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GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF PLANNING

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Office of the Director

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** D C Zoning Commission

**FROM:** Andrew Altman
Director

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 04-11
EXHIBIT NO. 12

**DATE:** June 2, 2004

**SUBJECT:** Preliminary Report on Zoning Commission Case No 04-11, a Proposal to Establish a Planned Unit Development on Property Located South of Emerson Street, N E (Square 3788 Lot 811 portion)

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**APPLICATION**
On April 16, 2004, the Office of Zoning received an application submitted on behalf of Rocky Gorge at Fort Totten LLC, the Applicant, requesting Zoning Commission review and approval of a consolidated Planned Unit Development (PUD). This request includes a related Zoning Map Amendment that would change the current "split" zoning of the subject property from R-2, and C-M-1 and M-1 zoning district with the Fort Totten Overlay Zone, to a single R-4 zone district

The Applicant plans to construct 75 one-family attached dwellings

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

**AREA DESCRIPTION**
According to the Applicant, the subject portion of lot 811 totals 5 89 acres (255,975 square feet). It is also located west and south of 7th Street and Emerson Avenue, N E., respectively (refer to Exhibit 1) Currently the site is developed with buildings, retaining walls, and other remnants of the previous concrete plant operation Trees and other landscaping are also scattered around the rolling site Part of the northern site boundary has frontage along Emerson Road and a public alley. The remainder of lot 811 will be consolidated with the Applicant's property along 7th Street for matter of right development of one-family semi-detached dwellings.

Surrounding development consists of vacant (former industrial) land to the north, light industrial and warehousing activity to the south, semi-detached two-story dwellings of masonry construction to the east and northeast, and railroad right-of-way to the west The eastern end of the site, and properties to the north, south and east are zoned Residential (R-2) zone district. A



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150-foot wide swath of the site immediately west, and other property to the north and south are zoned Commercial Light Manufacturing (C-M-1) zone district, and all property further west is zoned Manufacturing (M-1). Both industrial zones also fall under the Fort Totten Overlay Zone. The property's Emerson Street frontage is approximately 1,100 feet southeast of the Washington Metropolitan Transportation Authority (WMATA) Fort Totten Metro rail station.

**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AND ZONING ANALYSIS**

The Generalized Land Use Map designates most of the site a mixture of Medium Density Commercial, characterized by shopping and services offering a large concentration and variety of good and services outside of Central Employment Area as predominant uses, and Production and Technical Employment, characterized by restructured industrial land designed to encourage growth industries and industries with a high ratio of employees to land area occupied. However, the Generalized Land Use Policies Map designates this site and other property around the Fort Totten station as part of the Metro rail station Development Opportunity Area. Applicable policies under this designation are outlined in Section 1122 of the Comprehensive Plan including

". . (c) Develop surplus WMATA and unused industrial land for *medium density residential* and commercial mixed uses; .
(d) Protect and preserve existing low scale residences in the vicinity, . .
(g) Create a "mini-in-town" community."

Residential uses are not allowed in the underlying M and C-M-1 zone districts. The Fort Totten Overlay District specifically states that it's purpose is to "encourage residential and commercial development by means of the provisions of the underlying CR and C-3-A Districts while enabling existing industries to provide jobs, tax revenues and critical support functions for development of the District of Columbia to remain in the District" per Section 1561.3 (a) of the Zoning Regulations However, the Regulations also state "The Fort Totten (FT) Overlay District is established to allow existing industrial businesses to remain and expand and to propose land use control policies to further implement the Comprehensive Plan " So, although the current underlying zoning in a portion of the site would restrict residential development, the Comprehensive Plan clearly establishes a preference to convert unused industrial land (such as the former cement plant on this property) for residential purposes, and the FT Overlay aims to permit land use policies to implement the Plan. Therefore, the Office of Planning does not find the proposed rezoning of a portion of the site from C-M-1 and M-1 to R-4 to be inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan, particularly when read in conjunction with the policies from the Plan which are cited below

Residential development is permitted in the R-2 zone district, however this district requires a minimum lot width of 30 feet, and minimum area of 3,000 square feet. Section 300.2 also does not list "Attached dwellings" as an allowable use in the district.

