

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** District of Columbia Zoning Commission  
**FROM:** <sup>JLS</sup> Jennifer Steingasser,  
Deputy Director, Development Review & Historic Preservation  
**DATE:** February 2, 2018  
**SUBJECT:** ZC Case 17-27 – Setdown Report for a Proposed Map Amendment  
Petition to Re-Map 1125 Spring Road, N.W. (Hebrew Home for the Aged and former Robeson School) from RF-1 (Residential Flat Zone) to RA-2 (Residential Apartment Zone)

**I. RECOMMENDATION**

The Office of Planning recommends that the Zoning Commission **set down** the proposed map amendment for 1125 Spring Road, N.W. for the Hebrew Home for the Aged and former Robeson School (Square 2902, Lots 804 and 807) from RF-1 to RA-2. The proposed map amendment would not be inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

**II. APPLICATION-IN-BRIEF**

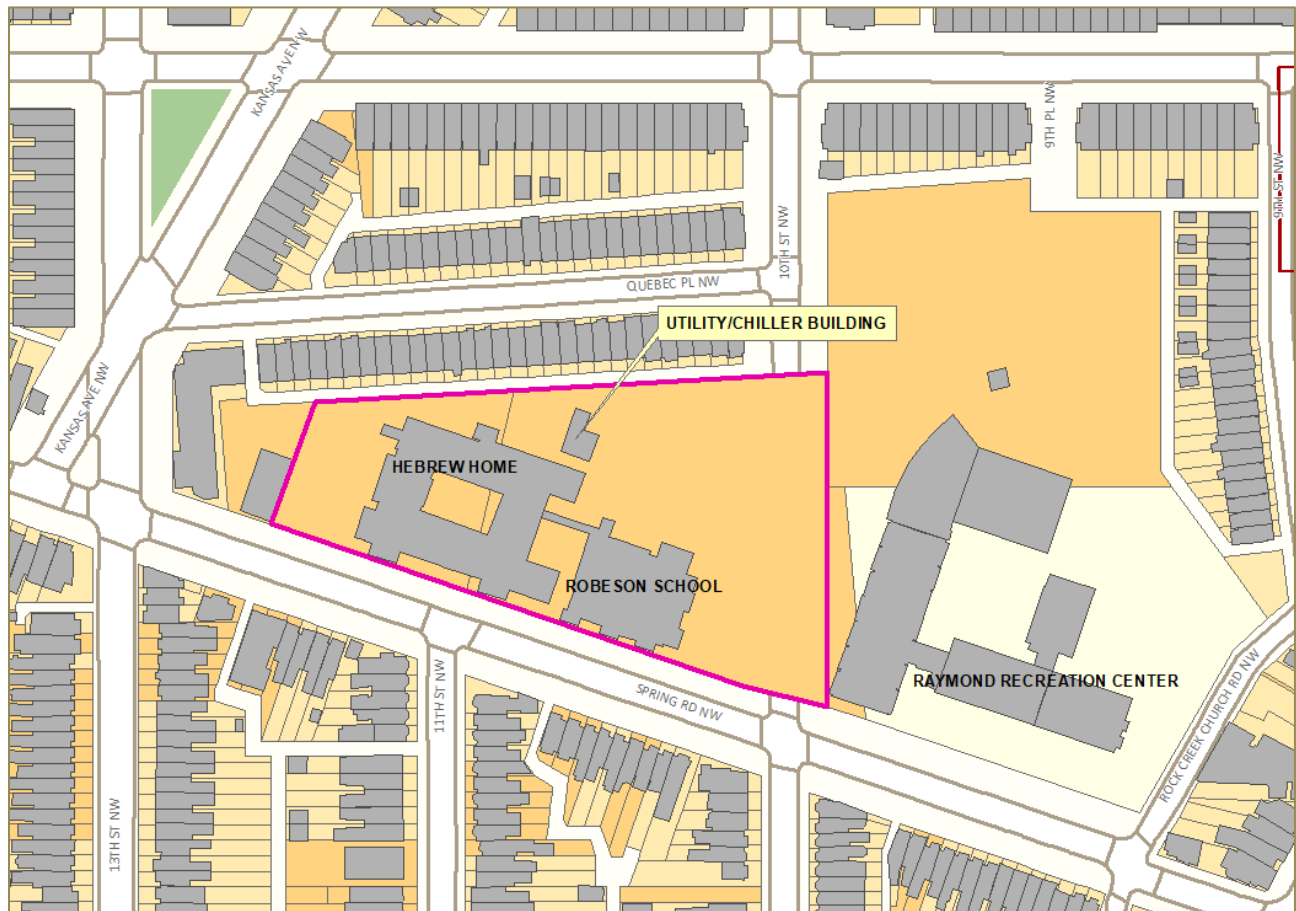
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|---|--|
| <b>Applicant</b>                          | Holland & Knight for Spring Flats MD LLC |
| <b>Address</b>                            | 1125 Spring Road, N.W.                   |
| <b>Proposed Map Amendment</b>             | From RF-1 to RA-2                        |
| <b>Legal Description</b>                  | Square 2902, Lots 804 and 807            |
| <b>Property size</b>                      | 144,400 square feet (3.31 acres)         |
| <b>Generalized Policy Map Designation</b> | Neighborhood Conservation Area           |
| <b>Future Land Use Map Designation</b>    | Local Public Facilities                  |
| <b>Current Zoning</b>                     | RF-1 (Residential Flat Zone)             |
| <b>Ward and ANC</b>                       | Ward 4, ANC 4C                           |
| <b>Historic District/Landmark</b>         | None                                     |

