

Government of the District of Columbia


Department of Transportation



d. Planning and Sustainability Division

MEMORANDUM

TO: Sara Bardin
Director, Office of Zoning

FROM: Anna Chamberlin, AICP 
Associate Director

DATE: March 4, 2022

SUBJECT: ZC Case No. 21-11 – 5425 Western Avenue NW

PROJECT SUMMARY

Abraham & Laura Lisner Home for Aged Women (the “Applicant”) seeks approval of a Map Amendment to rezone a 5.4-acre (236,590 SF) property from R-2 to RA-2 to align with the Comprehensive Plan approved May 18, 2021. The subject property is located at 5425 Western Avenue NW (Square 1663, Lot 9) and bounded by Livingston Street to the north, a 42nd Street to the east, Military Road to the south, and Western Avenue to the west. The site is currently comprised of three (3) buildings with an assisted living residence, community residential facility, and a nursing facility. The Applicant did not include in their Statement of Support what development would be proposed if this Map Amendment is granted.

SUMMARY OF DDOT REVIEW

The District Department of Transportation (DDOT) is committed to achieve an exceptional quality of life in the nation’s capital by encouraging sustainable travel practices, safer streets, and outstanding access to goods and services. As one means to achieve this vision, DDOT works through the zoning process to ensure that impacts from new developments are manageable within and take advantage of the District’s multimodal transportation network.

The purpose of DDOT’s review is to assess the potential impacts of the proposed map amendment on the District’s transportation network. After review of the case materials submitted by the Applicant, DDOT finds:

- The proposed RA-2 (Residential Apartment - Moderate Density) zone would allow for approximately 473 more residential units on the property than the maximum allowed in the existing R-2 zone (568 units vs. 95 units);
- From a vehicle trip generation standpoint, maximum build-out in the proposed RA-2 zone could generate moderately more traffic, 42 AM peak hour trips and 52 PM peak hour trips, as compared to a matter-of-right development under R-2;

- The additional trips generated by the site are expected to have a minimal impact on the transportation network;
- DDOT concurs with the proposed up-zoning to further support nearby transit and generate additional foot traffic to support nearby businesses. This is consistent with DDOT's approach to infill sites which should be dense, compact, transit-oriented, and improve the public realm;
- Since the site is within ¼ mile of several WMATA Friendship Center Metrorail Station, DDOT encourages the Applicant to minimize the amount of off-street parking provided with any future redevelopment proposals. Per DDOT's January 2022 *Guidance for Comprehensive Transportation Review*, ideally no more than 0.25 vehicle spaces per unit (1 per 4 units);
- Any development proposals for the site will need to account for a long-term bicycle parking storage room, either below- or at-grade in an easily accessible location from the lobby, as well as short-term bicycle parking, as required by ZR16. Long-term bicycle parking must have at least 50% of spaces located horizontally on the ground and accommodate larger bikes;
- The site currently has several vehicular access points. When the site develops, it is expected that the number of curb cuts be reduced, preferably only one (1) curb cut to the lowest volume street, and that all loading, trash pick-up, and vehicle parking will take place from this curb cut. DDOT will not support any new curb cuts to the property from Western Avenue NW; and
- Depending on the final development program, DDOT will require a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Plan be implemented at the time of curb cut approval.

RECOMMENDATION

DDOT has reviewed the Applicant's request and determined that based on the information provided, the proposed rezoning would likely not lead to a significant increase in the number of peak hour vehicle trips on the District's transportation network if developed with the most intense matter-of-right uses.

Given the subject property is a short walking distance to the Friendship Heights Metrorail Station and the proposed change in zoning is consistent with DDOT's approach to new development that supports higher densities, adjacent transit, and walkable design, DDOT has no objection to the approval of the requested Map Amendment.

