

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF PLANNING



Office of the Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: D. C. Zoning Commission

FROM: *ESM*
Ellen McCarthy
Director

DATE: December 29, 2005

SUBJECT: Preliminary Hearing Report on Zoning Commission Case Number 05-26 to
Establish a Planned Unit Development on Property Known as 2950 Tilden Street,
N.W. (Square 2234 Lot 800)

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D.C. OFFICE OF ZONING

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APPLICATION

On July 27, 2005, the Office of Zoning received an application from Tilden 800 LLC, the applicant, requesting Zoning Commission approval of a consolidated Planned Unit Development (PUD) and an associated Map Amendment for the subject property.

The applicant plans to develop the vacant property with 49 for-sale residential condominiums in a pre-cast concrete building that ranges from 2- to 6-stories to a maximum height of 67 feet at the rear of property. This project includes approximately 98,000 square feet of gross floor area equaling a floor area ratio (FAR) of 2.8, and below grade parking for approximately 120-140 vehicles on two levels accessed from a single 20-foot wide driveway from Tilden Street. The driveway also accommodates a 12 x 20 foot loading and delivery space. The building is described in the Pre-hearing Statement dated July 27, 2005, as "... a hybrid of traditional architecture and modern design which accommodates higher density with minimal visual and physical impact ..." that "... blends traditional and modern elements into a special statement" with a "combination of private gardens and courtyard space (that) creates an intimacy similar to that found throughout Cleveland Park ..."

RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning (OP) recommends that the Zoning Commission set down this application for a public hearing.

AREA DESCRIPTION

The subject vacant property is an interior lot 34,686 square feet (0.81 acre) in size located approximately 233 feet from the intersection with Connecticut Avenue, N.W. A 20-foot wide fire lane for the apartment building to the south extends along the rear property boundary. Surrounding development consists of 2½-3 story one-family semi-detached dwellings to the north across Tilden Street, a nine-story residential building (3883 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.)

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immediately adjacent to the south, the Kuwaiti Embassy on the adjacent property to east, the Melvin C. Hazen Park to the southeast, and Tilden Hall, a 6-story condominium apartment building on the corner lot to the west (3945 Connecticut Avenue). The subject property and properties to the north and east are in a Low-Density Residential (R-2) zone district, and properties to the south and west are in a Medium-High Density Residential (R-5-D) zone district (please refer to Exhibit 1). The site is also approximately 1,200 and 1,800 feet, respectively, from entrances to the underground Washington Metropolitan Transit Authority (WMATA) Van Ness-University of the District of Columbia and Cleveland Park Metro rail stations.

ZONING REVIEW

The R-2 zone district allows one-family detached and semi-detached dwellings up to 40 feet and 3-stories in height, and a maximum lot occupancy percentage of 40% with no FAR limit. This proposal involves a multiple dwelling with a 2.8 FAR, a maximum height of 67 feet (not including the rooftop penthouse) and a lot occupancy percentage of 57%. The applicant therefore requested approval of a PUD including a zone map amendment that would change the current R-2 zone district to an R-5-C zone district. Approval of the PUD and zone change would allow a multiple dwelling with up to a 4.0 residential FAR, a 75% lot occupancy and maximum height of 75 feet with no limit on the number of stories.

The subject property exceeds the minimum 15,000 square feet required for a PUD in the proposed R-5-C zone district. Although the PUD approval and zone change would generally accommodate the proposed building, the applicant requested relief from § 411 of the Zoning Regulations to allow the roof structure to have less than a 1:1 setback from the irregular exterior building walls, and from the requirement under § 2001.1 for a loading berth 55 feet deep. OP also thinks this proposal requires relief from the requirement under the same section for a 200 square-foot loading platform.

Regarding evaluation criteria under § 2400 of the regulations, the application lists the primary amenities of the proposal as urban design; (superior) architecture; site planning; transportation; approximately 50 housing ownership opportunities including 3 affordable ownership units; and the additional public benefit of a \$100,000 contribution for the maintenance and upkeep of the Pierce Mill and Rock Creek National Park.

The proposal also furthers several other Comprehensive Plan themes and policies:

- The Generalized Land Use Map designates the subject property for High Density residential land uses characterized by high-rise apartment buildings as predominant uses that may include low, moderate and *medium density* housing. The R-5-C zone district proposed under this PUD is designated a *medium density* residential zone district (refer to Exhibit 2).
- The Comprehensive Plan, which is the legal basis for zoning in the District, emphasizes, as its first principle, the importance of stability for residential neighborhoods. Under Section 101, Major Themes, the plan states:

“The successful and creative functioning of neighborhoods is a fundamental concern. Citizen participation in civic improvement starts from the interest that people have in their neighborhood blocks and the day-to-day relationships therein. District services are primarily directed to homes and their environs. ...

