technical Changes. The Comprehensive Plan was last amended over five years ago and much of the document is over 10 years old. Amendments will be proposed to fix technical information such as updating background information and deleting completed actions.

Reflect New Plans. Many new plans have been developed by District agencies since the last amendment process, including six Small Area Plans by OP. As appropriate, additional plans will be incorporated into the amended Comprehensive Plan as new or modified policies and actions so that it reflects the most recent policy direction for each agency. A list of plans that will be incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan can be found [here](#).

Other New or Modified Narratives, Policies or Actions. District agencies, ANCs, or the public proposed amendments to individual narratives, policies and actions, including new narratives, policies and actions to reflect emerging issues or innovative ideas.

Map Changes. District agencies, ANCs, or the public proposed changes to the two maps included in the Comprehensive Plan: the Future Land Use Map and the Generalized Policy Map. These changes were proposed by property owners who may wish to change the land use or intensity (i.e., moderate density commercial to medium density commercial) on individual parcels, or by the community to reflect their vision for the neighborhood.

How does the Comp Plan respond to COVID-19?

The Comprehensive Plan addresses many of the salient issues we face today and can serve as a high-level guide to ensure that the District not only recovers from the disruptions caused by coronavirus, but emerges stronger, healthier, more resilient, and more equitable than before. In light of COVID-19, OP made targeted changes to narrative, policies, and actions.

- The Office of Planning added language that recognizes the dual public health and economic crisis and articulates the Comp Plan's role in response and recovery.
- Across all elements, we've tempered our expectations around population, economic, and sector-specific growth, while highlighting the importance of continued monitoring and response to crises.
- Language around food access and health equity has been sharpened to acknowledge the impact underlying social and economic conditions have on communities and their ability to immediately respond to and recover from shocks and stresses.
- We've broadened our characterizations of emergencies to cover public health in addition to extreme weather events and public safety. The need to plan for temporary and surge capacity facilities in addition to ongoing monitoring and emergency response has been added throughout the Citywide Elements.

- We've further emphasized language around housing stability and the need for all residents to have access to safe, decent, and affordable housing options especially during times of economic instability.

OP has identified 96 policies and accompanying actions and narratives throughout the Mayor's proposed Comp Plan Amendment that explicitly guide the District's COVID-19 response and recovery. This collection of policies, actions, and narrative text are presented in the form of a "COVID-19 crosswalk" and can be found on the [project website](#).

How does the Comprehensive Plan become approved and by whom?

The District's Comprehensive Plan is adopted as legislation by the DC Council. In addition, the Plan is approved at the federal level by the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) and the U.S. Congress. This means that the policy guidance provided in the District Elements—the text (Citywide and Area Elements) and both of its maps—have legislative weight. Furthermore, OP has to provide certification to the DC Council on an annual basis that the District's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

How does the Comprehensive Plan relate to other citywide plans by other agencies?

The Comprehensive Plan sets the high-level framework for land use and related policy sectors. Other citywide plans, such as DDOT's MoveDC or DOEE's Climate Ready DC, provide more prescriptive guidance for implementation at the policy level. Small Area Plans, which are adopted by Council, also provide more prescriptive guidance for implementation, however this guidance is place-based.

How does the Comprehensive Plan relate to other OP plans?

Small Area Plans provide targeted planning guidance for a smaller, defined geographic area, such as a corridor or neighborhood, than the Comprehensive Plan covers. Small Area Plans provide supplemental guidance to the Comprehensive Plan and operate to refine the Comprehensive Plan.¹ They cannot amend the Comprehensive Plan, including the two maps. All changes to the text and two maps must first be included as part of the Comprehensive Plan, which then lead to and guide a more detailed planning effort. Recent examples include the Southwest Neighborhood Plan (2015) and the Central 14th Street Vision Plan and Revitalization Strategy (2012). Small Area Plans are adopted by the DC Council through an approval resolution, and its recommendations are incorporated through legislation into the Comprehensive Plan during amendment cycles. For example, among its policy guidance, Small Area Plans typically include recommendations to change the Future Land Use Map designations of specific sites within the study boundaries of the Small Area Plan.

¹ By statute, a small area plan "provide[s] supplemental guidance to the Zoning Commission and other District agencies in carrying out the policies of the Comprehensive Plan." DC ST § 1-306.03(c)(4). As the DC Court of Appeals has recently explained, "Small Area Plans are to be interpreted in conjunction with the Comprehensive Plan," so a Small Area Plan recommendation that is inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan will have no effect unless and until the Comprehensive Plan is amended to eliminate the inconsistency. *Barry Farm Tenants and Allies Ass'n v. District of Columbia Zoning Comm'n*, 182 A.3d 1214, 1219 (DC 2018). And as stated in Section 224.5 of the recently passed Framework Element, "[u]nless a Small Area Plan has been made binding on the Zoning Commission through its enactment as part of a Comprehensive Plan amendment, a Small Area Plan provides only supplemental guidance to the Zoning Commission and it does so only to the extent it does not conflict with the Comprehensive Plan."

