

Zoning Commission Case No. 24-14

1459 Columbia Road, NW

Map Amendment from RA-2 to RA-4

June 5, 2025

Holland & Knight

OWNERSHIP TEAM

Emory United Methodist Church (Emory Fellowship)

- Primary location at 6100 Georgia Avenue, NW
- Founded: 200 years ago
- Congregation: 550 Members
- Mission: Serve our Community such to where people live a WHOLE life.
- Prior real estate development experience: In partnership with its mission arm, Emory Beacon of Light, Emory Fellowship developed the 180,000 SF multi-purpose Beacon Center campus in Brightwood in April 2019 that now provides 99 affordable housing apartments to DC residents.



OWNERSHIP TEAM

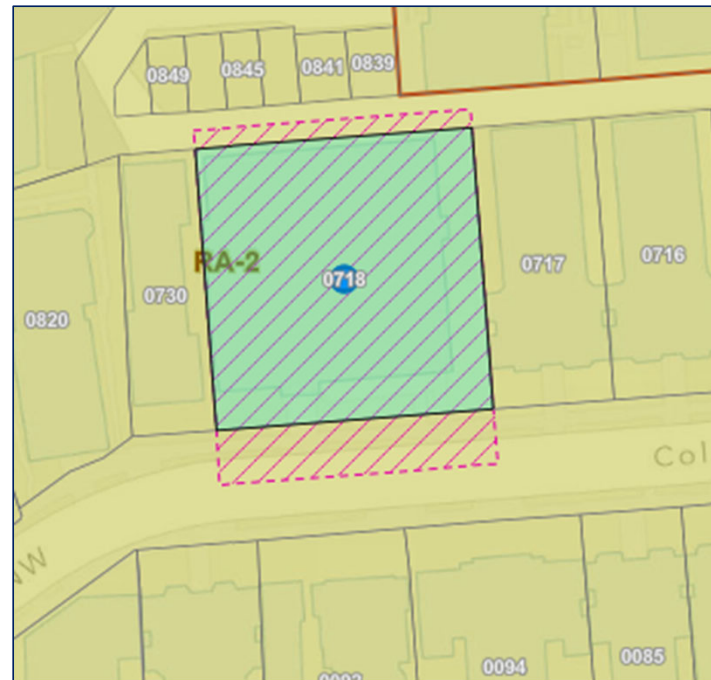
Beacon Properties

- Washington, DC based 501(c)(3) formed in 2019 as a non-profit affiliated organization under Emory Fellowship
- Vision and Mission:
- Empowering the marginalized and disenfranchised by preserving and creating real estate opportunities
- Engaging in social justice action through real estate development