**III. SITE AND AREA DESCRIPTION**

The subject site consists of approximately 3.31 acres of land in the Petworth neighborhood, currently developed with a vacant community health care center formerly known as the Hebrew Home for the Aged; a utility/chiller building at the rear of the Hebrew Home; the former Paul Robeson School, which was last used as a mental health treatment and education center; and a parking lot. The site has approximately 632.5 feet of frontage along Spring Road, and 552.6 feet of frontage along the public alley to the north.

The Hebrew Home was constructed in 1925, and consists of five stories and approximately 85,800 square feet of area. The Hebrew Home is a historic landmark and listed in the D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites and the National Register of Historic Places. The single-story Robeson School building abuts the Hebrew Home towards the eastern boundary of the site, and consists of approximately 5,000 square feet. The Robeson School is not part of the historic landmark designation. The small utility/chiller building sits north of the Hebrew Home building and is within the historic landmark boundary.

The subject site is located in a residential neighborhood, surrounded by predominantly attached dwellings and low-rise apartment buildings. The Raymond Recreation Center and Playground is located to the east of the site, across 10<sup>th</sup> Street. The site and surrounding area is zoned RF-1. The site is located approximately 0.3 miles west of the Georgia Avenue/Petworth Metro Station.



#### IV. EXISTING AND POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY

The subject site, consisting of lots 804 and 807, is currently zoned RF-1. The applicant proposes to rezone the site to RA-2 (Residential Apartment, moderate density), which provides for areas developed with predominantly moderate-density residential, and allows all types of urban residential

development that conforms to the height, density, and area requirements established for the zone (11DCMR Subtitle F § 300).

The following table provides a summary comparison of the development standards:

|                                | <b>Existing Zone – RF-1</b> | <b>Proposed Zone – RA-2</b>                 |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| <b>Lot Width (min.)</b>        | 40 feet                     | None prescribed                             |
| <b>Lot Area (min.)</b>         | 4,000 sq. ft.               | None prescribed                             |
| <b>Floor Area Ratio (max.)</b> | None prescribed             | 1.8   |
| <b>Height (max.)</b>           | 35 feet/3 stories           | 50 feet/no story limit                      |
| <b>Lot Occupancy (max.)</b>    | 60% maximum                 | 60% maximum                                 |
| <b>Pervious Surface</b>        | 20%                         | None prescribed                             |
| <b>Rear Yard</b>               | 20 feet minimum             | 15 feet minimum                             |
| <b>Side Yard</b>               | None required               | None required                               |
| <b>Green Area Ratio</b>        | None prescribed             | 0.4   |
| <b>Number of Units</b>         | 2 dwelling units (by-right) | None prescribed                             |
| <b>Parking</b>                 | 1 per 2 dwelling units      | 1 per 3 dwelling units in excess of 4 units |

## V. COMPREHENSIVE PLAN MAPS

Section 226 of the Framework Element of the Comprehensive Plan addresses the use of the Plan’s maps, stating: The Generalized Policy Map and Future Land Use Map are intended to provide generalized guides for development and conservation decisions.