The R-4 zone district allows attached (row) dwellings and reduces the required minimum lot width to 18 feet, and lot area to 1,800 square feet. Proposed typical development lots would

range from 18-20 feet wide with areas in excess of 1,800 square feet The Applicant's Pre-hearing Statement dated April 16, 2004 explained that the overall site must be divided into theoretical lots consistent with Section 2516, "because most of the buildings in the project will have no street frontage " The Statement requests "flexibility" with regards to the zoning requirement that each dwelling lot maintain a front yard equal to the required rear yard in Section 2516.5 (b), and the application of exterior and exterior building materials

Based on differences between what is planned and allowed in the current multiple zone districts, the Applicant submitted the instant PUD and related map amendment to rezone the entire site to R-4 zone district. Although this moderate density residential zone district differs from the Generalized Land Use Map designation of medium density commercial and production and technical employment, it is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan goals cited above for the Fort Totten special treatment area in Section 1122 -- conversion of unused industrial land to residential use, and protection of the low-density residential neighborhoods special treatment area policies This proposal is consistent with the R-4 zone district requirements except for the some setback issues

The primary public benefits and amenities include housing, urban design and landscaping, efficient and economical use of land, and effective and safe vehicular and pedestrian access. With regard to the pedestrian access, the Statement notes, "... the Applicant has contacted the National Park Service, as custodian of the Fort Totten Park, with a proposal to improve the existing (trail) cut-through the park from 6th Street, N E , with hardscape and related improvements " "Traffic Impact Study for the Emerson Street Townhouses, Washington, D.C." prepared for the Applicant by traffic consultants Wells & Associates, LLC also concluded that·

- anticipated 2007 peak-hour levels of service at intersections studied around the site would not change as a result of traffic generated by the 75-unit PUD,
- delays for minor street approaches at the South Dakota Avenue/8th Street intersection "which currently fail" would increase only marginally;
- project traffic volumes would only account for 0.5% to 1.1%, and 20% to 30% of 2007 traffic at South Dakota Avenue intersections, and the Emerson Street/6th Street intersection, respectively; and finally
- "The Proposed PUD will not have a significant impact on the study area."

The proposal also furthers several Comprehensive Plan themes·

- Major Themes of the Comprehensive Plan in Section 101 include·

  "... (a) Stabilizing and improving the District's neighborhoods; ...
  (e) ; ..."

  Section 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."

Section 204 Stimulating Private Sector Growth.

"204.2 The policies established in support of the stimulating private sector growth objective are as follows. ...

(m) Place a high priority on stimulating and facilitating a variety of commercial, retail, and *residential development investments appropriate to selected Metrorail station areas* outside of the Central Employment Area, consistent with the Land Use Element and any ward and small area plan, and with sensitivity to surrounding areas

Section 302 Housing. General includes.

"302.1 The general objectives for housing are to *stimulate production of new and rehabilitated housing to meet all levels of need and demand* and to provide incentives for the types of housing needed at desired locations.

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, recognize the importance of the lending industry in housing development, identify sites where new housing is to be encouraged, and, in selected cases, provide incentives for desired development; ...

(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,* ."

Section 1102 Objectives for Residential Neighborhoods·

"1102 1 The residential neighborhood objectives are as follows:

(a) To conserve and enhance the essentially satisfactory qualities of the District's many stable residential neighborhoods including those qualities that make them unique,
(b) To enhance other neighborhoods and achieve stability;
(c) To redirect public and private initiatives to neighborhoods most in need of improvement and stability, ...
*(d) To protect residential neighborhoods from disruptive uses; . .*"

Section 1608 Ward 5 Objectives for Housing

"1608.1 The objectives for housing are as follows

(a) Protect and preserve the ward's stable neighborhoods and its sound housing stock,
(b) Stimulate the production of new housing, ...
(c) Provide incentives for housing at desired locations *such as the Fort Totten Metrorail Station Special Treatment Area* and the Rhode Island Avenue Metrorail area; ."