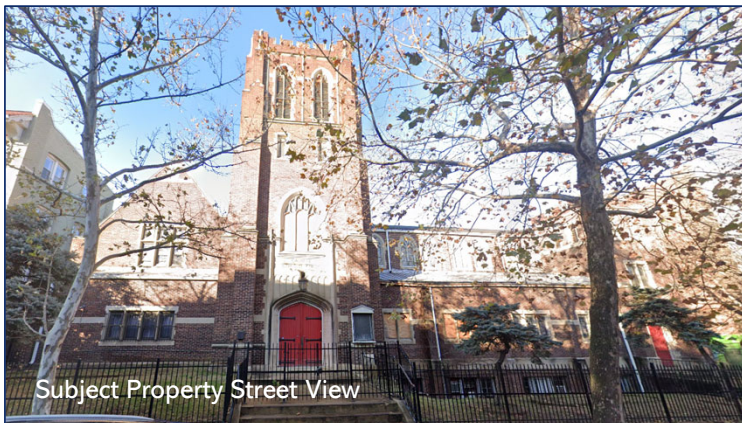
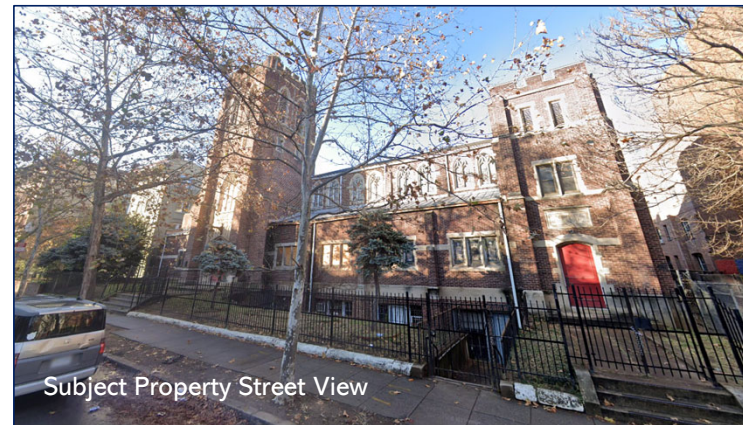
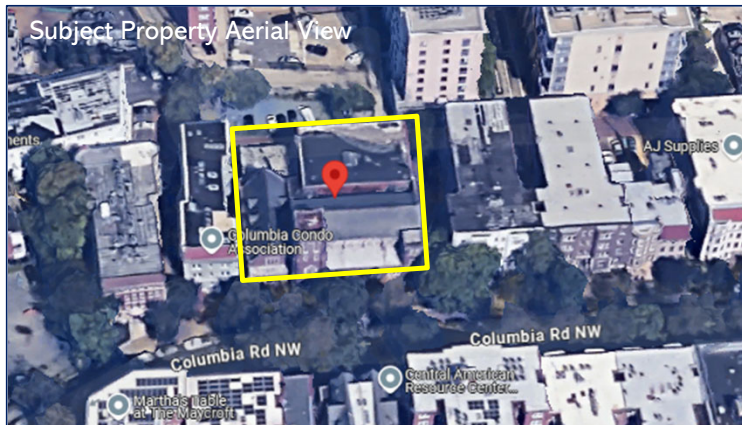


SUBJECT PROPERTY

- Current Zone: **RA-2**
 - Low- to moderate-density residential
- Proposed Zone: **RA-4**
 - Medium- to high-density residential
- Land Area: 19,460 sq. ft. (0.44 acres)
- Currently developed with Calvary Methodist Church
 - Not a historic landmark or in a historic district



SUBJECT PROPERTY CONTEXT



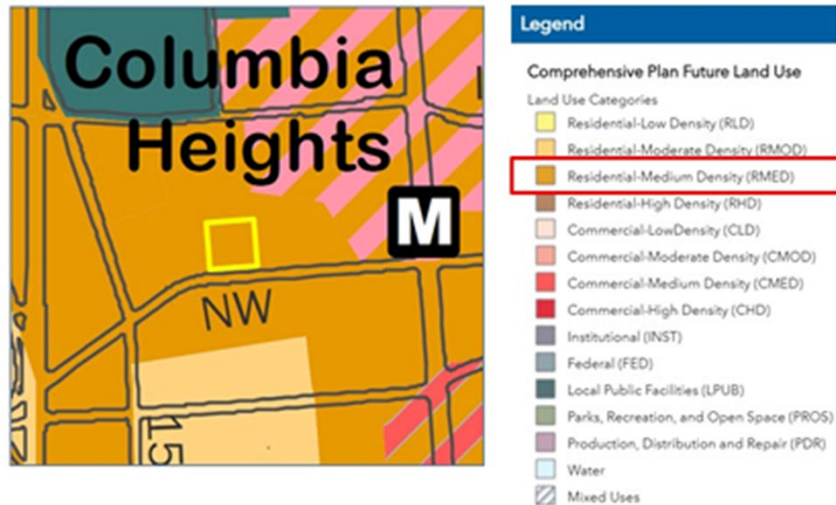
STANDARD OF REVIEW

Zoning Commission may approve a map amendment if the amendment is not inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan and other adopted public policies and action programs related to the subject site.

11-X DCMR § 500.3

The proposed map amendment is not inconsistent with the Future Land Use Map designation, the Generalized Policy Map designation, or the intent of the Comprehensive Plan.