The District elements of the Plan propose that the residential character of neighborhoods be maintained and improved. ...

Ensuring good quality neighborhoods is of utmost importance to the District. ...”

- **Major Themes of the Comprehensive Plan in § 101 include:**

- “(a) Stabilizing and improving the District’s neighborhoods; ...**
- (e) Respecting and improving the physical character of the District...**
- (f) Preserving and ensuring community input; ...”**

- **§ 102 Stabilizing and Improving the Districts Neighborhoods includes:**

“102.4 Promoting and ensuring good quality neighborhoods is of utmost importance to the District. The District elements of the Plan’s policies and strategies on increasing housing opportunities, neighborhood commercial facilities, and improving transportation in some neighborhoods will be combined with other District policies on historic preservation, environmental quality, and public facilities to conserve functioning, stable neighborhoods, and to stabilize or improve those which need redirection.”

- **Housing objectives under § 302 include the following:**

“302.1 The general objectives for housing are to stimulate production of new rehabilitated housing to meet all levels of need.

302.2 The policies established in support of the general objectives for housing are as follows:

- (a) Encourage the private sector to provide new housing to meet the needs of present and future District residents at locations consistent with District land-use policies and objectives ...**
- (e) Encourage housing on suitably located public or private properties that are vacant, surplus, underutilized, or unused, and encourage adaptive reuse of surplus schools and other available public buildings as housing, with particular emphasis upon the needs of low- and moderate-income residents;**

- (f) Encourage the private sector to meet housing needs through the development of infill housing and permit the use of appropriate manufactured and modular construction techniques; ...”
- Policies to support improving air quality include:
 - “403.2 The policies established in support of the improving air quality objective are as follows: ...
 - (c) Promote land use patterns and transportation services which decrease reliance on automobiles for commuting and other routine trips. (Measures which reduce dependence on automobiles for a significant number of trips are essential to a reduction of regional air pollution. Clustering of residences, shopping, and work places where they can be served efficiently by Metrorail or frequent bus service promotes this essential independence.); ...”
- General guidance in the Transportation Element includes the following:
 - “502.2 The policies established in support of the general transportation objectives are as follows:
 - (a) Support land use arrangements that simplify and economize transportation services, including mixed-use zones that permit the co-development of residential and nonresidential uses to promote higher density residential development at strategic locations, particularly near appropriate Metrorail stations; ...”
- The Urban Design Element of the Plan include the following:
 - “702.1 The urban design objectives are to do the following:
 - (a) Maintain and enhance the physical integrity and character of the District as the Nation’s Capital; ...”
- Area of Stable Character objectives include:
 - “711.2 The policies established in support of the areas of stable character objectives are as follows:
 - (a) Encourage in-fill development to be complementary to the established character of the area. In-fill development in stable areas should not create sharp changes in physical pattern which might lead to deterioration; ...”

- Objectives for Residential Neighborhoods, in the Land Use Element of the Plan under § 1102, states the residential neighborhood objectives are as follows:

“(a) To conserve the essentially satisfactory qualities of the District’s many stable residential neighborhoods; ...”

- Ward 3 Actions to Implement the Plan related to housing include following under § 1402:

“1402.1 Preface: ...

(h) While new housing is needed, all development proposals must be evaluated to avoid adverse impacts on neighborhood stability, traffic, parking, and environmental quality. ...

1402.4 Policies in support of the general housing objectives: The District government should do the following:

(a) Work with the private sector (both owners and community groups) to identify sites and increase housing development opportunities in appropriate locations designated in the Land Use Element; ...

(c) Provide zoning flexibility for the production of new housing, especially for the elderly and for low- and moderate-income households, through the following mechanisms: ...

(5) Giving zoning preference to projects that include housing near each of the ward’s Metrorail stations; ...”

- Ward policies related to urban design include:

“1406.9 Objectives and policies for areas of strong architectural character and areas of stable character include following design guidelines:

(a) Height: Relate the overall height of new construction (including additions) to that of adjacent structures. As a general rule, construct new buildings to a height roughly equal to the average height of existing buildings. Avoid new construction which greatly varies in height (too high or too low) from older buildings in the vicinity; ...

(c) Massing: Break up uninteresting box-like forms into smaller, varied masses. Variety of form and massing are elements essential to the character of the streetscape. Avoid single, monolithic forms which are not relieved by variations in massing. Box-like facades and

forms are intrusive when placed in a streetscape of older buildings which have varied massing and facade articulation; ...”

- Ward policies with regard to land use include:

“1409.2 Relation of Ward 3 to the declaration of major policies in the Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan. The objectives and policies for land use/zoning in Ward 3 are as follows: ...

- (g) Correct or prevent inconsistencies between zoning and land uses designated in the Comprehensive Plan, and between building permit issuances and the Comprehensive Plan; ...
- (k) Maintain and expand the existing housing stock, where feasible and consistent with the Comprehensive Plan to ensure a greater variety of housing types, opportunities, and choices; ...”