Section 1615 Ward 5 Actions in Support of Transportation·

"1615 1 The policies in support of transportation are as follows:

(a) Improve the movement and management of vehicular and pedestrian traffic to ensure public safety and mitigate adverse effects of traffic and parking on residential streets around the Fort Totten . . Metrorail stations:
(b) Recommended actions·

(A) *All proposed projects should include an analysis of potential traffic impacts on the surrounding streets and especially on adjacent residential neighborhoods, ..*"

This project would further these themes and objectives by;

- Eliminating the possibility of future industrial uses similar to previously uses that the community complains had negative noise and traffic impacts;
- Converting underutilized industrial land into new residential development;
- Respecting the adjacent residential neighborhood through dwelling unit designs of similar height and scale;
- Providing a significant private sector investment in residential development near a Metro Station development opportunity area outside the Central Employment Area;
- Providing trail improvements that would improve pedestrian access to the Fort Totten

Metro Station across Fort Totten Park; and
- Having "no significant impact" on future neighborhood traffic circulation

The Statement also notes this proposal furthers these themes by

- ". . ensur(ing) the development of an exception design and appropriate density in this well developed and established community,
- " .. fulfill(ing) the tenets of TOD espoused by the District and further(ing) the efforts to create housing need(ed) to bring additional residents to the District;"
- "attract(ing) and retain(ing) additional residents which further increases the tax base and creates revenue for the District of Columbia;"
- " . furthering the total urban living system with its access to (Fort Totten Metrorail and Metrobus station),"
- " .. hav(ing) no significant impact on vehicular traffic," and
- " . greatly enhanc(ing) the physical character of the area and complement(ing) the materials, heights, scale and massing of surrounding (single-family residential) land uses "

Based on this information, OP concludes this PUD proposal does not appear inconsistent with Comprehensive Plan and supports more specific housing goals identified in the Comprehensive Plan. Therefore, the Office of Planning recommends the project be scheduled for public hearing noting that the following issues need to be addressed in greater detail