FUTURE LAND USE MAP



Medium Density Residential

- Defines neighborhoods or areas generally, but not exclusively, suited for mid-rise apartment buildings
- May apply to taller residential buildings surrounded by large areas of permanent open space
- Density typically ranges from [1.8 to 4.0 FAR](#), although greater density may be possible when complying with Inclusionary Zoning
- The RA-3 zone is consistent with the Medium Density Residential category, and other zones may also apply

10-A DCMR § 227.7

FUTURE LAND USE MAP

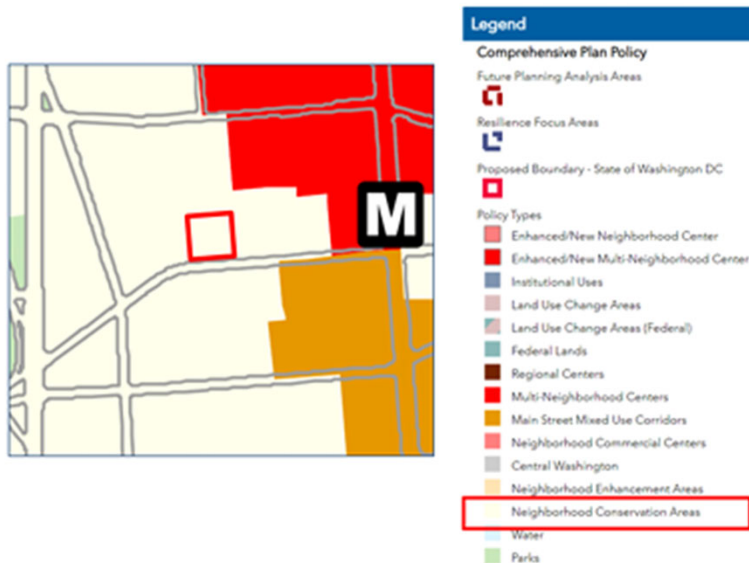
Consistency with Comprehensive Plan

- **RA-4 Zoning Compatible with Medium Density Residential**
 - RA-4 permits up to **4.2 FAR with IZ**, consistent with Medium Density Residential designation (10-A DCMR § 227.7)
 - Defined in the zoning regulations as medium- to high-density residential, and is appropriate in the medium-density FLUM designation (11-F DCMR §§ 101.7, 201.1, 201.4)
- **Adaptive Reuse Preserves Neighborhood Character**
 - Existing church will be converted to housing; full 90 ft. height unlikely to be used, resulting in compatible development
 - Adaptive reuse aligns with structural limits and neighborhood character while providing housing and affordable housing in an area that is transit-accessible
 - Aligns with medium density residential designation's emphasis on the existence of **pockets of varying densities** within this designation (10-A DCMR § 227.7)
- **FLUM Interpretation Allows Flexibility**
 - FLUM provides flexibility in interpreting the appropriate zoning for areas and is not a strict zoning map but rather a generalized depiction of desired land uses (10-A DCMR § 228.1)
 - Although the RA-4 is not specifically listed in the Medium Density Residential description, it is nonetheless compatible with Medium Density Residential designations in certain contexts, especially when the site conditions, adjacent uses, and the need for housing justify greater density

FUTURE LAND USE MAP - JUSTIFICATION

- 0.20 miles from the Columbia Heights Metrorail Station.
- Approximately 0.10 miles from 14th Street, a Priority Corridor for Metrobus routes.
- Development of the site under the existing RA-2 zone would produce 42,033 square feet of residential density, of which 5,254 square feet would be required as affordable housing. However, development of the site under the proposed RA-4 zone would produce 81,732 square feet of residential density, of which 16,346 square feet would be required as affordable.
- RA-4 would be consistent with the neighborhood character along Columbia Road, which consists of several 4+ story apartment buildings in the RA-2 zone with the same Moderate Density Residential FLUM designation.
- RA-4 would provide additional housing options in an increasingly unaffordable neighborhood.
- The percent increase from RA-2 to RA-4 is 133%, which would require 20% or 95% of the bonus density to be set aside for IZ, the highest amount. Nonetheless, the Church, and its related nonprofit, Beacon Properties, are planning for an affordable development consisting of as many affordable units as feasible and the inclusion of community use space (e.g., daycare, community meeting space, workforce training, other similar community needs).
- The Church was constructed in 1914. Incorporating architecturally meaningful portions of the original Church into the redevelopment of the Property will significantly reduce the potential for residential density on the lot.
- The size of the lot would minimize the overall impact of a redevelopment consisting of 4.2 FAR.
- The height of development on the site will be limited by the Height Act.

