

Context and progress to date

In the last two years, Greater Greater Washington (GGWash) has helped business and government leaders, regional organizations, and residents better understand the need to build enough market-rate and affordable housing for our region's current and future residents.

Through the blog we've provided convincing arguments for building more housing as a key strategy to stem the rapidly rising costs to rent or own a home in Washington, DC. Offline, we've convened a coalition of unlikely partners, creating a strategic alliance which can influence political will around housing and land use policy. Additionally, we've begun organizing hyper-local elected officials who can affect local housing development decisions.

In less than two years, GGWash has helped bring greater awareness to housing affordability challenges and influenced regional conversations about these issues. With renewed funding from the Open Philanthropy Project, GGWash can build upon these initial successes and translate this increased attention on housing affordability issues to solutions and policy changes that encourage development which makes economic sense *and* advances the public good.

Future goals and objectives

Current land use policy in the District continues to hinder the creation of new homes, which our city needs to keep up with demand. Greater Greater Washington has become a voice for the progressive development Washington needs, advocating for land use and housing policies that allow for greater growth and development.

In the coming years we seek to revise current policy and (possibly create new policy), build the capacity of hyper-local elected officials to individually and collectively push for more housing, and continue an education campaign to help decision-makers and residents understand the social and economic benefits of building enough homes to meet the demand.

With Open Philanthropy's continued support, we can leverage our existing organizational resources to achieve several important goals over the next two years. But we dream big at Greater Greater Washington and are confident that with increased support from Open Philanthropy we can create a more robust approach to land use reform and housing affordability and realize greater impacts more quickly.

Following are our proposed goals for the coming years. They reflect two scenarios: what we plan to achieve with our current organizational capacity (maintain scenario) and what we could accomplish with an additional staff person and increased funding support (expand scenario).

The Expand scenario essentially would split the current Housing Organizer position (David Whitehead) into two: One would focus on grasstops and grassroots "organizing" such as email campaigns, Advisory Neighborhood Commission relationships and support, and building connections to organizations like tenants' groups that are not as automatically aligned with our

approach to land use but could be a part of a coalition. The other would take on the more policy-centric work such as reaching consensus among coalition members for specific policies, advocating with councilmembers, writing blog posts, and coordinating the work of paid and/or volunteer contributors to generate housing content. Fortunately, David Whitehead has been doing both of these jobs currently, but each category is at least one full-time job and he can't do them all, so he has been forced to deprioritize some very worthwhile efforts such as fully building the ANC network.

Goal 1: A revised Comprehensive Plan with greater emphasis on building more housing

In the last year, Greater Greater Washington has convened and facilitated a diverse coalition of business groups, tenants' organizations, developers, affordable housing and smart growth advocates, and faith groups. This coalition has resulted in [greater consensus around the need for more housing](#) in DC to address increasing housing costs in our city, as well as more affordable housing and support for communities facing displacement.

The group is taking collective action through the Office of Planning's update to the District's Comprehensive Plan. Because the Comprehensive Plan is legally required to underpin zoning, this amendment process is a critical step to developing and implementing land use policies that support greater density in more parts of the city.

The coalition is currently in the process of finalizing a package of specific amendments to the current plan that encourage building the housing we need. During this grant term, a major goal is to get the DC Council to adopt a revised Comp Plan that explicitly promotes building more housing along with other priorities from the coalition.

We are directly aware of projects which could house about 2,500 people that have been put on either indefinite hold or into uncertain limbo thanks to NIMBY action just in the past year (400 people at Colonel Brooks, 1,300 at McMillan¹, approximately 360 at the Georgetown Day School site in Tenleytown,² about 400 for MRP at Brookland.³) At least one other developer has said they have delayed moving ahead on a Planned Unit Development because of investor concern around recent lawsuits, and by one attorney's reckoning there were 19 pending lawsuits against projects as of January 2017, which have likely had additional deterring effects beyond the specific projects we know about.

One of the 10 priorities from the coalition would aim to fix the Planned Unit Development (PUD) process and clarify the right of the Zoning Commission to approve projects such as these, including with density bonuses which were challenged in some of the recent cases.

¹ https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/a-setback-for-affordable-housing-in-the-district/2017/02/03/cef17138-e7f7-11e6-b82f-687d6e6a3e7c_story.html?utm_term=.726744295c7b

² <https://ggwash.org/view/41633/its-another-delay-for-200-units-of-housing-in-tenleytown>; assuming 1.8 average household size

³ We've heard from the developer that they will switch to a matter of right process and lose "a couple hundred units" out of 1,500.