### **Generalized Future Land Use Map (FLUM)**

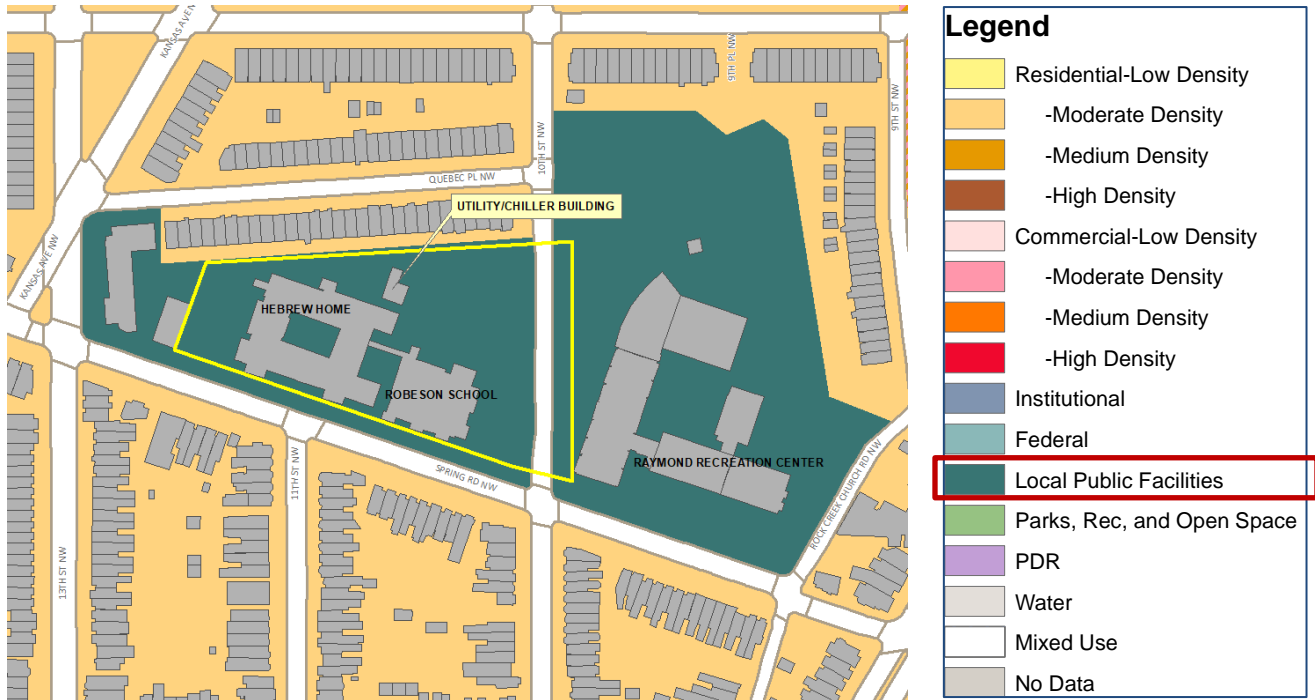
The Future Land Use Map (FLUM) designates the property for Local Public Facilities.

Section 225 of the Framework Element provides a description of the FLUM land use designations.

***Local Public Facilities:** Includes land and facilities occupied and used by the District of Columbia government or other local government agencies (such as WMATA), excluding parks and open space. Uses include public schools including charter schools, public hospitals, government office complexes, and similar local government activities.*

Section 225.15(h) of the Framework Element in the Comprehensive Plan specifically notes that density or intensity on institutional and public sites is not provided on the FLUM; however, should these sites be redeveloped, new designations should be comparable in density or intensity to the surrounding neighborhood.

The neighborhood surrounding the Hebrew Home is identified as Moderate Density Residential on the FLUM, and the proposed R2-A zone is not inconsistent with this designation. The Moderate Density Residential designation is used to define the District’s row house neighborhoods, as well as its low-rise garden apartment complexes. The R-3, RF-1, and RA-1 through RA-4 zones are generally consistent with this category.

