

**DC Historic Districts Coalition**  
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Statement Before the  
DC Council, Committee of the Whole  
Oversight of the Office of Planning  
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Good morning, Chair Mendelson and Council Members,

My name is Scott Roberts, and I am a resident of the Bloomingdale Historic District who is speaking on behalf of the DC Historic Districts Coalition (DC HDC). The DC HDC is an informal alliance of individuals and organizations representing Washington, DC's 37 neighborhood historic districts and other individuals and organizations interested in the city's historic preservation, including residents of potential future historic districts.

The DC HDC has identified five issue areas for the coming year:

- 1) First and foremost, the DC HDC would like to express thanks for expanding the DC Historic Homeowner Grant program administered by the DC Historic Preservation Office (HPO). This expansion was included in the DC FY2024 Budget Support Act. Through this legislation, the program was expanded to all historic districts and landmarks, and increased the maximum grant amount to \$50,000. This expansion is critical to address affordability issues, as it will help eligible homeowners with maintenance and repair.

Now, the DC HDC encourages the expansion of the grant program to include multi-unit buildings, such as condominiums and co-ops. The current legislative and regulatory language does not provide eligibility for multi-unit buildings, even when they are a historic landmark or within a historic district. There is clearly a need for this, as many condo and co-op boards are seeking financial assistance. For example, in January 2024, a resolution was passed by ANC 4D, which requests funding for historically designated Hampshire Gardens, a 236-unit building. This request follows the emergency financial assistance provided by DMPED to The Kenesaw/Renaissance in 2022.

- 2) The DC HDC would like to highlight the need for increased and consistent enforcement of design guidelines in the city's neighborhood historic districts. As you are aware, there are two types of design guidelines: city-wide general design guidelines, which provide guidance on building components, and historic district-specific guidelines. HPO and the Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB) promulgate these guidelines. Violations of these design guidelines occur regularly and often times, it is the historic districts' residents who are responsible for reporting these infractions to HPO and the Department of Buildings.
- 3) It should be noted that there are several outstanding historic district nominations that are pending with HPRB. The DC HDC encourages HPO to schedule the Park View Historic District nomination and the Chevy Chase DC Historic District nomination for HPRB consideration in 2024.
- 4) The DC HDC believes that there is a need for a user-friendly update to the design guidelines. Design guidelines are critical to the success of historic preservation, as they help facilitate the long-term stewardship of properties within historic districts. Therefore, these guidelines need to be clear and easy to understand for both historic district residents and the general public. While some of the existing general design guidelines are well done, most are outdated and do not include color

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photographs and representative, contemporary examples. Instead, most of the design guidelines include black and white sketches that do not fully illustrate the specific topic and are not necessarily useful in practice.

- 5) The DC HDC has appreciated the continued improvements made to the Office of Planning's PropertyQuest DC website, which has become a critical tool for historic preservation planning purposes. The DC HDC suggests that contributing buildings within historic districts be identified as a property's "highlights" on PropertyQuest in order to make the website a more complete tool.

Finally, HPO did not produce an annual report for 2022. Traditionally, a report is produced each year and is relied upon by preservation and planning professions, as well as neighborhood and community organizations/non-profits. The DC HDC encourages HPO to return to producing its annual report.

Thank you for providing the time for me to testify today. I look forward to any questions you may have and look forward to working with you throughout the coming year.