Over the next 12 – 18 months, Greater Greater Washington will (maintain):

- **Influence the Office of Planning (OP) to prioritize building more housing in the revised Comprehensive Plan they submit to Council for approval**
 - Increase the number of partners who publicly support the amendments that the coalition submits to OP; priority groups include for- and not-for-profit developers, affordable housing groups, social justice organizations, labor unions
 - Encourage multiple Area Neighborhood Commission (ANC)s to pass resolutions stating support for more housing
 - Meet with agency leaders who can convince OP of the merits of the coalition’s amendments and encourage them to include them in OP’s revised Comp Plan

- **Educate and engage readers and supporters in the amendment process**
 - Publish regular blog posts about the importance of the Comprehensive Plan and provide updates about the revision process
 - Send regular email communications to supporters providing opportunities to take action to support our goals
 - Facilitate opportunities for supporters to attend public meetings, hearings, and other events to speak up for a Comprehensive Plan that prioritizes more housing

- **Lobby councilmembers to adopt a version of the Comprehensive Plan that reflects the priorities identified by the coalition**
 - With partners, meet with all 13 councilmembers to try to convince them of the benefits of a Comp Plan that supports developing the housing that DC needs

With stepped-up funding, Greater Greater Washington could:

- **More aggressively solicit ANC support for the coalition**
 - With 40 ANCs and 299 individual representatives, with a second staffer on this project we could reach out more aggressively and individually to members on target ANCs than resources currently permit.

- **Educate and engage more readers and supporters in the amendment process**
 - With one staff member dedicated specifically to this campaign, we can achieve a lot, but our ability to create blog posts, email campaigns, and rally public meetings are limited by staff time. We still are at the point where additional time would yield very strong added value in this effort.

Goal 2: Strengthen hyper-local elected officials’ capacity to increase housing supply at the neighborhood level and push for land use reform citywide

Although the DC government and nonprofit organizations provide discrete training opportunities to DC’s hyper-local Area Neighborhood Commissions (ANCs), no entity is providing ongoing opportunities for ANC commissioners to network, learn from one another, and organize to take collective action. Greater Greater Washington recognized an opportunity to serve in this role and over the last year has begun convening ANCs to strengthen their role as

hyperlocal elected officials.

This work has had preliminary success. Five ANCs have already submitted resolutions in support of the Comprehensive Plan coalition's priorities, specifically calling on leaders to prioritize building more housing. Additionally, this group of ANCs has collaborated to [win \\$2 million in funding for an express bus that runs through DC](#). While neither housing nor land-use related, creating the space for this campaign allowed Greater Greater Washington to develop relationships with ANCs and demonstrate the power of their collective action, which we hope to pivot more intentionally to housing and land use goals in the next phase of our work.

However, currently this effort is only receiving approximately 20% FTE. It could easily be a full 1 FTE on its own, and given the strong influence of ANCs on the land use process and on their councilmembers (importance), the interest among ANCs members to network and learn, including their relative lack of knowledge of land use (tractability), and the fact that other organizations are not similarly organizing ANCs (neglectedness), we believe this is a major area of value worth investing in further (not to a full 1.0 FTE under the "expand" scenario, but to >0.5 FTE).

Over the next few years, we are committed to (maintenance funding scenario)⁴:

- **Cultivating more informed, equipped commissioners by providing learning and peer networking opportunities**
 - Facilitate bi-monthly meetings that include networking and learning, particularly about issues that are of interest to ANCs and further GGWash's goals (e.g. countering NIMBY resistance to development projects)

- **Supporting ANC commissioners to advocate for policies that support a growing city**
 - Organize commissioners to identify and act collectively on city-wide issues (e.g. Comprehensive Plan amendment)
 - Draft model resolutions that ANCs can use to formally support GGWash's goals

With additional funding we could also (expanded funding scenario):

- **Further grow and engage the ANC network**
 - Double the size of the ANC caucus through explicit outreach to more commissioners
 - Explicitly cultivate leaders within the ANC network
 - Hold more events beyond a bi-monthly meeting (conference calls, committee meetings, ward-specific meetings, or others based on interest of commissioners)

- **Bring increased attention to 3-5 development projects that ANC commissioners support, but are receiving NIMBY resistance**
 - Assign one "beat" contributor per project to tell the story of the housing

⁴ Greater Greater Washington will also support the election of urbanist-minded, progressive commissioners through political organizing and conducting robust voter education and endorsement activities. However, no funds from Give Well/The Open Philanthropy Project/Community Foundation of Silicon Valley will be used to support these activities.