CONTINUED COORDINATION

Given the achievable matter-of-right density possible on the subject property, it is expected that the Applicant will coordinate with DDOT through the permitting process for a future development proposal on the following actions to minimize impacts to the transportation network:

- Depending on the ultimately proposed development program and if any future relief is requested from the Board of Zoning Adjustment (BZA) or Public Space Committee (PSC), the Applicant may be required to scope and provide a Comprehensive Transportation Review (CTR) study or some other transportation analysis;
- Develop and implement Transportation Demand Management (TDM) measures commensurate with the land use and scale of future development, as appropriate;
- When the property ultimately develops, the site should be designed so that loading occurs without trucks performing backing maneuvers across public space. Also, coordinate with DDOT on an appropriate Loading Management Plan (LMP), if necessary;

- Submit a detailed curbside management and signage plan to DDOT, consistent with current DDOT policies. If meter installation is required, they will be at the Applicant’s expense;
- Coordinate with DDOT’s Urban Forestry Division (UFD) and the Ward 3 arborist regarding the possibility of any existing Heritage Trees or Special Trees on the property; and
- Continue coordination with DDOT on the following public space design elements noted in the Streetscape and Public Realm section of this report.

TRANSPORTATION ANALYSIS

Mode Split and Trip Generation Comparison

DDOT conducted a trip generation analysis for the site to compare the transportation impacts of full build-out under the existing R-2 and proposed RA-2 zones. To complete the analysis, DDOT first assessed the theoretical maximum development potential of the site based on current and proposed zoning.

The existing R-2 zone allows for the site to be developed with low- to moderate-density development, including detached dwellings and rowhouses, which DDOT estimates at 95 units. If rezoned to RA-2, the site could potentially achieve a 2.16 FAR for a mixed-use development assuming an inclusive zoning (IZ) bonus, which could yield approximately 511,000 SF of residential. It is estimated that a maximum of 568 residential units could be constructed on-site if the rezoning to RA-2 is granted. No first-floor retail was assumed in the RA-2 zone since retail and corner stores are prohibited by zoning.

To determine the number of trips generated by each scenario, DDOT utilized the rates published in the ITE *Trip Generation Manual, 10th Edition*, webtool. A 75% non-auto mode share was assumed based on the site’s proximity to Metrorail. Table 1 below presents a summary of DDOT’s estimate of vehicle trips for each development scenario.

Table 1 | Trip Generation Comparison

Development Scenario	Estimated Development Program	AM Peak Person Trips	PM Peak Person Trips	AM Peak Vehicle Trips	PM Peak Vehicle Trips
Maximum Current Matter-of-Right in R-2 Zone	95 Dwellings	40	49	9	10
Maximum Future Matter-of-Right in RA-2 Zone	568 Dwellings	241	295	51	62
Net Change	+473 Dwellings	+201	+246	+42	+52

As shown above, development of the site with the maximum number of allowable units under RA-2 (estimated at 568 units) will generate approximately 51 vehicle trips in the weekday morning commuter peak hour and approximately 62 vehicle trips during the weekday evening commuter peak hour, as compared to the nine (9) projected vehicle trips in the weekday morning commuter peak hour and 10 vehicle trips during the weekday evening commuter peak hour that could be generated under max build-out under existing R-2 zoning.

Zoning Requirements

Table 2 below details DDOT’s estimates of the theoretical vehicle parking and bike parking zoning requirements for each of the evaluated development scenarios. Note that the exact requirements will be determined by the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA) and will be based on the specific development ultimately proposed. This also includes any required loading facilities.

Since the site is located within ¼ mile of the Friendship Heights WMATA Metrorail Station, DDOT encourages the Applicant to take advantage of the allowable 50% reduction in the parking minimum, per ZR16 Subtitle C, Section 702.1(a), when the site redevelops. According to DDOT’s January 2022 *Guidance for Comprehensive Transportation Review*, a site this close to Metrorail service should provide no more than 0.25 spaces per unit (1 space per 4 units). The presence of surplus parking has the potential to induce demand for additional driving on the roadway network. During public space permitting, the Applicant will be required to implement a TDM plan, the contents of which will be determined at that time and will be influenced by the amount of off-street parking provided.

