

Government of the District of Columbia

Department of Transportation



d. Planning and Sustainability Division

MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Zoning Commission

FROM: Meredith Soniat
Acting Associate Director *MS*

DATE: February 10, 2025

SUBJECT: ZC Case No. 24-10 – Creation of Pennsylvania Avenue East Neighborhood Mixed-Use Zone

PROJECT SUMMARY

The Office of Planning (the “Applicant”) seeks approval of Text and Map Amendments to create a new Pennsylvania Avenue East Neighborhood Mixed Use (NMU-5A/PAE) zone for the properties generally fronting on Pennsylvania Avenue SE between Fairlawn Avenue SE and 27th Street SE. The subject properties include:

- Lots 1, 4, 5, 26-28, 809, and 810 in Square 5553;
- Lots 29, 38, 39, 61, 62, and 823-826 in Square 5556;
- Lots 35 and 806 in Square 5559;
- Lots 39, 40-46, 52, 55, and 814-817 in Square 5560;
- Lots 63, 64, 57, 806, and 807 in Square 5579; and
- Lot 804 in Square 5581.

While the total area covered by the proposed zoning is approximately 14 acres, the developable area is considerably smaller at 198,277 square feet based on the case’s Application Form ([Exhibit 1](#)). The properties within the boundary currently consist of a variety of retail, vehicle service stations, surface parking, and public uses as well as one (1) mixed-use residential building.

SUMMARY OF DDOT REVIEW

The District Department of Transportation (DDOT) is committed to achieving an exceptional quality of life by encouraging sustainable travel practices, safer streets, and outstanding access to goods and services. To achieve this vision, DDOT works through the Text and Map Amendment process to evaluate the requested zoning change and inform the Zoning Commission (ZC) on the order of magnitude impacts

to the transportation network. After an extensive review of the case materials submitted by the Applicant, DDOT finds:

- The Applicant’s proposed zoning aligns with the Council-approved [Pennsylvania Avenue East Small Area Plan](#) (PAESAP) which recommended a new zone be created for the mixed-use sites at the intersection of Pennsylvania Avenue and Minnesota Avenue SE;
- The properties are directly along the 32 and 36 Metrobus Priority Corridor Network Routes on Pennsylvania Avenue and directly along or within ¼ mile of the future¹ high capacity Metrobus route C31;
- The proposed NMU-5A/PAE zone would allow for approximately 375 more residential units and the same amount of retail on the properties than the maximum allowed in the existing MU-4 zoning;
- The total increased density is expected to generate a moderate increase in the amount of transit, biking, walking, and vehicle trips;
- The additional vehicle trips generated by the additional density could have a moderate impact on the roadway network, and a Comprehensive Transportation Review (CTR) or some other transportation analysis may be required as developers finalize plans for the various properties;
- The properties are adjacent to priority transit, and DDOT encourages future developers 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 the development would provide no more than 0.35 vehicle spaces per unit (1 per 3 units);
- Any development proposals for the site will need to account for long-term bicycle parking storage rooms, either below- or at-grade in easily accessible locations from building lobbies, as well as short-term bicycle parking, as required by Title 11 of the *District of Columbia Municipal Regulations (DCMR)* Subtitle C, § 801 and Title 18 of the *DCMR* § 1214;
- Many of the properties to be rezoned have access to existing rear public alleys. Per the Urban Design Guidelines outlined in the *PAESAP*, all loading and parking garage access points should be located on existing alleys at the rear of the lots, or if unavailable, on adjacent side streets to minimize impact on the pedestrian-prioritized retail zone of Pennsylvania Avenue;
- DDOT will not support any new curb cuts to the properties from Pennsylvania Avenue. Future developers will be required to close existing curbs cut to Pennsylvania Avenue and restore the curbside and public space; and
- The proposed rezoning will 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.

RECOMMENDATION

DDOT has no objection to the approval of the requested Text and Map Amendments.

¹ As shown in the [2025 Better Bus Network](#); “high frequency” routes will be served every 12 minutes or better.

CONTINUED COORDINATION

It is expected that future developers will coordinate with DDOT through the permitting process on the following actions to minimize impacts of any development proposals on the transportation network:

- Depending on the final development program for any individual property and if any future relief is requested from the Board of Zoning Adjustment (BZA) or Public Space Committee (PSC), a Comprehensive Transportation Review (CTR) study or some other transportation analysis may be required;
- A Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Plan may be required if a curb cut is requested, the contents of which will be commensurate with the land use, parking supply, and scale of future development, in accordance with the January 2022 *Guidance for Comprehensive Transportation Review*;
- When any property ultimately develops, the site should be designed so that loading occurs without trucks performing backing maneuvers through sidewalk 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 expense of the future developer for any individual property;
- Coordinate with DDOT's Urban Forestry Division (UFD) and the Ward 7 Arborist regarding the preservation of any existing Heritage Trees or Special Trees. According to the District's [Tree Size Estimator map](#), there are many Special Trees and several Heritage Trees within the proposed zone's boundary; and
- Continue coordination with DDOT on the 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 developable area to compare the transportation impacts of residential development scenarios under the existing MU-4 with the proposed NMU-5A/PAE zones. To complete the analysis, DDOT first assessed the theoretical maximum development potential of the site based on current and proposed zoning.

