

June 14, 2005

Testimony of  
The Committee of 100 on the Federal City  
at the Confirmation Hearing  
of Ellen McCarthy, Director-nominee  
District of Columbia Office of Planning

Madam Chairman:

It is a pleasure to be here today representing The Committee of 100 on the Federal City when one of our own members and former officers is being considered for an office we have long been advocates for. We are appreciative of the support this Council has provided over the past years in raising the level of professionalism and the adequacy of resources for the Office of Planning, and we look forward to the stewardship Ellen will provide in leading the staff of this critical agency.

Ellen has the distinction of being the shortest serving chairman of The Committee of 100, having been elected at roughly the same time that Anthony Williams was elected Mayor. She and we had anticipated a somewhat longer transition, but as the Mayor and Planning Director Andy Altman assumed authority, they realized they wanted Ellen on the team right away.

But Ellen's tenure at the Committee of 100 was not just limited to her service as chairman, but her many years as an officer, a leader on issues of planning and zoning. As an example, she voiced advocacy for The Committee's goal of more downtown housing at a time when few believed this was a viable option. Indeed, I recall working with Ellen, with outgoing chairman, Tersh Boasberg, and with you and your staff during that mayoral transition to try to improve the process by which Comprehensive Plan changes were adopted.

We at The Committee are also realists, acknowledging that the Planning Director is part of a team directed toward particular Administration goals. I anticipate that The Committee will continue to be a strong voice of support for the Office of Planning and its professional standards, and to be a voice of concern when we believe overly aggressive Administrative goals threaten neighborhood stability, or when laudable goals are sought through untested means. (Ellen would expect no less.)

We look forward to working with Ellen and her staff through the Comprehensive Plan process and all those other critical planning elements that will shape the city we hand over to our children and grandchildren, and to the incoming generation of District residents. Working together, we may just get it right.

I would be pleased to answer any questions. Thank you for this opportunity.

Barbara Zartman, Chairman