

## 2. Introduction

The Uptown ARTS Overlay District (hereafter referred to in this report as “the ARTS District”) was established in 1989 and encompasses large parts of both the 14<sup>th</sup> and U Streets corridors.<sup>2</sup> The original purpose of the ARTS District (as stated in the regulations) was to encourage arts and related cultural and support uses, as well as pedestrian-friendly retail, residential and other development, that fosters 18-hour activity in the district. To that end, the Uptown ARTS Overlay District Zoning Regulations specify a set of zoning incentives and requirements that were intended to meet these goals.<sup>3</sup>

In May 2009 Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2F (“ANC2F”) became aware that, as part of the DC’s citywide “Zoning Review” process, the DC Office of Planning (“OP”) had issued a report making recommendations on the future zoning of Arts Districts in the city, and that the DC Zoning Commission (“ZC”) had considered OP’s recommendations and issued a “Guidance Note” on Arts District zoning to direct the further work of OP as it moved forward with rewriting zoning regulations for arts districts.<sup>4</sup>

ANC2F immediately wrote to OP and the ZC requesting that the Uptown Arts Overlay District community be given a reasonable and adequate opportunity to provide input into the future zoning of the ARTS District. ANC2F indicated that it intended to conduct an outreach process to all stakeholders to review the zoning issues affecting the ARTS District, and agreed to provide its report and recommendations concerning the future zoning of this district to OP and the ZC by September 2009.

In June 2009 ANC2F formed the “Uptown ARTS Overlay Review Committee” to review the effectiveness of the zoning rules governing the ARTS District. The Committee held 8 advertized public meetings over June and July, at which it heard from both panels of expert speakers and members of the public. During August and September Committee members participated in another 9 advertized public meetings in the ARTS District, at which the Committee’s recommendations were presented and discussed. Participants in the Committee’s outreach process came from all backgrounds: community leaders; individual residents; artists; gallery owners; theater representatives; retailers and other business owners; restaurateurs; bar and club owners; local and national developers; OP staff and other DC government officials; urban planning and retail development experts; business associations; numerous property owners throughout the 14<sup>th</sup> and U Streets’ corridors; the DC Zoning Administrator, a former chair of DC’s Board of Zoning Adjustment; a former chair of DC’s Zoning Commission; and, DC’s former Deputy Mayor for Economic Development. The Committee itself comprised local residents, a local artist and developer, a local restaurateur, and the owner of local service and retail businesses.<sup>5</sup>

The community-based zoning review process that led to this report has been open, transparent and comprehensive. The Committee’s report and recommendations are the consensus product of an unprecedented process of collaboration that has encompassed 130 participants, three ANCs, three neighborhood associations, the MidCity Business Association, and the MidCity Artists Group, all of which organizations voted to endorse the committee’s recommendations.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix A for a map of the ARTS Overlay District.

<sup>3</sup> See Chapter 19 (Uptown ARTS Overlay District) of Title 11 of DC Municipal Regulations.

<sup>4</sup> OP’s report is available online at: <http://www.dczoningupdate.org/artsculture.asp?area=ace> In addition, the Zoning Commission’s Guidance Note is reproduced in full as Appendix D of this report.

<sup>5</sup> See Appendix B for a list of Committee Members and of participants in this review process.

<sup>6</sup> Letters of support and endorsement from these organizations are contained in Appendix H of this report.