GENERALIZED POLICY MAP



Neighborhood Conservation Area

- Characterized by **little vacant or underutilized land** and maintenance of existing land uses and community character is anticipated over the next 20 years
- Development is expected to be modest, with a focus on infill housing, public facilities, and institutional uses; **major density changes are not anticipated**
- The guiding philosophy in Neighborhood Conservation Areas is to conserve and enhance established neighborhoods, but **not preclude development**, particularly to address citywide housing needs
- Proposed RA-4 zone is **not inconsistent** with the Neighborhood Conservation Area designation, as it will support modest, compatible growth, while addressing housing needs and maintaining the community's residential character

COMPARISON OF EXISTING AND PROPOSED ZONING

	Existing Zone: RA-2	Proposed Zone: RA-4
	Allowed / Required as Matter-of-Right	Allowed / Required as Matter-of-Right
Height	50 ft.	90 ft.
Penthouse Height	12 ft. and 1 story; except 15 ft. and second story permitted for penthouse mechanical space	20 ft. and 1 story plus mezzanine; except second story permitted for penthouse mechanical space
Density (FAR)	1.8 FAR (2.16 FAR with IZ)	3.5 FAR (4.2 FAR with IZ)
Lot Occupancy	60% for residential use	75%
Rear Yard	4 in. per 1 ft. of building height, but no less than 15 ft.	4 in. per 1 ft. of building height, but no less than 15 ft.
Side Yard	None required, but if provided, min. 4 ft. (min. 8 ft. for detached or semi-detached buildings containing 1 or 2 dwelling units)	None required, but if provided, min. 4 ft. (min. 8 ft. for detached or semi-detached buildings containing 1 or 2 dwelling units)
Green Area Ratio	0.4	0.3

RA-4 INSTEAD OF RA-3

Density

- 3.5 FAR (without IZ bonus density) and 3.6 FAR (with IZ) are not inconsistent with the Medium Density Residential FLUM designation.
- RA-3 and RA-4 are both medium-density zones. 11-F DCMR §§ 101.6 and 101.7.
- Mid-rise apartment buildings are suited to Medium Density Residential FLUM designation.

Neighborhood Compatibility

- The RA-3 and RA-4 zones are residential zones.
- Supports balanced residential development and preserves surrounding neighborhood character.
- Adds needed housing near transit.

Reuse of Existing Structure

- Will maintain architecturally significant features, resulting in more complex development with potentially greater FAR than permitted by RA-3 zone (3.0 / 3.6 with IZ).
- The full 90-foot height allowed under the RA-4 zone will likely not be utilized due to structural constraints. RA-3 permits a height of 60 feet.
- Aligns with designation's flexibility in allowing pockets of varying densities while preserving neighborhood character.

Flexibility in FLUM Interpretation

- RA-4 zone is not inconsistent with the intent of the FLUM, especially when considering site conditions, adjacent buildings and uses, and broader housing needs.
- The FLUM is a broad policy tool, not a strict zoning map, and allows for flexible zoning interpretations.

Alignment with Comprehensive Plan Goals

- The RA-3 and RA-4 zones supports citywide housing objectives by advancing affordable housing and higher density.
- Compatible with neighborhood needs and citywide housing policies.

ZONING COMMISSION RACIAL EQUITY TOOL



Part I: Guidance Regarding the Comprehensive Plan

Part II: Community Outreach and Engagement



Part III: Disaggregated Data

Part IV: Evaluate the Zoning Action through a Racial Equity Lens



PART 1: GUIDANCE REGARDING THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Mid-City Area Element

- MC-1.1.1: Neighborhood Conservation
- MC-1.1.2: Directing Growth
- MC-1.1.3: Infill and Rehabilitation
- MC-1.1.7: Preservation of Affordable Housing
- MC-1.1.12: Green Development Practices
- MC-1.2.1: Cultural Diversity
- MC-1.2.6: Neighborhood Greening

Land Use Element

- LU-1.4.2: Development Around Metrorail Stations
- LU-1.4.3: Housing Around Metrorail Stations
- LU-1.4.6: Development Along Corridors
- LU-1.5.1: Infill Development
- [LU-2.1.1: Variety of Neighborhood Types](#)
- [LU-2.1.2: Neighborhood Revitalization](#)
- LU-2.1.3: Conserving, Enhancing, and Revitalizing Neighborhoods
- LU-2.1.5: Support Low-Density Neighborhoods
- LU-2.1.10: Multi-Family Neighborhoods
- LU-2.2.4: Neighborhood Beautification

