

MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Zoning Commission

FROM: *JLS*
Jennifer Steingasser, Deputy Director

DATE: March 16, 2018

SUBJECT: Setdown Report for ZC #18-01- Grimke School Rezoning
Proposed zoning map amendment from RF-1 to ARTS-2 for the Grimke School property at 1925 Vermont Avenue, NW (Square 361, Lot 827)

I. RECOMMENDATION

Community Three Development requests a rezoning of the Grimke School property on Vermont Avenue from the RF-1 zone to the ARTS-2 zone. The proposal would not be inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan, including the Generalized Policy Map, the Future Land Use Map and the Plan’s written policies. The Office of Planning (OP), therefore, recommends that the Zoning Commission set down the requested map amendment for a public hearing.

II. BACKGROUND

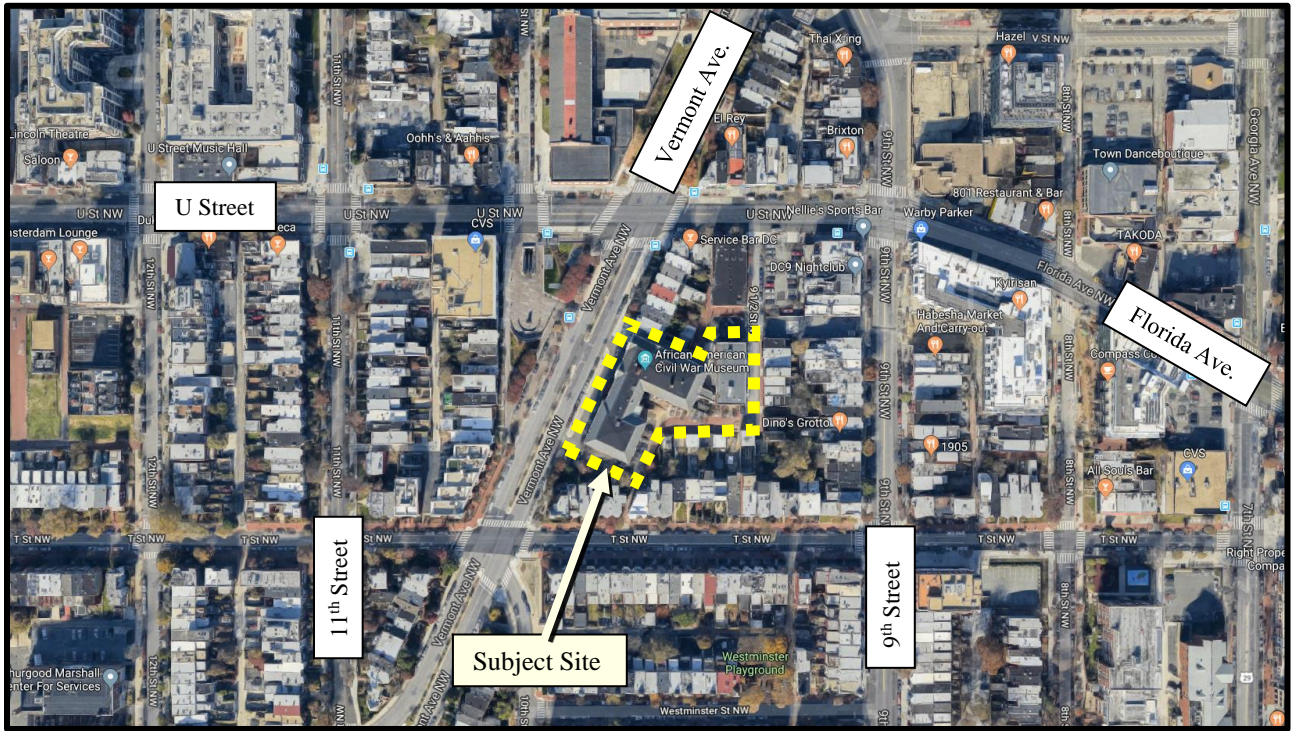
The subject site is owned by the District, and development rights for the site were awarded to Community Three Development after the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development issued a request for proposals (RFP) for the site. While the site was then and is now zoned for residential uses, the RFP anticipated that the African American Civil War Museum would be maintained on the site, and that office and arts uses could also be potential uses, given the adjacent ARTS zoning and the mixed use Comprehensive Plan designation for this site. Community Three’s selected proposal includes a mix of museum, arts and office uses in the main school building, and housing on the site of the current gym.

