Testimony of Eric Coard
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Metropolitan Police Department

Good evening Madame Chair and members of the Zoning Commission. My name is Eric Coard, Senior Executive Director for Corporate Services of the Metropolitan Police Department. I am appearing tonight on behalf of both the Department and the Chief of Police, Charles Ramsey. This text amendment is important to the Metropolitan Police Department because it will dictate where and how MPD can locate and expand its facilities in the coming years. We would like to thank you for taking the opportunity to hear this application. We would also like to thank the Office of Planning for its work on this case and the positive report it recently filed in support of our proposal. We also thank you again for your prior support of our emergency zoning text amendment to allow the location of MPD's ROC North in the former Petworth School on Shepherd Street, N.W. That facility is up and running and has been well received by the community. We have already experienced a documented decrease in crime and illegal activity in the neighborhood because of our presence at that location.

These text amendments are extremely important to MPD in fulfilling its obligation to deliver public safety services to the citizens of the District of Columbia. Currently, MPD has seven District Stations (1D through 7D) and three District Substations (1D1, 4D1, and 6D1), as well as three ROCs and several neighborhood policing centers, to serve the citizens of our city. As criminal patterns and

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behaviors change, MPD must have particular flexibility to expand or relocate the local facilities and services and to establish new stations.

For example, MPD recently needed to establish a local substation in the Fourth District in Columbia Heights to deal with the rise in criminal activity in that area. In that case, we re-acquired a former Police Precinct House on Park Road from the Department of Recreation and renovated it for our use. Again, this facility is up and operating, and we have noticed that our presence in the area has had the desired effect.

The focus of our future deployment will primarily be at the Substation level. MPD has placed a future priority on establishing substations in 5D, 7D, and 3D. Although MPD general facilities – which are those that serve needs across the District as a whole – need some flexibility, it is the local facilities – those that are critical to the successful day-to-day and minute-to-minute public safety operations of the police force – that must be given as much flexibility as possible.

This flexibility is needed for two important reasons. First, MPD must be able to locate in areas in response to a demonstrated need – such as an increase in crime or growing demand for MPD services. The sites selected by MPD for local facilities, such as District Stations, Substations, ROCs, and neighborhood policing centers, are selected for their strategic location and response time in light of crime or the services that are needed. These are the bases from which MPD deploys its officers, and the ability to identify and secure strategic locations enhances MPD's ability to respond as quickly as possible to the needs of the citizenry. Second, given the

already built nature of the District, there are often very few options for MPD in selecting locations for these new facilities within MPD's strategic parameters. Therefore, MPD needs as much latitude as possible in selecting its new locations.

MPD has found that in the recent past, its new facilities have been welcomed into the communities and have served to improve the appearance of the building into which MPD locates as well as the neighborhood in general. For example, the recent renovation of Substation 1D1 on Capitol Hill was a historic renovation which restored this facility, originally a Police Precinct House, to its original appearance when it was built almost 100 year ago. The new MPD facilities are high-quality, with $2 million representing an approximate baseline of what MPD invests into a substation. MPD is confident that as long as it provides appropriate parking and stays within the permitted zoning envelope, its new facilities will be consistent with the surrounding communities.

In addition, we believe that the parking ratios proposed in our application are the most appropriate ones to be used for our facilities. The typical size of a District Station is approximately 43,000 square feet. On average today, each Station has approximately 75 cars assigned to that station, although this varies from station to station. Based on either the square footage formula proposed in our application or the new formula proposed by the Office of Planning, the required number of parking spaces is approximately the same. We believe that the number based on square footage is more reliable and enforceable because the number of vehicles assigned to a facility may fluctuate depending upon the needs of that facility and because at

any time of the day there will typically be fewer cars based on the staggered roll calls that have been implemented at the District Stations and Substations.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak with you this evening. I am happy to answer any questions that you may have.