- development through a YIMBY, urbanist lens through a series of blog posts
- Partner with developers, planners, think tanks, and other entities to debunk NIMBY myths using data-driven, analytical blog posts
- **Provide more intensive training and educational opportunities for ANC commissioners to become better informed about density as a tool to address housing affordability, economic development and segregation**
 - Organize at least one half-day training/educational event for ANCs (e.g. representative from another state to speak about its laws and what has been successful there)
 - Cover the costs for 3-5 commissioners to attend a YIMBY-focused conference

Goal 3: Draw city-wide attention to the need to build more housing

In the last 18 months, Greater Greater Washington has increased coverage of [housing and development issues on our blog](#) and readers have responded. From 2015 to 2016 we grew the number of housing posts by one third and readership of those posts (as measured by pageviews) grew by 383%! Traditionally, transit and transportation have been GGWash's core areas of expertise, so in the eighteen months we focused on publishing information that gave readers a solid understanding of housing, development, and land use concepts.

Building on that foundation, we now want to develop more strategic messages around the benefits of building more housing in more neighborhoods across DC and communicate them through multiple online platforms including social media.

Over the next 24-30 months, we will (maintenance funding scenario):

- **Communicate the need zoning and land use reform and beliefs about the social and economic impacts of greater density**
 - Develop and spread messages that focus on the greater societal benefits of increased density and disseminate them through the blog
- **Develop a cohort of grasstops allies and grassroots supporters who support increased density in more neighborhoods across DC**
 - Meet with business and government leaders, neighborhood and city elected officials, and residents to take temperature of support for using land use as a tool to reduce segregation and build more housing to keep up with the demand
 - Engage supporters and allies in policy development conversations

With additional funding we could also (expand):

- **Develop a larger cohort of grasstops and grassroots supporters**
 - This is also an area currently significantly constrained by available time. Meeting with more supportive groups and keeping them more actively involved in policy discussions will pay dividends in political support down the road.

- **Host a series of “house parties” to engage residents in land use reform**
 - Working with ANC commissioners, partner organizations, and GGWash volunteers, we could help put on 5-10 informal neighborhood gatherings to help generate support for land use reform as tool to reduce segregation and build more housing to keep up with the demand
- **Develop a social media campaign and other means to bring greater attention to our messages**
 - Work with volunteers and consultants to develop a targeted messaging campaign for GGWash’s Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts that is aligned with our blog coverage; test effectiveness of strategies
 - Begin regularly A-B testing headlines for greater effect

Goal 4: Develop a policy that results in building more market rate and subsidized affordable housing more equitably across the city

We are following with great interest efforts such as the Wiener bill in California that would reduce land use approval barriers for new housing that meets a defined need, and have been studying “anti-snob” policies like Massachusetts’ 40b law. In the District, like in the rest of the nation, a substantial amount of land is locked up at very low densities through the efforts of affluent residents (through zoning, historic preservation, lawsuits, and more) who want to keep growth out.

In the District, the current mayoral administration’s priority is affordable housing (rather than overall housing supply). These exclusionary areas also represent strong opportunities to build affordable housing, and we have substantial interest from developers in building housing with higher quantities of affordable units in high-opportunity areas if they can do so with greater density and reduced uncertainty. Therefore, we believe there is a strong opportunity to pursue such a policy as a way to satisfy the government’s (and many residents’ stated) priorities while also cracking the single-family zoning monopoly.

The District currently hosts 13% of housing units on 12.6% of land through single-family detached houses⁵ and 27% of population in 9.9% of land as attached homes and row homes (some of which are just 2-home attached structures). Even if the single-family land reached the relatively low density of the attached and row category, that would scale the number of units by 2.7; assuming the detached house family sizes are average (probably not, but not necessarily so far off either) then this could accommodate about another 150,000 residents not currently contemplated by any estimates, or a 22% population increase from current values. About 25% of those residents would be lower-income, providing some boost to well-being from the opportunity to live in higher-achievement areas as well.

⁵ See DC Comprehensive Plan Land Use Element (https://planning.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/op/publication/attachments/District%20Elements_Volume%20I_Chapter%203_April%208%202011.pdf) for acreage and Housing Element (https://planning.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/op/publication/attachments/District%20Elements_Volume%20I_Chapter%205_April%208%202011.pdf) for units.

The policy would also incentivize mid-rise construction in row house areas and high-rise construction in mid-rise areas, adding even more population opportunity (the Comp Plan data doesn't allow a similar apples to apples comparison for those land use areas, but we can work to get better data). Further, it could strengthen similar efforts in other cities.