III. SITE AND AREA DESCRIPTION

The basic parameters of the site and its surroundings are described in the table below.

Address	1925 Vermont Avenue, NW (between T and U Streets)
Legal Description	Square 361, Lot 827
Site Area	37,926 sf (0.87 ac.)
Existing Development	The Grimke School site consists of the main school building and a rear gym. The main building has two full floors above ground, and one story partially below grade. See the front façade photo below. The main building is currently

	vacant but, after the school use was discontinued, was used for DC government offices. The gym at the rear of the site fronts on 9½ Street, the named public alley east of the site. The gym houses the African American Civil War Museum. See aerial photo below. The main building is contributing to the historic district and will be retained; The gym is non-contributing and will be demolished.
Existing Zoning	RF-1
Existing Allowable Uses	Residential (Rowhouses and flats)
Proposed Zoning	ARTS-2
Proposed Allowable Uses	Multifamily residential, arts, office, cultural
Historic Preservation	Contributing building in the U Street Historic District
Adjacent Development	
North	Rowhouses and an alley
East	9½ Street, a named public alley, with alley rowhouses on the east side of the alley
South	Rowhouses and an alley
West	Vermont Avenue, with the African American Civil War Memorial, the east entrance to the U Street metro, and rowhouses on the west side of Vermont
Surrounding Neighborhood Character	U Street and the immediately surrounding streets have a mix of retail, commercial, entertainment and multifamily residential uses. The surrounding neighborhoods are dominated by rowhouses. Howard University and Howard University Hospital are northeast of the site.
Comprehensive Plan Policy Map	Neighborhood Enhancement Area
Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map	Moderate Density Residential and Moderate Density Commercial mixed us



Aerial Photo of the Grimke School and Surrounding Neighborhood



Front façade of the Grimke School

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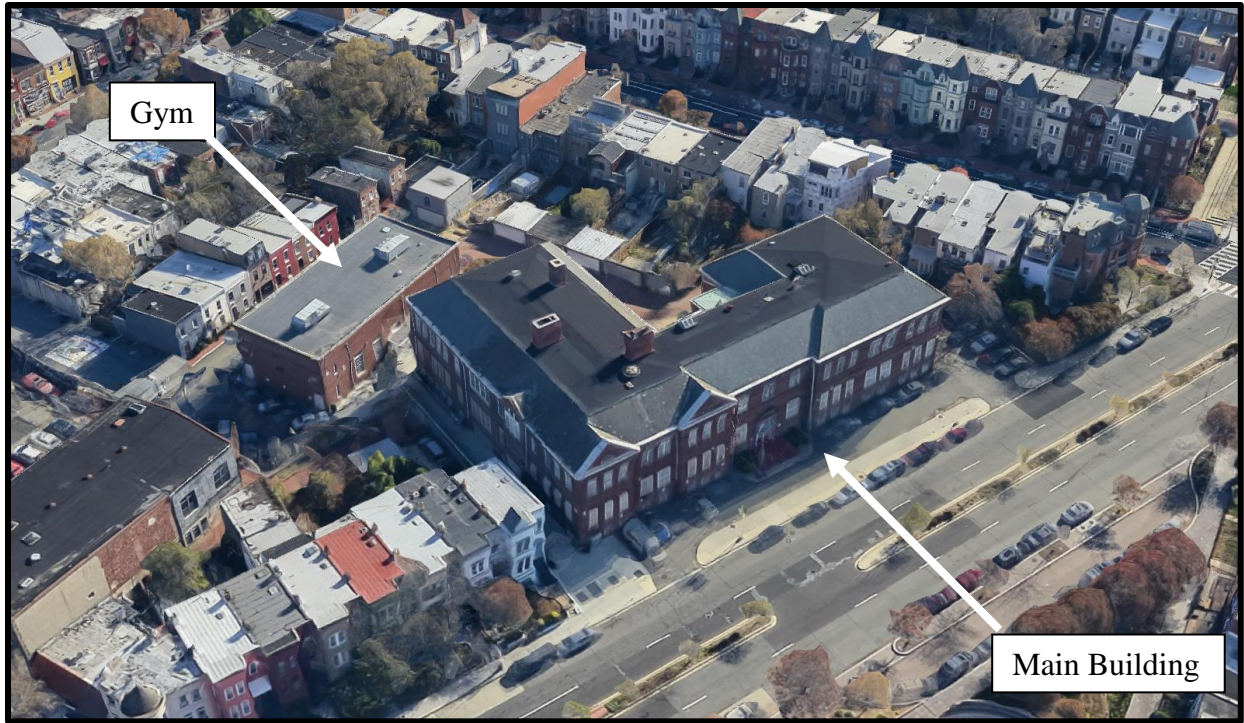
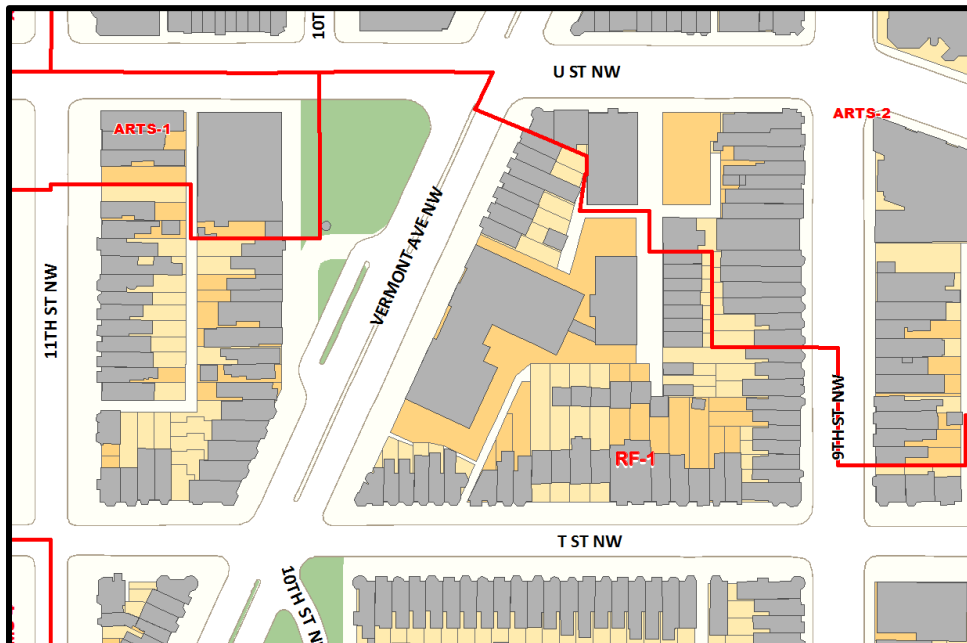


