

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: May 20, 2025

SUBJECT: ZC Case No. 24-14 – (Emory United Methodist Church)

PROJECT SUMMARY

Emory United Methodist Church (the “Applicant”) seeks approval of a Map Amendment to rezone a 19,460-square-foot property from RA-2 to RA-4. The subject property is located at 1459 Columbia Road NW (Square 2672, Lot 718) on the north side of Columbia Road between 14th and 15th Streets, NW. The site currently is improved with a vacant place of worship, which the Applicant proposes to retain and convert into residential units.

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 Map Amendment process to evaluate the requested zoning change and inform the Zoning Commission on the order of magnitude impacts on the transportation network. After an extensive review of the case materials submitted by the Applicant, DDOT finds:

- The site is within ¼ mile from the Columbia Heights Metrorail Station and within ¼ mile of Metrobus Priority Corridor Network routes on 14th and 16th Streets, NW;
- The proposed RA-4 (Residential – Medium to High Density) zone would allow for approximately 44 additional residential units on the property than the maximum allowed in the existing RA-2 zoning;
- The increased potential density is expected to generate a moderate increase in the amount of transit, biking, and walking trips and a minor increase in the amount of generated vehicle trips;
- The additional vehicle trips generated by the additional density are expected to have a minimal impact on the roadway network;

- The site is near multiple priority transit options and protected on-street bikeways, and 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 the development would provide 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 Title 11 of the *District of Columbia Municipal Regulations (DCMR)* Subtitle C § 801 and Title 18 of the *DCMR* § 1214;
- The site currently has access to an existing 20-foot rear public alley. When the site redevelops, it is expected that all loading, trash pick-up, and vehicle parking will take place from the rear alley;
- DDOT will not support any new curb cuts to the property from Columbia Road NW; and
- The proposed rezoning would 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 Map Amendment.

CONTINUED COORDINATION

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

- Depending on the final development program 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;
- When the property redevelops, 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 Applicant’s expense;
- Coordinate with DDOT’s Urban Forestry Division (UFD) and the Ward 1 Arborist regarding the preservation of any existing Heritage Trees or Special Trees on the property. According to the District’s [Tree Size Estimator map](#), there is one Special Tree on the property and one Special Tree in the Columbia Road public right-of-way fronting the property; 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 site to compare the transportation impacts of development scenarios under the existing RA-2 with the proposed RA-4 zones. 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 the site to be developed with moderate-density residential development. If rezoned to RA-4, the site could potentially achieve a 4.12 Floor-Area Ratio (FAR) for a residential development assuming an Inclusionary Zoning (IZ) bonus. It is estimated that a maximum of 91 residential units could be constructed on-site if the rezoning to RA-4 is granted, as compared to approximately 47 dwellings under RA-2.

It is important to note that a specific development has not been proposed and that these are just estimates of a potential development based on lot size, lot coverage, FAR, by-right uses, and building heights allowed by zoning, which DDOT obtained from the Office of Planning Setdown Report. Granting the rezoning would not lock in the development program estimated in this report since the site 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 Institute of Transportation Engineers' *Trip Generation Manual, 11th Edition*, webtool. A 75% non-auto mode share was assumed based on the site's proximity to Metrorail and Metrobus. Table 1 below presents a summary of DDOT's estimate of person and vehicle trips for each development scenario.

As shown below, development of the site with the maximum number of allowable units (estimated 91 units) will generate approximately eight (8) vehicle trips in the weekday morning peak hour and approximately nine (9) vehicle trips during the weekday evening peak hour, as compared to the approximately four (4) and five (5) vehicle trips in the weekday morning and evening, respectively, that could be generated under maximum build-out under existing zoning. This represents a minor increase in both the morning and evening vehicle trips on the transportation network.

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
Existing Conditions	Former Place of Worship (vacant)	0	0	0	0
Maximum Current Matter-of-Right in RA-2 Zone	47 Residential Units	20	21	4	5
Maximum Future Matter-of-Right in RA-4 Zone	91 Residential Units	40	42	8	9
Net Change RA-2 to RA-4	+44 Residential Units	20	21	4	4

Vehicle Parking, Bicycle Parking, and Loading Requirements

Since the site is located within ¼ mile of the Columbia Heights Metrorail Station and ¼ mile of the Metrobus Priority Corridor Network routes on 14th and 16th Streets, DDOT encourages the Applicant to take advantage of the allowable 50% reduction in the parking minimum, per Title 11 of *DCMR*, Subtitle C, § 702.1(a), when the site redevelops.

According to DDOT’s January 2022 *Guidance for Comprehensive Transportation Review*, a site this proximate to priority transit should provide no more than 0.25 spaces per residential 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 commit to a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) plan if the 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 Applicant 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 the Applicant 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 to 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 the redevelopment proposal triggers loading requirements, the Applicant must ensure that there is no backing of trucks across the sidewalk and that all movements through sidewalk space are head-in and head-out with turns occurring on private property or the alley. All access must be provided via the alley. If the project has more than three (3) residential units, the Applicant must contract a private trash collection service. Trash must be stored on private property out-of-the-view of the sidewalk and collected from the alley. Move-ins and move-outs should occur from a loading berth, off-street parking, space, or alley. 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 and move-outs.

Note that 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 is one (1) Special Trees on the property and one (1) Special tree in the Columbia Road public right-of-way fronting the property. DDOT expects that the Applicant coordinate with the Ward 1 Arborist regarding the preservation and protection of existing Special or small street trees, as well as the planting of new street trees, in bioretention facilities or a typical expanded tree planting space.

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 will be required.

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. It is noted that the site has a 20-foot Building Restriction Line (BRL) along the Columbia Road NW frontage. The area between the property line and BRL is the building restriction area, which is regulated like DDOT public space and should remain “park-like” with landscaping.

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

- All vehicular site access to the site, as well as loading facilities and trash pick-up, must be via the existing rear public alley network;
- No new curb cuts to the property from Columbia Road should be proposed;
- If the redevelopment proposal triggers loading requirements, ensure there is no backing of trucks across the sidewalk and all movements through sidewalk space are head-in and head-out;
- 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 the long-term bike storage room so DDOT can confirm it meets the requirements of Title 11 of *DCMR* Subtitle C, § 800, Title 18 of *DCMR* § 1214, and DDOT *Bike Parking Guide* best practices;
- During permitting, submit a Curbside Management Plan for all public streets surrounding the site showing existing and proposed signage and curbside designations; and
- Any existing 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 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.

MS:eo