While this would be a higher-risk effort with a larger change of not actually becoming law (and if it did, it would take time at best for the density in all such areas to increase), even if such an effort does not fully succeed, it would be worthwhile because of the opportunity to realign coalitions and create a strong, organized constituency among lower-income neighborhoods in DC who are supportive of greater housing supply even in higher-income areas, creating a broader constituency for pro-housing supply policies, giving politicians more cover to support them. This would strengthen our efforts on more project-specific campaigns and smaller citywide zoning changes.

We do not currently have the staff capacity to successfully develop this policy over the next two-three years and could not commit to this goal at a maintained level of funding. However, with expanded funding, we could:

- **Convene a diverse working group, including for-profit and nonprofit developers, policy advocates, community organizations, and even former planning directors to draft a “fair share” policy**
 - Devise a process to define “fair share” targets for market-rate and affordable housing for various neighborhoods in the District.
 - Create a mechanism for neighborhoods that fall short of their “fair share” target to be subject to a streamlined approval process for new housing if such housing would help rectify the imbalance.
 - Draft a formal policy
- **Build a base of grasstops and grassroots support**
 - Publish stories about the need for such a policy and implications of maintaining the status quo
 - Hold events in many communities to energize residents around reducing segregation
- **Promote the “fair share” policy**
 - Advocate with city officials and legislators for the policy
 - Develop a strategy to try to pass the policy

Goal 5: Continue building organizational capacity and increase financial sustainability

In the last two years Greater Greater Washington has grown its staff from one part-time editor to three full-time staff (soon to be four⁶) and has brought on five new board members, who

⁶ Greater Greater Washington won a competitive bid for a program management contract with DC Surface Transit, a 501(c)(6) nonprofit originally created to operate and provide marketing for the Circulator bus routes. Through this contract, we will hire a transportation staffer to help drive advocacy and project implementation efforts to

bring needed experience and expertise and fundraising capacity. During this time, GGWash has also secured funding from a variety of sources including other foundation grants, contracts, corporate sponsorships and individual donations.

- **Strengthen data collection and analysis systems**
 - Improve systems for collecting information about donors, supporters, and people who take action
 - Increase systematic use of data to inform decisions about program efforts, fundraising strategies, and communications to allies and supporters
- **Generate 25% of budget from sustainable revenue sources**
 - Test out an advertising/underwriting model that generates revenue from our blog but does not compromise our mission, editorial integrity, or advocacy goals
 - Create more formalized individual donor, major gifts, and corporate sponsorship programs
- **Create a cash reserve equivalent to 3 months' operating expenses**
 - This would make it possible for GGWash to spend more management attention pursuing longer-term (and possibly higher-risk) but ultimately more potentially valuable strategies for building sustainability. For example, a potential larger dollar donor wants to contribute but would like more in-person events. We could build up this program with this revenue source and it would possibly open the door to more revenue that would exceed the cost; however, in the short term it would not immediately help close a budget gap. Longer-term budget flexibility enables us to better pursue these "investments" in future sustainability.

With additional funding we could also (expand):

- **Pilot test a fellowship program to pay contributors for more investigative journalism**
 - Create a fellowship model that would result in a cadre of skilled writers who would be paid for their work and would be assigned in-depth stories that further our housing and land use goals and advocacy efforts

solve DC's priority transportation challenges. The contract provides a sustainable revenue source for this position as well as a small percentage of existing GGWash personnel and overhead costs.

Budget





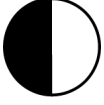

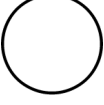

Maintain scenario (over 24 months)

Expense category	July 2017 – June 2018	July 2018 – June 2019
Staffing and related costs	\$115,000	\$105,500
3 employees, including taxes and benefits		
Computer and web	\$3,000	\$2,500
Servers, site upgrades and maintenance, CRM		
General operating expenses	\$27,000	\$22,000
Office space, program-related events, insurance, legal, etc.; processing fees		
TOTAL	\$145,000	\$130,000

Expand scenario (over 36 months)

Expense category	July 2017 – June 2018	July 2018 – June 2019	July 2019 - June 2020
Staffing and related costs	\$195,000	\$160,000	\$120,000
4 employees, including taxes and benefits			
Computer and web	\$5,000	\$1,000	\$500
Servers, site upgrades and maintenance, CRM			
General operating expenses	\$27,000	\$25,000	\$23,500
Office space, program-related events, insurance, legal, etc.; processing fees			
TOTAL	\$227,000	\$186,000	\$144,000

Summary of goals by funding scenario

Goal	Maintain	Expand
1. Revise Comprehensive Plan		
2. ANC caucus		
3. Citywide attention to housing		
4. "Fair share" policy		
5. Organizational capacity	