Image Copyright Google

Aerial Photo Looking Southeast

IV. ZONING

The site is currently zoned RF-1, along with many adjacent properties. Along its northeastern boundary the school site abuts the ARTS-2 zone. The applicant proposes to remap the site to ARTS-2. Please refer to the zoning map below, and a table on the next page comparing the parameters of the RF-1 and ARTS-2 zones.



Item	RF-1	ARTS-2
Height	35', 3 stories	65' 70' w/ IZ
FAR	Not regulated [1.8 effective FAR]	3.5 base FAR 4.5 max with bonuses
Lot Occupancy	60%	80%
Rear Yard	20'	15'
Uses	Primarily rowhouses and flats	Multifamily residential, arts, commercial

V. COMPREHENSIVE PLAN POLICIES

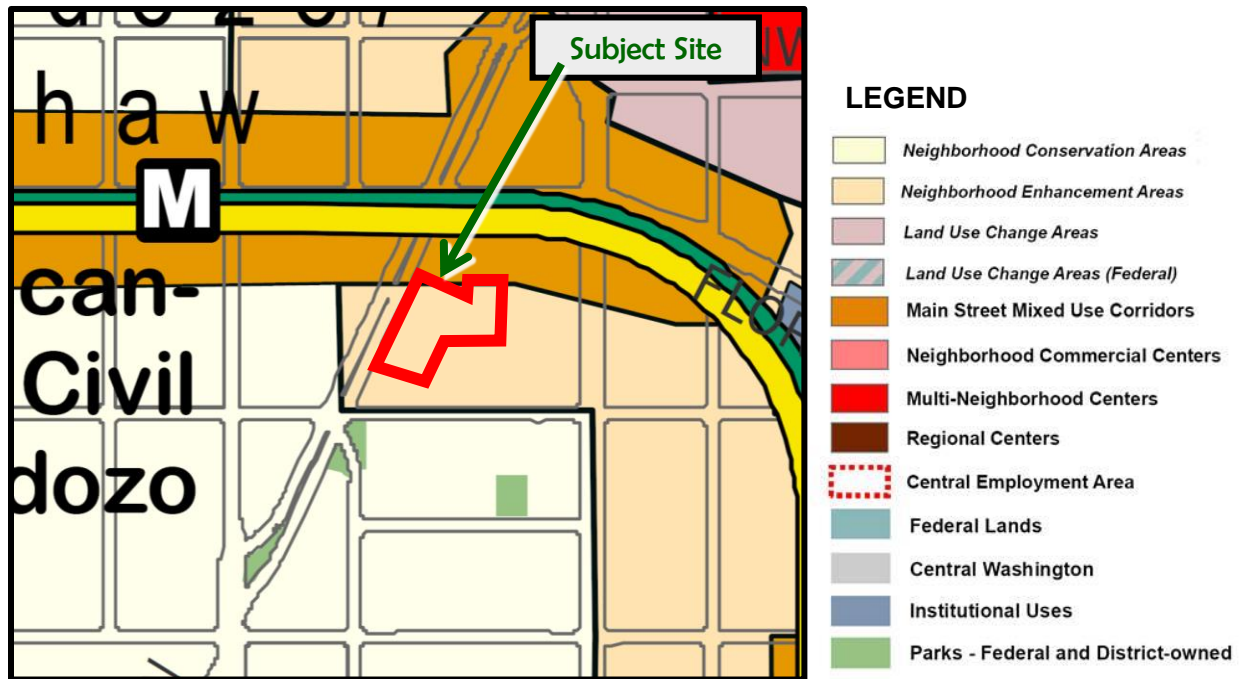
The proposed zone would allow development consistent with major policies from the Land Use, Housing, Economic Development, Historic Preservation, Arts and Culture and Mid-City elements. Please refer to Attachment 1 for the relevant policies.

VI. COMPREHENSIVE PLAN LAND USE MAPS

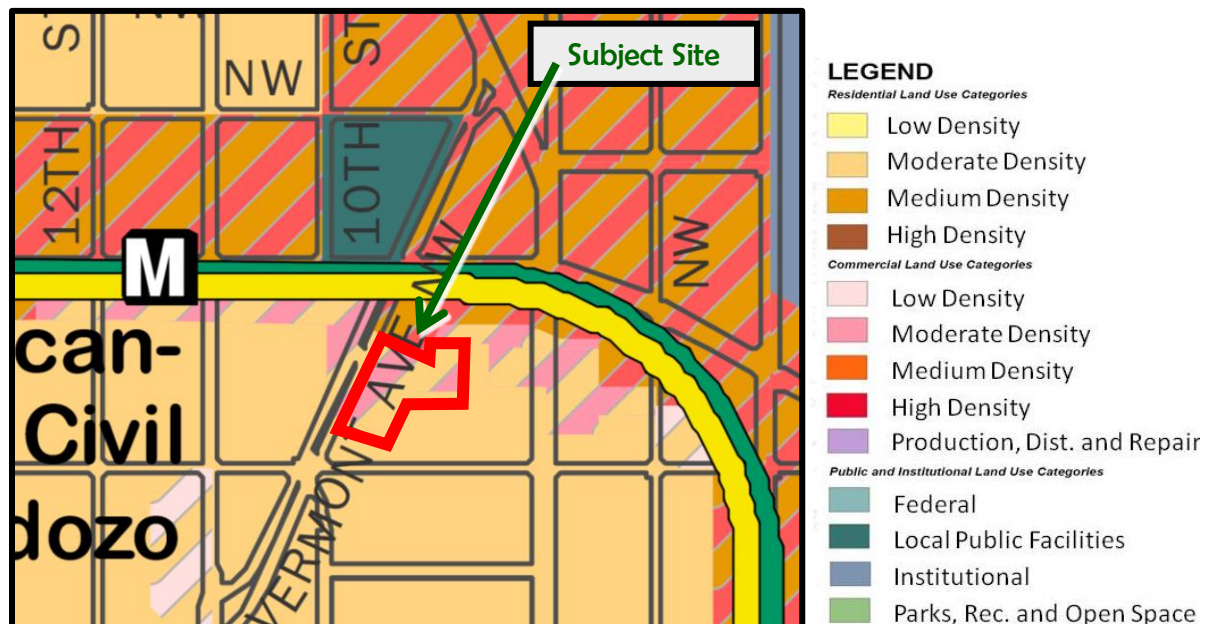
The Comprehensive Plan’s Generalized Policy Map describes the subject site as part of a Neighborhood Enhancement Area, areas that are characterized as having potential for redevelopment of vacant land that “reflect the historical mixture and diversity of each community...” (Comprehensive Plan, § 223.6). The Comprehensive Plan goes on to state:

The guiding philosophy in Neighborhood Enhancement Areas is to ensure that new development “fits-in” and responds to the existing character, natural features, and existing/planned infrastructure capacity. New housing should be encouraged to improve the neighborhood and must be consistent with the land use designation on the Future Land Use Map. The unique and special qualities of each area should be maintained and conserved, and overall neighborhood character should be protected as development takes place. Publicly-owned open space within these areas should be preserved and enhanced to make these communities more attractive and desirable. (§ 223.7)

Finally, the Plan states that “New development in these areas should improve the real estate market, reduce crime and blight, and attract complementary new uses and services that better serve the needs of existing and future residents. (§ 223.8) The proposed zoning would facilitate the re-use of an underutilized, publicly owned site with additional housing and complementary commercial uses, while allowing new development on the site to fit in to the neighborhood. The proposed ARTS-2 zone, therefore, would not be inconsistent with the Neighborhood Enhancement Area designation.



The Future Land Use Map (FLUM) indicates that the site is appropriate for moderate density residential and moderate density commercial mixed use.



Moderate Density Residential is “used to define the District’s row house neighborhoods, as well as its low-rise garden apartment complexes. The designation also applies to areas characterized by a mix of single family homes, 2-4 unit buildings, row houses, and low-rise apartment buildings.” (Comprehensive Plan § 225.4)

Moderate Density Commercial is characterized by areas where “Retail, office, and service

businesses are the predominant uses. Areas with this designation range from small business districts that draw primarily from the surrounding neighborhoods to larger business districts that draw from a broader market area. Buildings are larger and/or taller than those in low density commercial areas but generally do not exceed five stories in height. The corresponding Zone districts are generally C-2-A, C-2-B, and C-3-A, although other districts may apply.” (ibid. § 225.9)

As seen in the preceding paragraph, the Comprehensive Plan refers to the zone nomenclature of the 1958 Regulations. What, under the 2016 Zoning Regulations is known as ARTS-2, was, under the 1958 Regulations called ARTS/C-2-B. The proposed zone is therefore consistent with the Future Land Use Map designation.

VII. DUKE PLAN

The Development Framework for a Cultural Destination District Within Washington, DC’s Greater Shaw / U Street (the DUKE Plan) was adopted by Council in 2005 and provides guidance for development in the 7th Street/Georgia Avenue and U Street/Florida Avenue commercial corridors, as well as immediately surrounding areas. It includes several policies that generally support or specifically relate to the subject site, and as with any small area plan, those policies supplement and add specificity to the Comprehensive Plan. The proposed map amendment would not be inconsistent with the following policies.

The District of Columbia, other partner agencies, and private landholders have a unique opportunity to use public and private owned assets to leverage considerable community and citywide benefits within the Shaw/Howard University and U Street/African-American Civil War Memorial/Cardozo Metro station areas (p. 4)

The “African-American Civil War Memorial Sub-district” will be an active civic and cultural gateway to the Shaw community. The primary use within this section of the overall plan will be cultural uses and activities at which residents demonstrate the best in civic pride. (p. 28)

Relocate Fire/EMS and Corrections from Grimke. Consider an interpretive museum for the African-American Civil War Memorial and possibly other museum uses at Grimke School. (p. 29)

Allow for commercial, residential and/or cultural use of the Grimke School; properties between Grimke School and the southeast corner of the intersection of U Street and Vermont Avenue; properties on the south of U Street on the 900 block and properties on the 1900 block of 9th Street. In doing so, be mindful of the historic preservation regulations which also impact these properties and that some residential and mixed uses properties are currently within residential or light manufacturing zones. Continue to require retail in properties fronting on U Street and 9th Street. (p. 37)

Designate the Grimke School for adaptive reuse to include among other uses facilities for an interpretive museum for the African American Civil War Memorial and its Foundation,

a welcoming and orientation center for visitors to the area, and potentially other cultural facilities (e.g., the Black Fashion Museum); initiate a design and programming study to determine capacity and feasibility; and implement. (p. 42)

VIII. ATTACHMENTS

1. Relevant Comprehensive Plan Policies

JS/mrj

Attachment 1

Relevant Comprehensive Plan Policies

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...

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.

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...

