



October 11, 2008

Dear Committee of 100 Members and Friends,

***DC's Parks and Open Spaces.*** October's membership meeting spotlights policies and planning for the District's parks and open spaces, with the following featured speakers:

- \* **Hon. Harry Thomas, Jr., D.C. Council Ward 5, Chair of the Committee on Libraries, Parks and Recreation..**
- \* **Hon. Clark E. Ray, Director, Department of Parks and Recreation.**

Please plan to join us at noon, on Wednesday, October 15, at the Sumner School, 17<sup>th</sup> and M Streets, NW. If you want lunch, please email Treasurer Buck Clark [buck@clarkerealtypartners.com](mailto:buck@clarkerealtypartners.com) or call 202-628-8030.

***Parks Issues.*** The 2006 Comprehensive Plan describes the challenges facing the District with respect to its parks:

“The addition of thousand of new jobs and households over the next 20 years will increase demand for programmed parks, open space, and recreational activities. Existing parks will accommodate more users, particularly in neighborhoods where high-density infill development is planned.” The Plan acknowledges that “[g]iven the built out character of the city, finding land for such parks will be difficult and expensive.” The Department of Parks and Recreation operates approximately 3.5 acres of parkland for every 1,000 households. It estimates that if 55,000 households are added in the next 20 years—based on the oft-stated goal of political and business leaders to increase the District's population by 100,000 new residents-- almost 200 acres of new parkland will be needed.

The Plan acknowledges “competing pressure to use public land for other purposes, particularly revenue-generating uses like housing and office development.” It notes that the “city does not have a dedicated funding source for parkland acquisition (such as an impact fee) and capital improvement funds are typically used for new facilities rather than to buy vacant land. Acquisition may occur through a variety of means, such as donations and grants.”

### **Chairman's Message: A Tale of Two Cities**

The Committee of 100, a scarred veteran of freeway battles and early champion of D.C.'s

Living Downtown, is being tarred as a gaggle of aging couch potatoes bitterly clinging to cars and big houses. The mischaracterization is coming from so-called “smart growth” advocates who

want to recreate Washington, DC as a high-density destination for the healthy, wealthy and young. C100 and others have pointed out that the 2006 Comprehensive Plan (Comp Plan) contemplates a city with a mix of ages, family structures and income levels. The Comp Plan also calls for a range of housing choices and includes specific protections for established, low-density neighborhoods. The Plan aims to coax people out of their cars with various carrots—that is, by “providing transportation choices that are more efficient and environmentally friendly than driving”—but recognizes that a car remains a necessity for many residents, at least until the promised alternatives are available.

The struggle for the physical and social fabric of the District is being waged through the Zoning Review process. The District’s 50-year-old Zoning Code is not simply being streamlined and updated to implement the new Comp Plan. Rather, the Zoning Code is being used aggressively as a tool to re-engineer the city’s built environment, creating distinct winners and losers.

The Office of Planning (OP), whose zoning proposals so far have hewed to the smart growth line, seeks a higher, tighter city. At various points it has recommended allowing new housing on substandard (too small) lots; allowing rooftop recreation structures as a matter of course, effectively increasing building heights by 1-2 stories; and permitting the conversion of large single-family houses to apartments, if members of a particular community wanted to do this. OP has moved aggressively to discourage car ownership and use. Among other actions, it would eliminate most parking requirements for new developments, restrict curb cuts needed to access off-street parking, and perhaps install parking meters on residential streets.

These are samples of the policies OP is urging the Zoning Commission to adopt and embody in a new zoning code. Higher densities would result throughout the city, without regard for neighborhood character and with very little

opportunity for residents to find out about and comment on new developments next door. The “smart growth” movement as practiced in D.C. should not be confused with the laudable goals of walkable neighborhoods, “green” construction and demolition, energy efficiency and traffic congestion management. Smart growth, as experienced by many District residents, has come to mean demands for multi-family mixed-use development on every available scrap of land without regard to need, scale, balance or the opinions of impacted District citizens. This is coupled with hostility toward all automobile use, whether or not any other form of transportation is available. To live in this “smart” vision of the District, you should be willing to forego elbow room and to accept that a neighbor who enlarges his house may be literally an arm’s length away. You must have the health and energy to walk or bike to work, or the time to wait a half-hour for a bus. You cannot drop a young child at school in the morning across town from your job, or be the carpool parent on weekends unless you subscribe to Zipcar.

Nevertheless, the particular attributes of the smart growth lifestyle are not its real problem. The problem in D.C. is that its advocates want to impose the lifestyle on all of us—one size fits all—with no room for needs or desires that don’t fit into the smart growth box. D.C.-style smart growth is insidious because it brings us a city without choices. It’s not the District most of us want. Without vigilance, it’s the city we risk waking up to.

*Many thanks to Barbara Zartman, Marilyn Simon, Ann Hargrove, George Clark, Nancy Macwood and all members and friends for their analysis, writing and overall vigilance in the Zoning Review Process. Their work is being collected for posting on our website.*

**C100 files Comments with NCPC on October 9, 2008 *Draft National Capital Framework Plan: Destinations and Connections Beyond the National Mall.***

**John Fondersmith**, who has been representing C100 on NPCP's working group on the **Framework Plan**, filed comments last week recommending, among other things, a written explanation of how the four major plans affecting the Mall and Downtown will work together. An excerpt from his extensive comments, surveying the major planning initiatives underway, follows:

#### **“COORDINATED CENTRAL WASHINGTON PLANNING**

“The *National Capital Framework Plan* is a key part of a number of recent and current planning efforts for Central Washington (the original L’Enfant Plan area and some adjacent areas). The brochure, *Planning Together for Central Washington* (published spring 2008 by NCPC), reflects the current efforts of four federal agencies (NCPC, CFA, NPS and AOC) and the District government (Office of Planning, etc.) on four significant planning programs that affect Central Washington.