How can I get the latest information?

Please review the project website at plandc.dc.gov. The Comprehensive Plan Team will continually update the website throughout the planning process. You may also email the project team at plandc@dc.gov or call the Office of Planning at 202-442-7600.

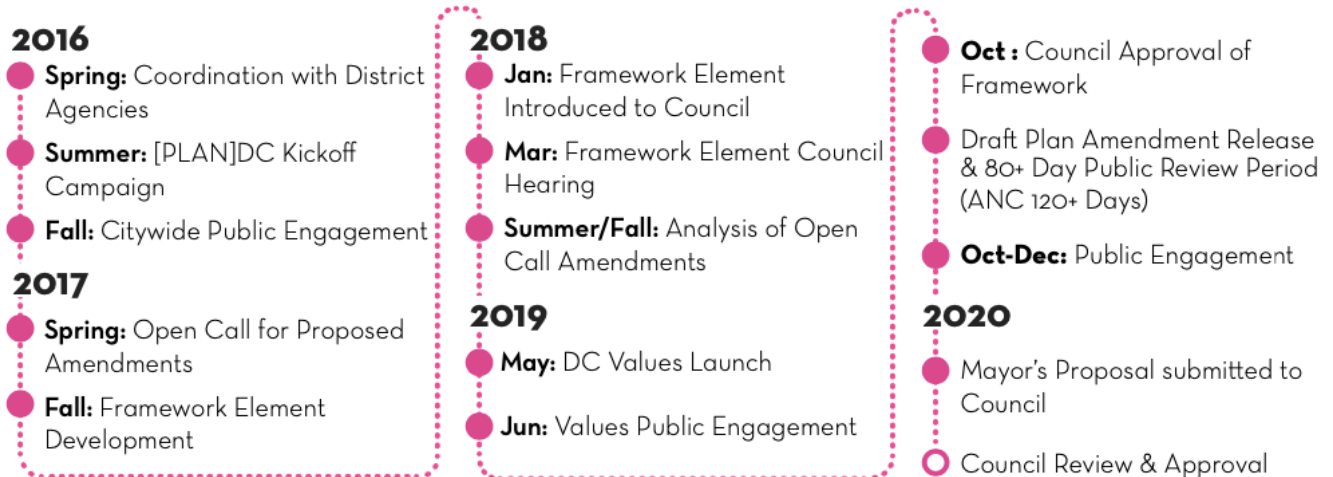
To learn more about the Comp Plan, start by reviewing our Supplemental Documents on plandc.dc.gov.

Where can I find the Mayor's Comprehensive Plan Proposal?

The Mayor's Comprehensive Plan Proposal and other supporting materials are available on the homepage of our project website, plandc.dc.gov.

What was the process for amending the Comprehensive Plan?

Amendment Timeline



How long was the public review period and how did OP collect feedback?

The Public Review launched on October 15, 2019. The Office of Planning extended the public review period for both the public and ANC Commissioners. The public had until **Friday, January 10, 2020** to review the Comprehensive Plan Draft Update. In addition to extending the 60-day public review period, OP will accepted feedback from ANCs through **Friday, February 14, 2020**.

Throughout the Public Review period, OP strongly encouraged residents to coordinate comments through their ANC. ANC resolutions and comments from the public were accepted through the project email, plandc@dc.gov, and through the ANC portal.

How was public feedback incorporated?

OP collected and reviewed all public comments. In addition, all comments were transmitted to the DC Council. Due to the volume of feedback received, OP did not respond directly to each comment received. In some instances, we may made updates to the Comprehensive Plan based on the feedback received.

After analyzing over 1,000 comments we received from the public and approximately 1,500 comments we received from 34 ANCs across all eight wards, we updated the 10/15/19 draft:

- Overall, 78% of the feedback received was integrated, supported, or acknowledged in the Mayor's proposal.
- About 16% of the comments were incorporated as proposed, or with some modifications.
- About 62% of the comments were already captured in one or more parts of the Comprehensive Plan. In the Mayor's proposal, OP included cross-references for similar language across multiple chapters.

How did OP engage with the community during the public review period?

OP hosted community meetings in all 8 Wards during November and December and joined over 60 community meetings throughout the Public Review period. Meeting details were shared through our project website, OP social media accounts, OP newsletters, and through distribution materials. Recordings of Ward meetings were shared online as well as meeting boards and handouts. A summary of the meeting materials and feedback can be found on our project website, plandc.dc.gov, in "Public Review".