The existing MU-4 zone allows for the properties to be developed with moderate-density mixed-use development. If rezoned to NMU-5A/PAE, the properties could potentially achieve a 4.7 floor-area ratio (FAR) for a mixed-use development assuming both an Inclusionary Zoning (IZ) and grocery store bonus. It is estimated that a maximum of 815 residential units and 198,277 square feet of retail could be constructed across the included properties if the rezoning to NMU-5A/PAE is granted, as compared to approximately 441 dwellings with 198,277 square feet of retail under MU-4.

It is important to note that a specific development has not been proposed and that these are just estimates of total potential development based on lot sizes, lot coverage, FAR, by-right uses, and building heights allowed by zoning, which DDOT obtained from the case's Application Form ([Exhibit 1](#)) and the Office of Planning's Setdown Report ([Exhibit 2](#)). Granting the rezoning would not lock in the

development program estimated in this report since the NMU-5A/PAE allows for a wider range of uses, and the properties may include additional constraints that will affect the amount of developable space.

To determine the number of trips generated by each scenario, DDOT utilized the rates published in the *ITE Trip Generation Manual, 11th Edition*, webtool. Non-auto mode shares of 60% and 75% were assumed for residential and retail uses, respectively, based on the site's proximity to Priority Transit (Metrobus Routes 32 and 36). Table 1 below presents a summary of DDOT's estimate of vehicle and person trips for each development scenario.

As shown below, development of the properties with the maximum number of allowable units (estimated 815 multi-family dwellings and 198,277 square feet of retail) will generate approximately 162 vehicle trips in the weekday morning peak hour, 296 vehicle trips in the weekday evening peak hour, and 345 vehicle trips in the Saturday peak hour compared to the approximately 107 vehicle trips in the morning, 237 vehicle trips in the evening, and 287 vehicle trips on a Saturday that could be generated under maximum build-out under existing zoning.

Table 1 | Trip Generation Comparison

Development Scenario	Estimated Development Program	AM Peak Person Trips	PM Peak Person Trips	SAT Peak Person Trips	AM Peak Vehicle Trips	PM Peak Vehicle Trips	SAT Peak Vehicle Trips
Maximum Current Matter-of-Right – MU-4	441 Multi-Family Dwellings 198,277 SF retail	495	1,430	1,791	107	237	287
Maximum Future Matter-of-Right – NMU-5A/PAE	815 Multi-Family Dwellings 198,277 SF retail	659	1,602	1,963	162	296	345
Net Change Max MU-4 to Max NMU-5A/PAE	+375 Multi-Family Dwellings	+164	+172	+172	+55	+58	+58

Vehicle Parking, Bicycle Parking, and Loading Requirements

Since the site is located directly adjacent to the future high frequency Metrobus route C31 (existing 32 and 36 Metrobus Priority Corridor Network Routes on Pennsylvania Avenue), DDOT encourages future developers to take advantage of the allowable 50% reduction in the parking minimum, per Title 11 of *DCMR*, Subtitle C, § 702.1(a), when the properties redevelop.

According to DDOT's January 2022 *Guidance for Comprehensive Transportation Review*, a site this proximate to priority transit should provide no more than 0.35 spaces per residential 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, future developers will be required to commit to a TDM plan if a project has 20 or more residential units and a curb cut, the contents of which will be determined at that time and will be influenced by the amount of off-street parking provided. The future developers will need to meet the requirements for electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure in accordance with the Comprehensive Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Access, Readiness, and Sustainability Amendment Act of 2024, which goes into effect in 2027.

The project must meet all bicycle parking requirements. DDOT encourages future developers to meet or exceed the bicycle parking, showers, and lockers requirements of Title 11 of the *DCMR* Subtitle C § 800 and Title 18 of *DCMR* § 1214. Long- and short-term bicycle parking should be designed in accordance with the 2018 DDOT *Bike Parking Design Guide*. As required by zoning, at least 50% of long-term bicycle parking spaces must be located horizontally on the floor or easily accessible on the bottom level of a two-tier rack system. Additionally, DDOT requires at least 5% of spaces be designed for cargo and larger bikes (10 feet by 3 feet rather than 6 feet by 2 feet) and 10% of spaces be served by electrical outlets for e-bikes and scooters.

If a redevelopment proposal triggers loading requirements, future developers must ensure that there is no backing of trucks across the sidewalk and that all movements through sidewalk space are head-in/head-out with turns occurring on private property or an alley. If an alley is available, access must be provided via the alley. If a project has more than three (3) residential units, the future developer must contract a private trash collection service. Trash must be stored on private property out of the view of the sidewalk and collected from an alley or parking lot. Move-ins and move-outs should occur from a loading berth, off-street parking space, alley, or parking lot, if provided. Future residents may also obtain “emergency no parking” signs through DDOT’s Transportation Online Permitting System (TOPS) to reserve an on-street parking space for move-ins/move-outs, if available.