While not a zoning requirement, DDOT encourages the Applicant to provide a minimum of 1 electric vehicle (EV) charging station for every 50 spaces. It is noted that a new District law, the Electric Vehicle Readiness Amendment Act of 2020, calls for 20% of all new off-street parking spaces to be EV-ready starting January 1, 2022. At this time, the law has not gone into effect because it has not been funded. The Applicant should be aware that this requirement may go into effect prior to pulling their building permit.

The project must meet all bicycle parking and loading requirements. DDOT encourages the Applicant to meet or exceed the bicycle parking and showers/lockers requirements of ZR16. Long- and short-term bicycle parking should be designed in accordance with the 2018 DDOT *Bike Parking Guide*. This includes a minimum of 50% of long-term spaces located horizontally along the floor. Additionally, at least 5% of spaces should be designed for larger cargo/tandem bikes and 10% of spaces served by electrical outlets for e-bikes and scooters. Short-term bicycle parking spaces should be accommodated with inverted-U racks.

Table 2 | Zoning Requirements for Vehicle Parking and Bicycle Parking

Development Scenario	Estimated Development Program	Min Vehicle Parking Spaces	DDOT Preferred Max Parking	Bicycle Parking Long-Term	Bicycle Parking Short-Term
Maximum Current Matter-of-Right in R-2 Zone	95 Dwellings	15	24	0*	0*
Maximum Future Matter-of-Right in RA-2 Zone	568 Dwellings	94	142	189	28

*Note: * Long- and short-term bicycle parking is not required for single family homes in R-2 zone.*

STREETSCAPE AND PUBLIC REALM

If the site develops or there are any substantial renovations to future buildings, the property owner will be expected to rehabilitate streetscape infrastructure between the curb and the property lines, in line with District policy and practice. This includes curb and gutters, street trees and landscaping, streetlights, sidewalks, and other appropriate features within the public rights of way bordering the site.

Specifically, there are potential access and public space issues that the Applicant should be aware of and continue to coordinate with DDOT on, when the site develops:

- There are several large trees that appear to be Heritage trees. Coordinate with DDOT's Urban Forestry Division (UFD) and the Ward 3 arborist regarding the possibility of any existing Heritage Trees or Special Trees on the property;
- Any future project should minimize the number of curb cuts and should close any existing curb cuts on Western Avenue NW and restore the public space. Any future curb cuts should be to the lowest volume public street surrounding the site;
- Ensure all missing curb ramps and high-visibility crosswalks are installed at intersections surrounding the site, notably:
 - 42nd Street and Legation Street NW;
 - 42nd Street and Livingston Street NW; and
 - 43rd Street and Military Road NW.
- Ensure sidewalks clear paths are a minimum of 8-feet wide on Western Avenue and 6-feet wide on all other streets surrounding the site.
- Ensure any pedestrian entrances to a future building are at-grade with the public sidewalk so that no stairs or ramps are required in public space;
- Install curb extensions at corners surrounding the site where a row of on-street parking (no rush hour through lane restrictions) are present;
- DDOT encourages the Applicant to experiment with and install artwork in public space;
- All overhead power lines should be moved to underground at the time of redevelopment so that poles and wires do not clutter DDOT public space; and
- Any existing Cobra Head-style streetlights along the site perimeter of Western Avenue should be replaced with either Washington Globe or Decorative Tear Drop-style streetlights. Exact style to be installed will be determined at the time of permitting.

DDOT encourages the Applicant to participate in a Preliminary Design Review Meeting (PDRM) with the Office of Planning and DDOT to discuss the public space design when a future development is proposed.

In conjunction with the *District of Columbia Municipal Regulations (DCMR)*, DDOT's *Design and Engineering Manual (DEM)* and the *Public Realm Design Manual* will serve as the main public realm references for the Applicant. DDOT staff will be available to provide additional guidance during the public space permitting process.

AC:kb