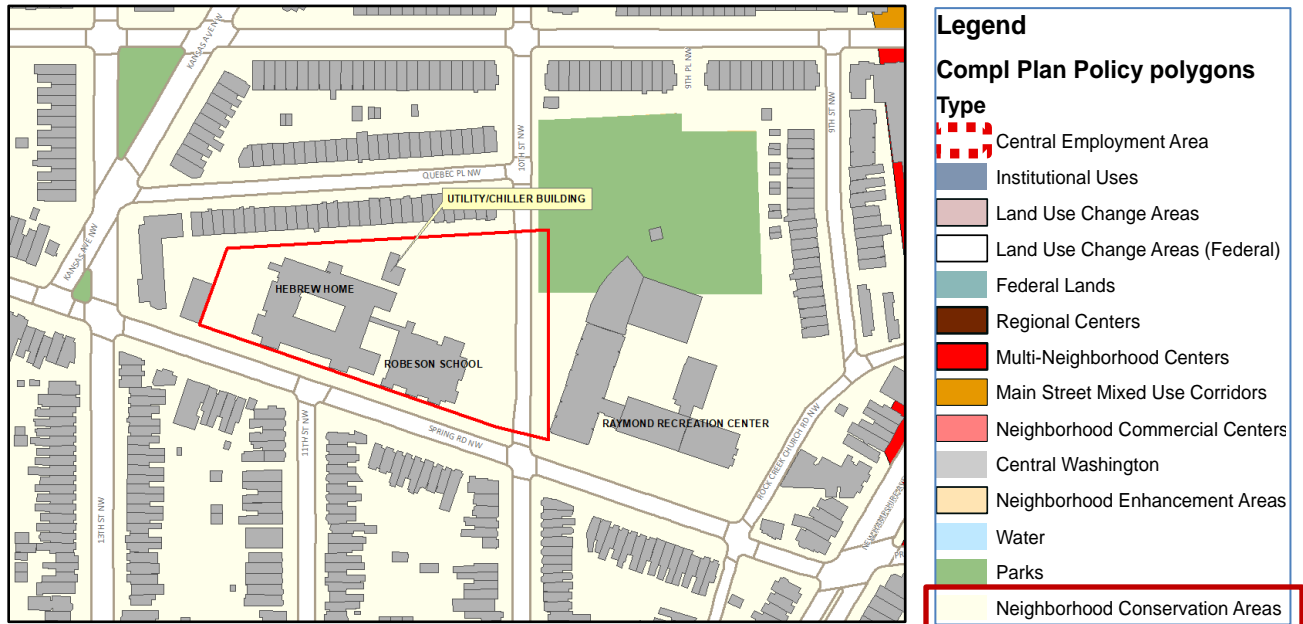


### The Generalized Policy Map

The Generalized Policy Map designates the subject site as a Neighborhood Conservation Area.

**Neighborhood Conservation Area:** Areas with very little vacant or underutilized land. They are primarily residential in character. Maintenance of existing land uses and community character is anticipated over the next 20 years. Where change occurs, it will be modest in scale and will consist primarily of scattered site infill housing, public facilities, and institutional uses. Major changes in density are not expected but some new development and reuse opportunities are anticipated. Neighborhood Conservation areas that are designated for Production, Distribution, & Repair uses on the Future Land Use Map are expected to be retained with the mix of industrial, office, and retail uses they have historically provided.

The guiding philosophy in Neighborhood Conservation Areas is to conserve and enhance established neighborhoods. Limited development and redevelopment opportunities do exist within these areas but they are small in scale. The diversity of land uses and building types in these areas should be maintained and new development and alterations should be compatible with the existing scale and architectural character of each area. Densities in Neighborhood Conservation Areas are guided by the Future Land Use Map.



The proposed map amendment to RA-2 would not be inconsistent with the Policy Map designation, which emphasizes the need to conserve and enhance established neighborhoods. The proposed designation would permit a residential development that would be compatible with the existing neighborhood, preserve the historic character through adaptive reuse of the landmark building, and enhance the neighborhood in general by permitting the redevelopment of an underutilized site.

