

MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Zoning Commission

FROM: ^{JLS} Jennifer Steingasser, Deputy Director, Development Review & Historic Preservation

DATE: April 25, 2019

SUBJECT: ZC Case 18-18 – Supplemental Report for a Proposed Zoning Text Amendment to Subtitle K to Create the Northern Howard Road Zone

At the first hearing for this application, on March 14, 2019, the Commission asked the Office of Planning (OP) about potential revisions to the text of the Northern Howard Road (NHR) zone.

Change of Name to NHR-1

The Commission noted that other Northern Howard Road zones, applying to other Comprehensive Plan land use designations, could be created in the future. The Commission therefore recommended that the currently proposed zone be designated “NHR-1” so that future zones could be numbered in sequence with minimum necessary adjustments to the text of the chapter. OP has begun editing the text to make this change and requests flexibility to continue to work with OAG to make refinements to the text.

Stepbacks at Upper Levels of Buildings

The Commission inquired about potential stepbacks in building façades at higher heights. In the Capitol Gateway Zone, buildings along South Capitol Street are required to step back at a 1-to-1 ratio above 110’ (Subtitle K § 510.1(b)(3)). This is also the case in the D-5 zone along South Capitol Street (Subtitle I § 616.7(d)). The wording in the Capitol Gateway, which is very slightly different in D-5 is as follows:

“Any portion of a building or structure that exceeds one hundred and ten feet (110 ft.) in height shall provide a one-to-one (1:1) step-back from the building line along South Capitol Street;”

If the Commission prefers, similar text can be added to NHR regarding the building line along Howard Road. OP recommends no required setback, but rather that the Commission review building designs on a case by case basis, as contemplated by the design review process written into the NHR zone. In the case of South Capitol Street, the clear intention was to preserve the viewshed toward the Capitol dome. In the case of this portion of Howard Road, there is no particular viewshed in need of preservation, but individual building designs will be required to go through design review by the Commission.

Design Review Process

The Commission expressed concern that the review process for NHR applications would not give the Commission enough tools to effectively shape building design. OP purposefully created the NHR design review process to closely follow the design review that has been successfully used in the Capitol Gateway (CG) zone for many projects near the baseball stadium. Section 1007 of NHR mirrors Subtitle K § 512, the review process in CG. Please refer to the table below for a side by side comparison. Based on the experience from CG, OP believes that the Commission should have enough tools to guide building design, including massing, materials and architectural details. NHR would also provide more specific regulations for ground floor uses and ground floor building design.

NHR		Capitol Gateway	
1007	ZONING COMMISSION REVIEW OF BUILDINGS, STRUCTURES, AND USES (NHR)	512	ZONING COMMISSION REVIEW OF BUILDINGS, STRUCTURES, AND USES (CG)
1007.1	The provisions of this section apply to properties within the NHR zone.	512.1	The provisions of this section apply to properties: [...]
1007.2	With respect to those properties described in Subtitle K § 1007.1, all proposed buildings and structures, or any proposed exterior renovation to any existing buildings or structures that would result in a substantial alteration of the exterior design, shall be subject to review and approval by the Zoning Commission in accordance with the following provisions.	512.2	With respect to those properties described in Subtitle K § 512.1, all proposed uses, buildings, and structures, or any proposed exterior renovation to any existing buildings or structures that would result in an alteration of the exterior design, shall be subject to review and approval by the Zoning Commission in accordance with the following provisions.
1007.3	In addition to proving that the proposed use, building, or structure meets the standards set forth in Subtitle X, Chapter 6, and the relevant provisions of this chapter, an applicant requesting approval under this section shall prove that the proposed building or structure, including the architectural design, site plan, landscaping, sidewalk treatment, and operation, will:	512.3	In addition to proving that the proposed use, building, or structure meets the standards set forth in Subtitle X and the relevant provisions of this chapter, an applicant requesting approval under this section shall prove that the proposed building or structure, including the sitting, architectural design, site plan, landscaping, sidewalk treatment, and operation, will:
	(a) Help achieve the objectives of the NHR zone defined in Subtitle K § 1000.1;		(a) Help achieve the objectives of the Capitol Gateway defined in Subtitle K § 500.1;
	(b) Help achieve the desired use mix, with the identified preferred uses specifically being residential, office, entertainment, retail, or service uses;		(b) Help achieve the desired use mix, with the identified preferred uses specifically being residential, hotel or inn, cultural,

	entertainment, retail, or service uses;
(c) Provide streetscape connections for future development on adjacent lots and parcels, and be in context with an urban street grid;	(c) Be in context with the surrounding neighborhood and street patterns;
(d) Minimize conflict between vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians;	(d) Minimize conflict between vehicles and pedestrians;
(e) Minimize unarticulated blank walls adjacent to public spaces through facade articulation;	(e) Minimize unarticulated blank walls adjacent to public spaces through facade articulation; and
(f) Minimize impact on the environment, as demonstrated through the provision of an evaluation of the proposal against LEED certification standards; and	(f) Minimize impact on the environment, as demonstrated through the provision of an evaluation of the proposal against LEED certification standards.
(g) Promote safe and active streetscapes through building articulation, landscaping, and the provision of active ground level uses.	