

# 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:** April 29, 2022

**SUBJECT:** ZC Case No. 22-02 – Benning Road NE

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#### PROJECT SUMMARY

The DC Office of Planning (the “Applicant”) seeks approval of a Map Amendment to rezone 46 properties from the MU-4 and RA-2 zones to the MU-5 zone. The subject properties are bounded by Benning Road NE to the north, and east-west alley or Gales Place to the south, 16<sup>th</sup> Street NE to the west, and Oklahoma Avenue NE to the east. The subject properties are improved with a variety of retail, surface parking, and church uses.

#### 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 MU-5 (Mixed-Use) zone would allow for approximately 574 more residential units distributed throughout the subject properties than the maximum allowed in the existing MU-4 and RA-2 zones (1,407 units versus 833 units);
- From a vehicle trip generation standpoint, maximum build-out in the proposed MU-5 zone could generate an additional 169 AM vehicle peak hour trips and 326 PM vehicle peak hour trips, as compared to a matter-of-right development of 833 residential units and 222,000 SF of retail;

- The additional trips generated by the Map Amendment are expected to have a minimal impact on the transportation network;
- DDOT concurs with the proposed up-zoning to further support nearby transit and nearby businesses consistent with DDOT’s approach that infill sites should be dense, compact, transit oriented, and improve the public realm;
- Since the site is within ¼-mile of the Union Station-Benning Road Streetcar line, DDOT encourages future Applicants to minimize the amount of off-street parking provided with any redevelopment proposals. Per DDOT’s January 2022 *Guidance for Comprehensive Transportation Review*, ideally no more than 0.35 vehicle spaces per unit (1 per 3 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;
- Many of the subject properties have access to rear public alleys ranging in width from 12 feet to 20 feet. If sites redevelop, it is expected that all loading, trash pick-up, and vehicle parking will take place from these public alleys. DDOT will not support any new curb cuts to the subject properties from Benning Road NE; and
- Depending on the design of future development proposals, DDOT may require a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Plan to be implemented.

## **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 properties are a short walking distance to multiple stops along the Union Station-Benning Road Streetcar line and the proposed change in zoning is consistent with DDOT’s approach to new development which supports higher densities, proximity to 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 future Applicants will coordinate with DDOT through the permitting process for development proposals on the following actions to minimize impacts to the transportation network:

- Depending on future development proposal and if relief is requested from the Board of Zoning Adjustment (BZA) or Public Space Committee (PSC), future Applicants 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 subject properties 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; 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 subject properties to compare the transportation impacts of the development potential under the existing RA-2 and MU-4 zones and the proposed MU-5 zone. To complete the analysis, DDOT first assessed the theoretical maximum development potential of the site based on current and proposed zoning.

The existing RA-2 zone allows for moderate-density residential development and the MU-4 zone allows for moderate density mixed-use development. If rezoned to MU-5, the subject properties could potentially achieve a 4.2 FAR for mixed-use developments assuming an inclusive zoning (IZ) bonus. It is estimated that a maximum of 1,407 residential units and 300,000 SF retail could be constructed across the subject properties if the rezoning to MU-5 is granted, as compared to approximately 833 dwellings and 222,000 SF of retail.

DDOT estimated the amount of person- and vehicle-trips that would be generated by theoretical maximum matter-of-right developments under the existing RA-2 and MU-4 zones and the proposed MU-5 zone. 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 sites’ proximity to Metrorail, Streetcar, and bus service. Table 1 below presents a summary of DDOT’s estimate of vehicle trips for each development scenario.

**Table 1 | Trip Generation Comparison**

Development Scenario	Development Program	AM Peak Person Trips	PM Peak Person Trips	AM Peak Vehicle Trips	PM Peak Vehicle Trips
<b>Maximum Current Matter-of-Right in MU-4 and RA-2 Zones</b>	833 Residential Units 222,000 SF Retail 0 SF Office	734	1972	106	219
<b>Maximum Future Matter-of-Right in MU-5 Zone</b>	1,407 Residential Units 300,000 SF Retail 0 SF Office	1111	2811	169	326

As shown above, development of the site under the MU-5 zone with the maximum number of allowable units (estimated 1,407 units) will generate approximately 169 vehicle trips in the weekday morning commuter peak hour and approximately 326 vehicle trips during the weekday evening commuter peak hour, as compared to the approximately 106 trips in the weekday morning commuter peak hour and 219 vehicle trips during the weekday evening commuter peak hour that could be generated under max build-out under existing zoning.

The projected increase in vehicle trips (63 trips in the weekday morning peak hour and 107 trips in the weekday evening peak hour) under the MU-5 zone would not have a significant effect on the District’s transportation network. The estimated trip increase is spread over 8.5 acres of land fronting approximately 3,000 linear feet of road frontage on Benning Road NE and could only be incrementally achieved through phased separate development projects.

Zoning Requirements

Table 2 below details DDOT’s estimates of the theoretical vehicle parking and bike parking zoning requirements for each of the evaluated 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 developments ultimately proposed.

Since the site is located within ¼-mile of Union Station-Benning Road Streetcar, DDOT encourages future Applicants to take advantage of the allowable 50% reduction in the parking minimum, per ZR16 Subtitle C, Section 702.1(a) when properties redevelop. According to DDOT’s January 2022 *Guidance for Comprehensive Transportation Review*, sites this proximate to priority transit should provide no more than 0.35 spaces per unit (1 space per 3 units). The presence of surplus parking has the potential to induce demand for additional driving on the roadway network. During public space permitting, Applicants will be required to commit to 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 currently a zoning requirement, DDOT encourages future Applicants 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. Applicants should be aware that this requirement may go into effect prior to pulling their building permit.

Future redevelopment projects must also meet bicycle parking and loading requirements. DDOT encourages Applicants 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 Design Guidelines*. 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.

**Table 2 | Zoning Requirements for Vehicle Parking and Bicycle Parking**

Development Scenario	Development Program	ZR16 Min Vehicle Parking Spaces	DDOT Max Vehicle Parking Spaces	ZR16 Long-Term Bicycle Spaces	ZR16 Short-Term Bicycle Spaces
Maximum Current Matter-of-Right in MU-4 and RA-2 Zones	833 Residential Units 222,000 SF Retail 0 SF Office	283	477	300	105
Maximum Future Matter-of-Right in MU-5 Zone	1,407 Residential Units 300,000 SF Retail 0 SF Office	431	722	499	156

**STREETSCAPE AND PUBLIC REALM**

If the any of the properties redevelop or there are any substantial renovations to existing buildings, the respective property owner(s) will be expected to rehabilitate streetscape infrastructure between the curb and the property lines consistent 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:

- All vehicular site access to properties along Benning Road NE, as well as loading facilities and trash pick-up, must be via the existing rear public alley network or Gales Place NE for the property between 17<sup>th</sup> Street NE and 18<sup>th</sup> Street NE;
- A 10-foot sidewalk should be constructed along site frontages. The sidewalk clear path must be a minimum of 6 feet wide and tree boxes a minimum of 4 feet;
- Building projects are not permitted on Benning Road NE;
- Ensure any pedestrian entrances to a future multi-family building are at-grade with the public sidewalk so that no stairs or ramps are required 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 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 future Applicants 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 Applicants. DDOT staff will be available to provide additional guidance during the public space permitting process.

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