## VI. COMPREHENSIVE PLAN POLICIES

**Comprehensive Plan Guiding Principles** outlined in Chapter 2 of the Plan, the Framework Element:

### *Managing Growth and Change*

*In terms of land area, Washington is not a large city...Despite these limitations, there is room for growth in the District of Columbia. Key opportunities include government lands, underused commercial and industrial sites, and vacant buildings. Other sites, including failed housing projects and ailing business districts, also present opportunities. There are also hundreds of small “infill” sites scattered throughout the city, especially in the northeast and southeast quadrants. Together, these areas hold the potential for thousands of new units of housing and millions of square feet of office and retail space.<sup>205.5</sup>*

*Redevelopment and infill opportunities along corridors and near transit stations will be an important component of reinvigorating and enhancing our neighborhoods. Development on such sites must not compromise the integrity of stable neighborhoods and must be designed to respect the broader community context. Adequate infrastructure capacity should be ensured as growth occurs.<sup>217.6</sup>*

### ***Creating Successful Neighborhoods***

*The residential character of neighborhoods must be protected, maintained and improved. Many District neighborhoods possess social, economic, historic, and physical qualities that make them unique and desirable places in which to live. These qualities can lead to development and redevelopment pressures that threaten the very qualities that make the neighborhoods attractive. These pressures must be controlled through zoning and other means to ensure that neighborhood character is preserved and enhanced.* <sup>218.1</sup>

*The recent housing boom has triggered a crisis of affordability in the city, creating a hardship for many District residents and changing the character of neighborhoods. The preservation of existing affordable housing and the production of new affordable housing both are essential to avoid a deepening of racial and economic divides in the city. affordable renter- and owner-occupied housing production and preservation is central to the idea of growing more inclusively.* <sup>218.3</sup>

*Each neighborhood is an integral part of a diverse larger community that contributes to the District's identity. Growing an inclusive city means that all neighborhoods should share in the overall social responsibilities of the community, including housing the homeless, feeding the hungry, and accommodating the disabled.* <sup>218.5</sup>

### ***Connecting the City***

*Transportation facilities, including streets, bridges, transit, sidewalks, and paths, provide access to land and they provide mobility for residents and others. Investments in the transportation network must be balanced to serve local access needs for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, autos and delivery trucks as well as the needs of residents and others to move around and through the city.* <sup>220.2</sup>

The proposed map amendment would allow for the redevelopment of the site as stipulated by the RFP that was released by the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development (DMPED), which prioritized the creation of affordable housing, workforce dwelling units, family-sized housing, and housing for seniors. These redevelopment and reuse goals were established through an iterative public process led by DMPED with the community and other stakeholders. The process known as Our RFP process,–consisted of a Public Workshop Meeting, an Online Engagement Form, and a Follow-Up Meeting. The proposal would further the Guiding Principles of the Comprehensive Plan regarding land use, the creation of successful neighborhoods, and transportation initiatives.

The proposed map amendment would create a significant amount of affordable housing, including housing for families and seniors. The redevelopment of the Hebrew Home and Robeson School would revitalize structures that have long been vacant and are falling into disrepair. The large site is centrally located in an existing moderate density residential neighborhood consisting primarily of attached dwellings and garden apartments. The resulting infill development would be compatible within the broader community context, converting the Hebrew Home to an apartment house consisting of 88 affordable dwelling units for seniors, with the remaining 99 dwelling units to be

constructed on the former Robeson School portion of the site. The site is located about 0.3 miles from the Georgia Avenue Petworth Metro Station, making it transit accessible.

Transportation improvements would be included in the redevelopment of the site, including the conversion of 10<sup>th</sup> Street into a public right-of-way. Currently, the land is owned by DMPED; however, once it is constructed to public standards, it would be turned over to DDOT for future maintenance. The public space around the site would also be improved to include improved sidewalks and landscape.