Policy LU-2.1.3: Conserving, Enhancing, and Revitalizing Neighborhoods: Recognize the importance of balancing goals to increase the housing supply and expand neighborhood commerce with parallel goals to protect neighborhood character, preserve historic resources, and restore the environment. The overarching goal to “create successful neighborhoods” in all parts of the city requires an emphasis on conservation in some neighborhoods and revitalization in others.

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.

Policy LU-2.4.1: Promotion of Commercial Centers: Promote the vitality of the District’s commercial centers and provide for the continued growth of commercial land uses to meet the needs of District residents, expand employment opportunities for District residents, and sustain the city’s role as the center of the metropolitan area. Commercial centers should be inviting and attractive places, and should support social interaction and ease of access for nearby residents.

Housing Element

Policy 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.

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.

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.

Policy H-1.1.4: Mixed Use Development. Promote mixed use development, including housing, on commercial zoned land, particularly in neighborhood commercial centers, along Main Street mixed use corridors, and around appropriate Metrorail stations.

Economic Development Element

Policy ED-2.1.5: Infill and Renovation: Support the continued growth of the office sector through infill and renovation within established commercial districts to more efficiently use available space while providing additional opportunities for new space.

Policy ED-2.1.6: Local-Serving Office Space: Encourage the development of small local-serving offices within neighborhood commercial districts throughout the city to provide relatively affordable locations for small businesses and local services (such as real estate and insurance offices, accountants, consultants, and medical offices).

Policy ED-2.3.3: Amenities Beyond the Mall: Promote the development of cultural amenities beyond the Mall in an effort to more fully capitalize on the economic benefits of tourism.

Policy ED-3.1.1: Neighborhood Commercial Vitality: Promote the vitality and diversity of Washington's neighborhood commercial areas by retaining existing businesses, attracting new businesses, and improving the mix of goods and services available to residents.

Policy ED-3.1.5: Public-Private Partnerships: Leverage the expenditure of public funds to produce private sector investments, including joint development on publicly-owned land and redevelopment in areas considered to be high risks by investors. Support the involvement of local community development corporations in commercial development and revitalization efforts within these areas.

Historic Preservation Element

Policy HP-2.1.1: Protection of District-Owned Properties: Sustain exemplary standards of stewardship for historic properties under District ownership or control. Use historic properties to the maximum extent feasible when adding new space for government activities, promote

innovative new design, and ensure that rehabilitation adheres to the highest preservation standards. Properly maintain both designated and eligible historic properties and protect them from deterioration and inappropriate alteration.

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.

Arts and Culture Element

Policy AC-1.1.2: Development of New Cultural Facilities: Develop new neighborhood cultural facilities across the District, providing affordable space for grass roots and community arts organizations. Provide technical and financial assistance to organizations to help plan and build such facilities.

Policy AC-1.1.5: Siting of Facilities: Support the siting of arts facilities in locations where impacts upon nearby uses can be most easily managed. Give preference to locations near public transit, or sites where shared parking facilities are available. Conversely, ensure that appropriate parking and transit access improvements are made when arts and cultural venues are developed.

Policy AC-3.2.1: Promoting Cultural Amenities: Promote the development of cultural amenities “beyond the Mall” in an effort to more fully capitalize on the economic benefits of tourism for District residents, businesses, and neighborhoods.

Mid-City Area Element

Policy MC-1.1.2: Directing Growth: Stimulate high-quality transit-oriented development around the Columbia Heights, Shaw/Howard University, and U St./African American Civil War Memorial/Cardozo Metrorail station areas, as well as along the Georgia Avenue corridor and the North Capitol Street/Florida Avenue business district. Opportunities for new mixed income housing, neighborhood retail, local-serving offices, and community services should be supported in these areas, as shown on the Comprehensive Plan Policy Map and Future Land Use Map.

Policy MC-1.1.6: Mixed Use Districts: Encourage preservation of the housing located within Mid-City’s commercially zoned areas. Within mixed use (commercial/residential) areas, such as Mount Pleasant Street and Columbia Road, encourage commercial uses that do not adversely impact the established residential uses.

Policy MC-2.3.2: Uptown Subareas: Create a distinct and memorable identity for different sub-areas in the Uptown District, based on existing assets such as the Lincoln Theater, Howard University, the African-American Civil War Memorial, and the Howard Theater.

Policy MC-2.3.4: Cultural Tourism: Promote cultural tourism initiatives, public art, signage, and other improvements that recognize the African-American historical and cultural heritage of the Uptown area. Such initiatives should bring economic development opportunities to local residents and businesses, and establish a stronger identity for the area as a nationally significant African-American landmark.