**“Center City Action Agenda:** This plan (“action agenda”), prepared primarily by the D.C. Office of Planning and the Downtown BID, was released on March 3, 2008. A number of planning and development initiatives are underway in the traditional “Downtown” as well as other studies and initiatives in the “emerging districts” of “Center City” Washington.

**“National Capital Framework Plan:** This plan, the subject of these review comments, is summarized and discussed below. We understand that, after October 10, the NCPC and CFA [Commission on Fine Arts] will make appropriate revisions and refinements to the draft plan, and want to adopt the final plan at their respective meetings in December 2008.

**“National Mall Plan:** The National Park Service is preparing a long-range (50 year) plan for the National Mall and the Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Park. The Committee of 100 is one of a number of organizations that have been involved with the Section 106 consultation process

for this plan. The original schedule called for a draft plan is to be completed near the end of 2008, with further review and comment after that time. However, work on the Plan has been extended. It now appears that a draft plan will be produced sometime in 2009.

**“Capitol Complex Master Plan:** Work on this plan is underway by the Office of the Architect of the Capitol (AOC), with consultants. It now appears that public release of this plan will not come until sometime in 2009.

#### **“Need for an Overall Summary Plan**

“These four major plans, and other smaller or more focused planning efforts, have proceeded on somewhat different time lines. It appears that there is a high level of internal consultation and coordination among federal, regional and District agencies, and other organizations, on these plans. **The coordination among various planning agencies is very commendable.** However, the different time lines make it difficult for policy makers, the public, and concerned organizations, such as the Committee of 100, to track and understand how these plans are supposed to fit together.

**Recommendation:** The Committee of 100 believes that coordination needs to continue. **When all the various key planning programs are completed (probably in mid or late 2009), some kind of overview publication should be prepared to indicate how the various plans fit together.”**

The comments, which will be posted on C100’s website, proceed to give a detailed analysis of specific elements of the Framework Plan. **John, George Oberlander, Ken Cooper and Don Hawkins** continue monitoring all the listed planning initiatives.

The above-described Mall Framework Plan was the subject of our September membership meeting. Because Sumner School is unavailable

in September, we met at the historic Thurgood Marshall Center, in the revitalized U Street Corridor. The trustees met at New York Avenue Church, through the kind offices of member **Terry Lynch**.

#### **UPDATES:**

***Third Church of Christ Scientist: Amicus Status Sought; Mayor's Agent hearing upcoming; C100 grant application pending.***

C100 and the National Trust for Historic Preservation filed a motion to appear as amici in the Third Church's suit against the D.C. Historic Preservation Review Board. The motion urges the D.C. federal district court to grant HPRB's motion to dismiss the Church's suit as unripe. According to the motion, "[t]his case involves the question of whether the mere designation of a structure used for religious services as a historic landmark violates the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment, the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA) or the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA)...[The] lawsuit must be dismissed because the District of Columbia has not yet taken a definitive position on whether the [Church] may alter or demolish its house of worship, and because the [Church's] exercise of religion has not, and may never be, impaired or affected by the designation decision." Thanks, **Andrea Ferster!**

The Mayor's Agent will hold a hearing later this month on the Church's application for a demolition permit. Distinguished architect **Arthur Cotton Moore** will testify as expert witness on behalf of the D.C. Preservation League, which is appearing through pro bono counsel. Trustee **Charles Robertson** has filed a notice of appearance on behalf of C100. Last week, C100 applied for a grant for funds to enable it and DCPL to plan a national forum on adaptive reuse of the building, an outstanding example Brutalist architecture. We note **Sally Berk's** tireless work on this project.

***Help Found.*** After a search of several months, C100 found an office administrator just in time for the June 2008 85<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration. **Kay Murphy**, who has significant experience with D.C. non-profit planning and historic preservation communities, is working for C100 16 hours a week, dividing her time between us and Judy Feldman's Commission on the National Mall. Kay is updating our membership list, developing our ecommunications capacity, and other tasks. If you haven't met Kay yet, please say hello at one of our meetings. She is a much-needed resource to overstretched members.

***Are you actively involved on a C100 Subcommittee?*** If not, we welcome and urge your participation. Vice-Chair **George Clark** is coordinating committees. He'll be glad to hear from you. Thanks to **Don Hawkins**, Chair Emeritus, for stepping up to Chair the HP Subcommittee.

***Visions 2008/2009.*** Four short months ago C100 celebrated its 85<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and presented the 2008 Vision Awards at a gala reception at the Chastleton. The event, proceeds from which benefited the Endowment Fund, was a complete financial and social success. It was good to see longtime members like **Terry Brown** as well as new friends just becoming acquainted with the work we do. New member **Lance Salonia**, in his first C100 project, did an outstanding job of organizing and managing the selections committee's work. As the June afterglow inevitably fades, we turn to ***Visions 2009.*** Several members held a forward planning session in July and Charles Robertson already is looking for likely sites. The formal nominations process will open in January.

#### **Upcoming Meetings:**

**November 18, 2008.** Program and Annual Business Meeting

**December 10, 2008.** Members are invited to the Trustees Meeting and Holiday Celebration. No Membership Meeting.