### **Citywide Element(s) of the Comprehensive Plan:**

#### ***Land Use Element***

***Policy LU-1.3.2: Development Around Metrorail Stations*** Concentrate redevelopment efforts on those Metrorail station areas which offer the greatest opportunities for infill development and growth, particularly stations in areas with weak market demand, or with large amounts of vacant or poorly utilized land in the vicinity of the station entrance. Ensure that development above and around such stations emphasizes land uses and building forms which minimize the necessity of automobile use and maximize transit ridership while reflecting the design capacity of each station and respecting the character and needs of the surrounding areas. <sup>306.11</sup>

***Policy LU-1.3.3: Housing Around Metrorail Stations*** Recognize the opportunity to build senior housing and more affordable “starter” housing for first-time homebuyers adjacent to Metrorail stations, given the reduced necessity of auto ownership (and related reduction in household expenses) in such locations. <sup>306.12</sup>

***Policy LU-1.4.1: Infill Development Encourage*** infill development on vacant land within the city, particularly in areas where there are vacant lots that create “gaps” in the urban fabric and detract from the character of a commercial or residential street. Such development should complement the established character of the area and should not create sharp changes in the physical development pattern. <sup>307.5</sup>

***Policy LU-1.4.3: Zoning of Infill Sites*** Ensure that the zoning of vacant infill sites is compatible with the prevailing development pattern in surrounding neighborhoods. This is particularly important in single family and row house neighborhoods that are currently zoned for multi-family development. <sup>307.7</sup>

***Policy LU-2.1.4: Rehabilitation Before Demolition*** In redeveloping areas characterized by vacant, abandoned, and underutilized older buildings, generally encourage rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of existing buildings rather than demolition. <sup>309.9</sup>

***Policy LU-2.1.5: Conservation of Single Family Neighborhoods*** Protect and conserve the District’s stable, low density neighborhoods and ensure that their zoning reflects their established low density character. Carefully manage the development of vacant land and the alteration of existing structures in and adjacent to single family neighborhoods in order to protect low density character, preserve open space, and maintain neighborhood scale. <sup>309.10</sup>

***Policy LU-2.1.12: Reuse of Public Buildings*** Rehabilitate vacant or outmoded public and semi-public buildings for continued use. Reuse plans should be compatible with their surroundings, and should limit the introduction of new uses that could adversely affect neighboring communities.<sup>309.17</sup>

The proposed map amendment would preserve the surrounding neighborhood character by allowing compatible moderate density residential development, and would accommodate the preservation and reuse of the historic Hebrew Home. The density of the map amendment would be supported by the existing transportation network, which includes proximity to Metro, several bus lines, and pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. Future development on the site will improve the transportation network, including the improvement of 10<sup>th</sup> Street to public right-of-way standards.

### ***Transportation Element***

***Policy T-1.1.4: Transit-Oriented Development*** Support transit-oriented development by investing in pedestrian-oriented transportation improvements at or around transit stations, major bus corridors, and transfer points.<sup>403.10</sup>

***Policy T-2.2.2: Connecting District Neighborhoods*** Improve connections between District neighborhoods through upgraded transit, auto, pedestrian and bike connections, and by removing or minimizing existing physical barriers such as railroads and highways. However, no freeway or highway removal shall be undertaken prior to the completion of an adequate and feasible alternative traffic plan that has been approved by the District government.<sup>408.6</sup>

***Policy T-2.4.1: Pedestrian Network*** Develop, maintain, and improve pedestrian facilities. Improve the city's sidewalk system to form a network that links residents across the city.<sup>410.5</sup>

***Policy T-2.6.1: Special Needs*** Address the transportation needs of all District residents, including those with special physical requirements and trip needs, such as access to medical centers or senior centers.<sup>412.2</sup>

The proposed map amendment would result in a multi-family development that is near the Georgia Avenue/Petworth Metro Station and other transportation infrastructure, as well as an improved streetscape that provides improved pedestrian connections. Given that the applicant intends to develop a portion of the site with affordable senior housing, as anticipated by the RFP, the proximity of the development to Metro and bus lines would address transportation needs for this segment of the population. In addition, 10<sup>th</sup> Street would be improved to public standards and transferred to DDOT for maintenance.

### ***Housing Element***

***H-1.1 Expanding Housing Supply*** Expanding the housing supply is a key part of the District's vision to create successful neighborhoods. Along with improved transportation and shopping, better neighborhood schools and parks, preservation of historic resources, and improved design and identity, the production of housing is essential to the future of our



*neighborhoods. It is also a key to improving the city's fiscal health. The District will work to facilitate housing construction and rehabilitation through its planning, building, and housing programs, recognizing and responding to the needs of all segments of the community. The first step toward meeting this goal is to ensure that an adequate supply of appropriately zoned land is available to meet expected housing needs.* <sup>503.1</sup>