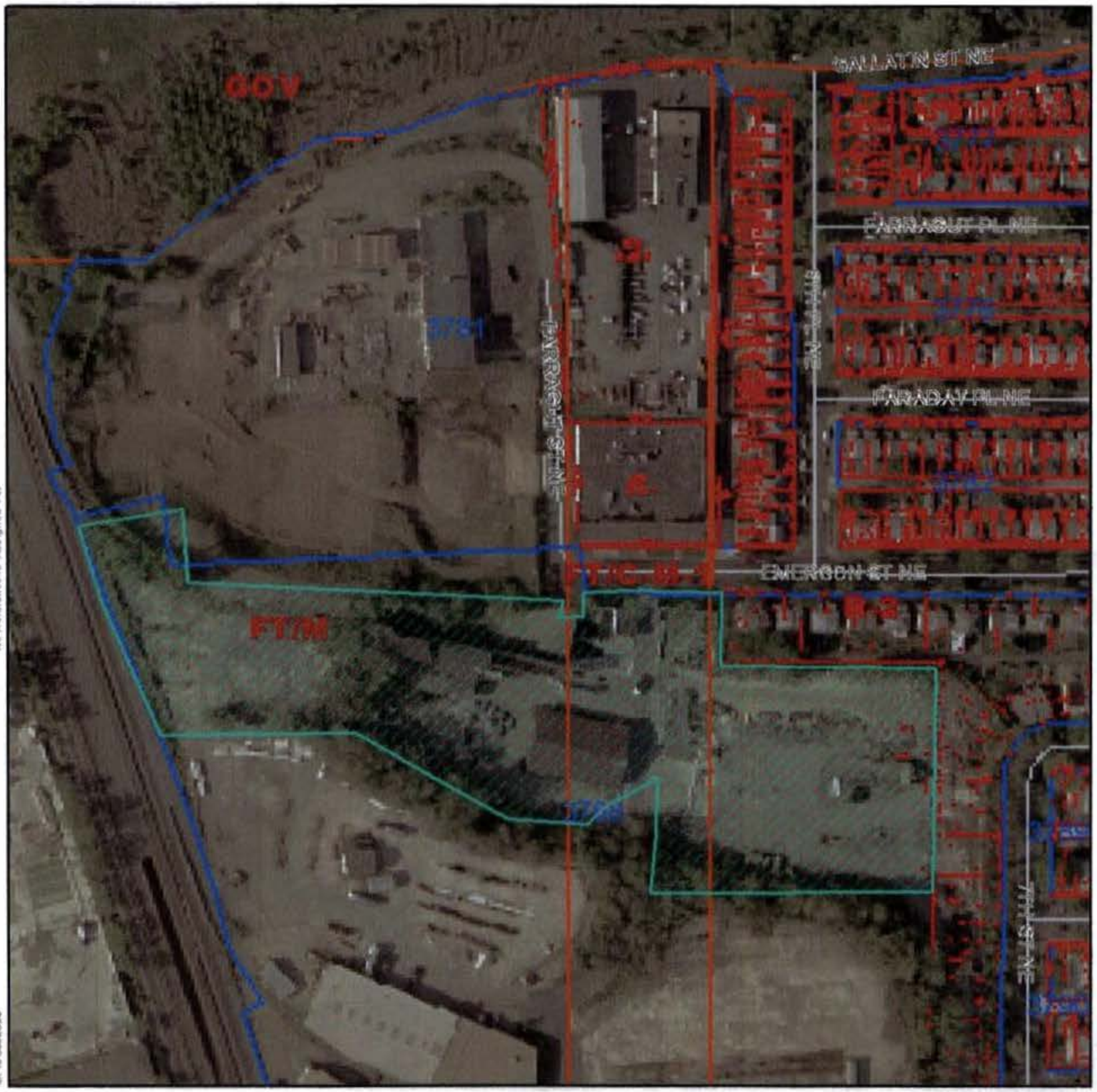
- Zoning relief· Clarify as much as possible the amount of relief required
- Community Input Staff will work with the Applicant to address issues raised by the Advisory Neighborhood Commission, and
- Development amenities and benefits· OP will work with the Applicant to refine the proposed package of amenities and benefits OP is particularly concerned that the project make a commitment to the provision of affordable housing units

**COMMUNITY COMMENT**
The Applicant held several meetings with representatives of Advisory Neighborhood Commissions (ANC) 5A, the most recent on March 16, 2004. The ANC has requested additional information.

AA/afj

Attachments Exhibit 1 Aerial Map with Zoning
Exhibit 2 Buildings and Comprehensive Plan Land Use

AFJ/afj




**Z.C. Application No. 04-11**
**Emerson Park**
**Planned Unit Development**

**Aerial & Zoning**

**Legend**

Water

Street Centerlines

Property Squares

N

100 50 0 100 200 Feet

**Government of the**
**District of Columbia**
**Anthony A. Williams, Mayor**

**Office of Planning ~ May 10, 2004**

This map was created for planning purposes from a variety of sources. It is neither a survey nor a legal document. Information provided by other agencies should be verified with them where appropriate.

**Exhibit 1**




**Z.C. Application No. 04-11**
**Emerson Park**
**Planned Unit Development**

**Buildings & Comprehensive Plan Land Use**

**Legend**

- Water
- Street Centerlines
- Property Squares
- Buildings
- Metro Development Areas (MDA)

N

100 50 0 100 200 Feet

★ ★ ★ **Government of the District of Columbia**
**Anthony A. Williams, Mayor**

**Office of Planning ~ May 25, 2004**

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**Exhibit 2**