

ZONING COMMISSION FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

CASE NO. 08-06-7

COMPREHENSIVE ZONING REGULATIONS REWRITE:
CAMPUS/INSTITUTIONAL

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The Office of Planning's second recommendation redefines the institutional uses that would be allowed as a matter-of-right in residential zones. This change is of great concern to Friendship Neighborhood Association as it would allow as a matter of right, up to a "matter-of-right threshold," institutional uses in residential zones that currently are not allowed and would allow, as a matter of right, several uses which currently require a special exception to locate in residential zones.

Currently, there are only a limited number of institutional uses, such as churches and public schools, that are allowed as a matter of right in the low- and moderate-density residential neighborhoods. Certain other institutional uses are allowed as a special exception. These include child/elderly development centers and private schools, but not trade schools. For the institutional uses that are allowed as a special exception, there are provisions which ensure that the use will not create objectionable conditions and that there would not be a concentration of these uses such that the cumulative effect would have an adverse impact on the neighborhood due to traffic, noise, operations and other similar factors.

Changing the zoning regulations to allow institutional uses, up to a threshold, in residential zones would eliminate the ability to review proposals to determine whether those uses would have an adverse impact on the neighborhood or whether there is a cumulative effect that would have an adverse impact. This proposed change also eliminates the ability of the ANC and the neighbors to effectively request conditions to limit the impact of the institutional use on the neighborhood and eliminates the predictability that zoning regulations provide to the District's residents.

While the proposal specifies that there will be a matter-of-right threshold set for each zone, this provides little protection to the neighborhood, since some institutional uses can be relatively small and still have a significant impact on the neighborhood. For example, one child care center in Friendship Heights has a floor area of 3,000 square feet and has a capacity for 44 children. This use generates a substantial amount of traffic as private vehicles are used to drop off and pick up most of the children.

Friendship Neighborhood Association asks that you recommend that the Office of Planning remove the recommendation to increase the scope of the institutional uses that are allowed as a matter-of-right in residential zones and that you recommend that the Office of Planning retain the provisions which currently provide appropriate review and protect residential neighborhoods from institutional uses which are currently allowed as a special exception in residential zones.