***Policy H-1.1.1: Private Sector Support*** *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.* <sup>503.2</sup>

***Policy H-1.1.3: Balanced Growth*** *Strongly encourage the development of new housing on surplus, vacant and underutilized land in all parts of the city. Ensure that a sufficient supply of land is planned and zoned to enable the city to meet its long-term housing needs, including the need for low- and moderate-density single family homes as well as the need for higher-density housing.* <sup>503.4</sup>

***Policy H-1.2.1: Affordable Housing Production as a Civic Priority*** *Establish the production of housing for low and moderate income households as a major civic priority, to be supported through public programs that stimulate affordable housing production and rehabilitation throughout the city.* <sup>504.6</sup>

***Policy H-1.2.4: Housing Affordability on Publicly Owned Sites*** *Require that a substantial percentage of the housing units built on publicly owned sites, including sites being transferred from federal to District jurisdiction, are reserved for low and moderate income households.* <sup>504.11</sup>

***Policy H-1.3.1: Housing for Families*** *Provide a larger number of housing units for families with children by encouraging new and retaining existing single family homes, duplexes, row houses, and three- and four-bedroom apartments.* <sup>505.6</sup>

***Policy H-4.2.3: Neighborhood-Based Senior Housing*** *Encourage the production of multi-family senior housing in those neighborhoods characterized by large numbers of seniors living alone in single family homes. This will enable senior residents to remain in their neighborhoods and reduce their home maintenance costs and obligations.* <sup>516.9</sup>

The proposed map amendment would allow for an expansion of the housing supply, creating 187 dwelling units, including 150 affordable dwelling units, where such density is not currently permitted. In response to the RFP, the applicant has agreed to provide affordable housing, senior housing, family sized dwelling units, and workforce housing. The proposal to develop the subject site would allow housing on underutilized land located in a well-established residential neighborhood.

### ***Environmental Protection Element***

***Policy E-3.1.3: Green Engineering*** *Promote green engineering practices for water and wastewater systems. These practices include design techniques, operational methods, and technology to reduce environmental damage and the toxicity of waste generated.* <sup>613.4</sup>

***Policy E-3.2.1: Support for Green Building*** Encourage the use of green building methods in new construction and rehabilitation projects, and develop green building methods for operation and maintenance activities.<sup>614.2</sup>

The proposed map amendment would allow for development on the subject site that would be certified to LEED Gold v4 standards, as stipulated by the RFP, which requires the employment of green building methods in the rehabilitation of the historic landmark and in new construction. Development of the site would also include enhanced landscaping, including streetscape, which will functionally and visually improve the public space and complement the prevailing residential character. Additionally, the redevelopment and any new construction would be subject to the requirements of the Department of Energy and Environment regulations which further Comprehensive Plan policies regarding tree retention and protection (E-1.1.2), landscaping (E-1.1.3), and energy efficiency (E-2.2.1 and E-2.2.5).

### ***Historic Preservation Element***

***Policy HP-2.1.2: Disposition of District-Owned Properties*** Evaluate District-owned properties for historic potential before acting on disposition. When disposal of historic properties is appropriate, ensure their continued preservation through transfer to a suitable new steward under conditions that ensure their protection and reuse.<sup>1008.3</sup>

***Policy HP-2.4.1: Rehabilitation of Historic Structures*** Promote appropriate preservation of historic buildings through an effective design review process. Apply design guidelines without stifling creativity, and strive for an appropriate balance between restoration and adaptation as suitable for the particular historic environment.<sup>1011.6</sup>

***Policy HP-2.4.2: Adaptation of Historic Properties for Current Use*** Maintain historic properties in their original use to the greatest extent possible. If this is no longer feasible, encourage appropriate adaptive uses consistent with the character of the property.<sup>1011.7</sup>

***Policy HP-2.4.3: Compatible Development*** Preserve the important historic features of the District while permitting compatible new infill development. Within historic districts, preserve the established form of development as evidenced by lot coverage limitations, yard requirements open space, and other standards that contribute to the character and attractiveness of those areas. Ensure that new construction, repair, maintenance, and improvements are in scale with and respect historic context through sensitive siting and design and the appropriate use of materials and architectural detail.<sup>1011.8</sup>

The proposed map amendment would allow for the rehabilitation and reuse of an existing historic resource. The development would be compatible with the existing neighborhood character, incorporating moderate density residential uses in a transit accessible, predominantly residential neighborhood. Preservation of the structure would include the preservation of open space on the property. The bulk and massing of the Hebrew School would continue to be compatible with the neighborhood, as the proposed modifications require approval by the Historic Preservation Board.

