

**Testimony of Spenser Balog**  
**Conservation Planner**  
**Casey Trees**  
**March 18, 2020**  
**Performance Oversight Hearing for the Office of Zoning**  
**Committee of the Whole**

Good morning. My name is Spenser Balog, Conservation Planner at Casey Trees. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Casey Trees is a D.C. based nonprofit with the mission to restore, enhance and protect the tree canopy of our Nation's capital. We achieve this mission by planting trees; educating the public about trees, their preservation and care; and advocating for the preservation of trees and green space.

Development in the District is inevitable and Casey Trees strongly believes that development and environmental protection can go hand in hand. There is a limited amount of undeveloped space in the District. Because of this, we need to be deliberate in our decision making so as to ensure thoughtful, sustainable growth. We recommend the following:

**Memorialize the Importance of Greenspace in the Zoning Code.**

Create a new Code that includes a Parks and Open Space Zone reflecting the fact that green space is not just an amenity, but a necessity for life in our current and future city.

**Require developments going through the PUD process to work more collaboratively with the surrounding community.**

In the updates to the Comprehensive Plan, OP encourages developers to meet with, and receive project feedback from, community members as soon as possible in the development process. While well intended, this language will invariably lead to underrepresentation from the individuals impacted most. Requiring engagement will ensure that significant development projects meet tree and greenspace standards expected by the surrounding community.

**Preserving Trees through the Green Area Ratio.**

The intent of the Green Area Ratio (GAR) is to ensure that a certain percent of permeable land is retained to allow for the growth of trees and vegetation for stormwater mitigation and cooling. Though it does attempt to incentivize retention of existing trees, the breadth of landscaping options in the GAR has allowed developers to remove existing trees and replace them with other landscape elements that provide lesser environmental benefit.

We look forward to working with DOEE and the Zoning Commission to review the GAR and possibly amended to more specifically encourage retention of existing trees. Providing a higher value in the GAR calculations may rectify this, but in any case, a review of the current standards to better incentivize tree retention would be a positive step forward.

Thanks again for the opportunity to testify. I welcome any questions you may have.