1409.4 Residential neighborhood objectives, policies, and actions are as follows:
...

- (c) Where the production of new housing is desirable per this plan, zoning flexibility should be considered, especially for the elderly and for low- and moderate-income populations:
 - (1) Consider increased residential densities (consistent with design scale and infrastructure capacity) in exchange for incorporating low- and moderate-income or elderly housing in development projects;
 - (2) Consider the provision of elderly and low/moderate-income housing, when it is a substantial portion of a project, as an important amenity in Planned Unit Developments, provided that such housing shall be on site (given the need for affordable housing in Ward 3, off-site housing shall be disfavored); ...
 - (5) Give zoning preference to projects which include housing near each of the ward’s Metrorail stations; ...”

This proposal supports referenced goals and objectives by:

- Locating residential development at an appropriate density on property identified for high-density residential use on the Comprehensive Plan Generalized Land Map.
- Providing new residential ownership opportunities on one of the few remaining developable lots of any size proximate to Connecticut Avenue, the referenced Metro rail stations and multiple transit routes.

- Providing home ownership opportunities on a site within walking distance of the two Metro stations.
- Providing substantial parking on-site thus not putting additional demands on limited on-street parking resources;
- Considering an array of eclectic architectural styles along Tilden Street and Connecticut Avenue.
- Achieving a unique architectural solution that maintains the existing front yard setback from Tilden Street, reflects the “rhythm of openings” of semi-detached homes across Tilden Street, incorporates area building materials (pre-cast concrete), and maintains an intimacy at the streetline by moving that additional height toward the rear of the property, thereby “respond(ing) to the site and contextual constraints with elegance, creating a superior design unlike anything else in Washington;”
- Invoking a PUD process that mandates input from community organization ensuring community input in the design and selection of appropriate project amenities;
- Providing infill housing at market and below-market prices on an otherwise underutilized site in support of the referenced housing goals; and
- Otherwise this proposal “... would transform a passive, vacant lot into a compelling new housing community” that “would soften the transition between existing high density and low density (residential) uses.”

Based on this preliminary review, the primary benefits and amenities provided by the project (architectural, site and urban design, and the provision of home ownership and affordable home ownership opportunities) are significantly greater than the relief being requested (increasing the allowable matter-of-right residential FAR, and waiving certain loading and penthouse set-back requirements). Thus, this proposal appears to meet minimum requirements for hearing.

Based on this information, OP concludes this PUD proposal does not appear inconsistent with Comprehensive Plan and supports more specific housing and urban design goals identified in the Plan. Therefore, the Office of Planning recommends the project be scheduled for public hearing while noting issues that need further examination such as:

- Zoning relief: Confirmation that this unique design will not require any additional relief from the regulations;
- Architecture: More detailed plans that document “... the richness of detail and material ...” of the proposed development including a model that effectively depicts the sloping terrain and the relationships between the proposed construction and surrounding buildings;
- Affordable Housing: Specifics about the size, type (1, 2, and 3 bedroom), and location of the affordable units and how these units would be classified according to HUD affordability standards;
- Loading and service: Review with the District Department of Transportation options for providing a loading space 55-feet long along Tilden Street for limited periods on weekdays during off-peak hours to accommodate large moving vans when needed; and

- **Environmental Impacts:** Consideration of the benefits of engineering the building design and systems to qualify for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification.

COMMUNITY COMMENT

The application refers to the applicant "mak(ing) great efforts to integrate the surrounding community into the project's creation." In response to a series of meetings with commissioners of Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) 3F, OP, and other interested residents the applicant made the following changes listed in the application:

- Proposed building height of 6 stories;
- Increased the driveway width and loading accommodations;
- Carved terracing into the rear building façade to add visual interest;
- Increased the amount of landscaping;
- Eliminated the vehicular access to the driveway serving the high-rise at 3883 Connecticut Avenue; and
- Added more traditional elements to the building architecture.

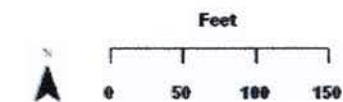
The applicant also expressed a willingness to execute a construction management plan. OP will continue to encourage the applicant to respond to concerns raised by surrounding neighbors.

Attachments:	Exhibit 1	Aerial with Zoning
	Exhibit 2	Planned Land Use

EMc/afj



Zoning Commission Case No. 05-26
2234 Tilden Avenue, N.W.
(Aerial and Zoning)



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 District of Columbia
 Anthony A. Williams, Mayor

Office of Planning ~ December 22, 2005

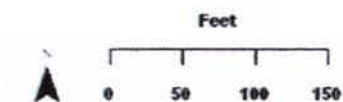
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LEGEND

-  Water
-  Street Centerlines
-  Property Squares



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