Note that the exact zoning requirements for vehicle parking, bicycle parking, and loading will be determined by the Department of Buildings (DOB) and will be based on the specific development ultimately proposed.

HERITAGE AND SPECIAL TREES

According to the District’s [Tree Size Estimator map](#), there are many Special Trees and several Heritage Trees within the proposed zone’s boundary. DDOT expects the Applicant to coordinate with the Ward 7 Arborist regarding the preservation and protection of existing Heritage, Special, and small street trees, as well as the planting of new street trees, in bioretention facilities or a typical expanded tree planting space, if proposed.

Heritage Trees have a circumference of 100 inches or more and are protected by the Tree Canopy Protection Amendment Act of 2016. With approval by the Mayor and DDOT’s Urban Forestry Division (UFD), Heritage Trees might be permitted to be relocated. As such, the Applicant may be required to redesign the site plan to preserve the Non-Hazardous Heritage Trees. Special Trees are between 44 inches and 99.99 inches in circumference. Special Trees may be removed with a permit. However, if a Special Tree is designated to remain by UFD, a Tree Protection Plan (TPP) will be required.

STREETSCAPE AND PUBLIC REALM

When the properties develop or there are any substantial renovations to future buildings, the property owners 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 future developers should be aware of and continue to coordinate with DDOT on as properties develop. Based on DDOT’s review of the Applicant’s materials and the *PAESAP*, these include but are not limited to:

- All loading and parking garage access points should be located on existing alleys at the rear of the lot, or if unavailable on adjacent side streets to minimize adverse impact on the pedestrian-prioritized retail zone of Pennsylvania Avenue SE;
- Depending on the final site design of a proposed development and the presence of healthy Heritage or Special Trees, DDOT may require “paper alleys” be constructed to provide additional access;
- No new curb cuts to any properties from Pennsylvania Avenue should be proposed. Existing curb cuts on Pennsylvania Avenue must be closed and curbside and public space restored;
- As the *PAESAP* calls for public art to be incorporated along the corridor, future developers should explore opportunities to partner with DDOT’s Arts in the Right-of-Way (AROW) program to facilitate art in the public right-of-way. AROW installations may include closed roadway murals, traffic control box art, micromobility corrals, intersection banners, historic call boxes, or barrier art, and resources and guidelines are available on the [AROW website](#);
- Enhance the pedestrian experience with streetscape elements such as enlarged street tree planter boxes and increased tree canopy, pedestrian scale lighting and signage, wide sidewalks along Pennsylvania Avenue SE, and space for tenant activation along storefronts;
- Enhance existing pedestrian crossings along Pennsylvania Avenue SE to better connect the two sides of the retail main street, increase pedestrian safety, and signal to vehicle drivers that they are entering a pedestrian-oriented neighborhood;
- Establish dedicated sidewalk areas that accommodate outdoor seating, clear pedestrian paths, landscaping, and other amenities. The sidewalk along Pennsylvania Avenue SE can be broken down as follows beginning with the curbside zone:
 - The **Amenity Area** (typically referred to as the tree or furnishing zone) should be at least 4 to 6 feet and provide a sizable amenity area that enhances pedestrian comfort including planting and trees, streetlights, regulatory signage, bicycle parking, and other furnishings such as benches and trash cans;
 - The **Circulation Area** (typically referred to as the pedestrian clear path) should be at least 8 feet and provide an unobstructed linear pedestrian path; and
 - The **Tenant Area** (typically referred to as the public parking or café zone) is the remaining space between the pedestrian clear path and the property line located immediately adjacent to building facades. This area should provide transition between circulation and building entries and activate storefronts through uses including tenant displays, outdoor seating, building projections, and planting areas.
- If a redevelopment proposal triggers loading requirements, ensure there is no backing of trucks across the sidewalk and all movements through sidewalk space are head-in/head-out;
- Where on-street parking exists or is proposed, future developers should install concrete curb extensions on the corners preceding an on-street parking lane and ensure all curb ramps and crosswalks are up to modern standards;
- 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;
- Provide a plan showing the detailed design of any long-term bike storage rooms, so DDOT’s Planning and Sustainability Division can confirm they meet the requirements of Title 11 of the

DCMR Subtitle C, § 800 and Title 18 of the DCMR § 1214 and DDOT *Bike Parking Guide* best practices;

- To support the PAESAP's vision of a pedestrian-prioritized retail zone along Pennsylvania Avenue, future developers should install missing No Right Turn on Red signage at any signalized intersection surrounding the properties;
- During permitting, submit a Curbside Management Plan for all public streets surrounding a site showing existing and proposed signage and curbside designations, as applicable;
- 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 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 developers 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 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.

MS:pj