## **Area Elements of the Comprehensive Plan:**

### ***Rock Creek East Area Element***

***Policy RCE-1.1.1: Conservation of Low Density Neighborhoods*** Maintain and conserve the attractive, stable neighborhoods of the Rock Creek East Planning Area. Any new development in the Planning Area should be attractively designed and should contribute to the community's positive physical identity. <sup>2208.2</sup>

***Policy RCE-1.1.2: Design Compatibility*** Ensure that renovation, additions, and new construction in the area's low density neighborhoods respects the scale and densities of adjacent properties, avoids sharp contrasts in height and mass, and preserves parklike qualities such as dense tree cover and open space. <sup>2208.3</sup>

***Policy RCE-1.1.3: Directing Growth*** Concentrate economic development activity and employment growth in Rock Creek East around the Georgia Avenue/Petworth Metrorail and Takoma station areas, along the Georgia Avenue corridor, along Kennedy Street, and on 14th Street NW between Allison and Decatur Streets. Provide improved pedestrian, transit, and bicycle access to these areas, and improve their visual and urban design qualities in order to create a unique destination for the local community to enjoy. <sup>2208.4</sup>

***Policy RCE-1.1.6: Development of New Housing*** Encourage the retention of existing subsidized housing units within the Rock Creek East Planning Area, along with other measures to increase housing choices and improve housing affordability for area residents. This should include the production of new mixed income housing along Georgia Avenue, and the encouragement of mixed income housing in the industrially zoned area west of Georgia Avenue between Upshur and Shepherd, and on District-owned land along Spring Road near the Petworth Metro Station. A particular emphasis should be placed on providing low cost affordable housing for seniors. <sup>2208.7</sup>

***Policy RCE-2.2.1: Development Character*** Encourage development in the Georgia Avenue/Petworth area to respect the area's pedestrian-oriented, moderate density character. A variety of project scales should be encouraged, ranging from small adaptive reuse and rehabilitation projects to mixed use projects combining housing and commercial uses. Mixed income housing with a variety of housing types is particularly encouraged. Any development of larger-scale buildings shall require architecturally sensitive scale transitions to adjacent, less dense development. <sup>2212.5</sup>

The proposed map amendment would allow for redevelopment and development of a site near the Georgia Avenue/Petworth Metro Station that would include 187 new dwelling units. The proposal would appropriately concentrate growth near the Metro Station, while providing improved streetscape, pedestrian, and bicycle infrastructure. A significant portion of the housing would be affordable, and would cater to a variety of populations, including seniors and families, as encouraged by the Rock Creek East Area Element. The density permitted by the proposed map amendment would be appropriate for the neighborhood, which is an established moderate density residential area, and would provide a suitable transition toward the higher-density Georgia Avenue corridor.

## **VII. COMMUNITY COMMENTS**

The property was the subject of an Our RFP process, a Mayoral Initiative that incorporates community engagement early in the request for proposals (RFP) process. Through this process, the community identified priorities for the site that included: affordable housing; housing for seniors; workforce housing; sustainable public space improvements; an upgraded 10<sup>th</sup> Street; incorporation of historic elements into the design; and development that exceeds green building requirements. Proposals that included these elements were prioritized during the review process, and ultimately resulted in the selection of the current proposal. Although not part of the review for the requested map amendment, the development would include 187 new dwelling units, with 150 of those units designated as affordable. Eighty-eight affordable senior dwelling units would be located in the Hebrew Home building, and 99 new units would be constructed on the Robeson School portion of the site.

Since being selected as the developer for the site, the applicant has continued to meet with the community to incorporate priorities into site development. At its January 10, 2018 meeting, ANC 4C voted 8-1-0 to recommend that the map amendment be set down with conditions, including that the developer continue to work with the community in the development of a community benefits agreement. Moving forward, the applicant should continue to work with the community and provide an update to the Commission regarding those efforts at the forthcoming public hearing.

JS/be