



COALITION FOR SMARTER GROWTH

Testimony before
the Honorable Tommy Wells, Chairman
Committee on Libraries, Parks, Recreation, and Planning

Agency Performance: Office of Planning

By Cheryl Cort, Policy Director
February 8, 2012

Good morning. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am speaking on behalf of the Coalition for Smarter Growth, a regional nonprofit based in DC.

After nearly a half century of decline, we are a growing city that must address the challenges of creating better transportation choices, creation of affordable housing, connecting residents to good-paying jobs, and development of a more sustainable and healthier lifestyles, among other things. OP is at the forefront of these challenges and helping guide our city through this transition.

One of its biggest undertakings is the revision of the 1950s zoning code. This task has seemed a bit overwhelming at times. Revising the zoning code is a major undertaking but is nearing completion. I have participated in a number of workgroups over a several year process. These groups were formed by OP to engage interested residents in learning about and reshaping the DC zoning code. I have found the experience to be a productive and highly interactive approach to public input. OP has conducted dozens of workgroups – more than I can keep up with. The many workgroups have given stakeholders a variety of opportunities for getting involved.

OP plays an essential role in the city's enhancement of neighborhoods, creation of safer, more walkable places, affordable housing, and economic development. Recently, OP completed a land use study for the streetcar plan. This is a helpful assessment of how land use can be shaped to take advantage of the streetcar, and address concerns to be mitigated, especially around affordable housing. OP's neighborhood planning efforts are invaluable to the District. OP has been leading the planned transition for St. Elizabeth's and Water Reed, along with other neighborhood plans such as 14th Street revitalization.

Page Two

Cheryl Cort, Coalition for Smarter Growth

Office of Planning Oversight Hearing, Feb. 9, 2012

OP offers important expertise in urban design, Inclusionary Zoning, community outreach, and integration of existing community plans. This gives it a special role in coordinating District government action. We recognize the collaboration of OP and DDOT in the streetcar study and other planning efforts. Closer collaboration between OP and DMPED on land dispositions and development projects will provide better outcomes for the community and the city as it utilizes all of its best expertise and experience.

We look forward to continuing to work with OP as it moves towards completion of the zoning update, and the other key tasks that guide our city towards a more sustainable and inclusive future.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.