Transportation Element

- T-1.1.4: Transit-Oriented Development
- [T-1.1.7: Equitable Transportation Access](#)
- T-1.3.1: Transit-Accessible Employment
- T-2.4.1: Pedestrian Network
- T-2.4.2: Pedestrian Safety

Housing Element

- H-1.1.1: Private Sector Support
- H-1.1.3: Balanced Growth
- H-1.2.1: Low- and Moderate-Income Housing Production as a Civic Priority
- [H-1.2.2: Production Targets](#)
- [H-1.2.3: Affordable and Mixed-Income Housing](#)
- H-1.2.6: Build Nonprofit Sector Capacity
- [H-1.2.9: Advancing Diversity and Equity of Planning Areas](#)
- H-1.2.11: Inclusive Mixed-Income Neighborhoods

Environmental Protection Element

- [E-1.1.2: Urban Heat Island Mitigation](#)
- E-2.1.2: Tree Requirements in New Development
- E-2.1.3: Sustainable Landscaping Practices
- E-3.2.5: Reducing Home Heating and Cooling Costs
- E-3.2.7: Energy-Efficient Building and Site Planning
- E-4.1.1: Maximizing Permeable Surfaces
- E-4.1.2: Using Landscaping and Green Roofs to Reduce Runoff
- E-4.2.1: Support for Green Building

****Policies identified in OP's Racial Equity Crosswalk as advancing racial equity.**

PART II: COMMUNITY GUIDANCE AND ENGAGEMENT

COMMUNITY

Columbia Heights Neighborhood Profile

- No racial or ethnic majority; White, Asian, Black, and Hispanic/Latino residents each make up at least 10% of the population
- Wide range of housing types from public housing to multimillion-dollar homes; significant growth around the Columbia Heights Metro station
- Thriving with restaurants, shops, and nightlife; revitalized by the Metro station and DC USA commercial center
- Strong tradition of civic engagement; nonprofits like Latino Economic Development Corporation (LEDC) and Columbia Heights Development Corporation (CHDC) actively support neighborhood development
- Excellent transit access via Metro, bus routes, and major arterials, which has been a key factor in development and growth

Potential Burdens

- Short term impacts from construction, traffic, and noise
- Long term impacts may include possible property tax increases, though tax relief programs are available (e.g. Homestead Deduction, Senior Credits, Individual Income Property Tax Credits, Lower Income Home Ownership Tax Abatement, Lower Income, etc.)

Potential Benefits

- Improved streetscapes, pedestrian safety, and transit access
- New housing and affordable housing in a high demand, well-connected neighborhood
- Increased equity and accessibility in a well-connected, high-opportunity neighborhood

PART II: COMMUNITY GUIDANCE AND ENGAGEMENT

LEGACY OF DISCRIMINATION IN COLUMBIA HEIGHTS

Historic Discrimination

- 1920s – [Racial covenants](#) confined Black residents east of 13th Street
- Post 1948 – Economic decline after end of covenants led to [housing overcrowding](#)
- 1968 Riots – Widespread destruction; slow recovery and reinvestment deepened [inequities](#)

Lasting Impacts

- [Demographic shift](#) from majority-white to majority non-white between 1950 and 1970
- Riots resulted in [displacement](#) of residents due to unsafe conditions and “white flight”, leaving behind a weakened tax base and contributing to a decline in public services and infrastructure

Districtwide Racial Equity Efforts

- Black Homeownership Strike Force aims for 20,000 new [Black homeowners](#) by 2030
- Upward Mobility Action Plan (UMAP) recommends a systemic approach to align housing, financial, and workforce programs to [boost upward mobility](#)
- Extensive tax relief and homebuyer assistance programs across the District

Revitalization Efforts in Columbia Heights

- Prioritization of [affordable housing](#) through IZ program and affordable housing trust funds ensure that new developments include affordable units for low- and moderate-income residents
- Grassroots organizations and community groups advocate for residents' rights and [provide legal support to fight against displacement](#)

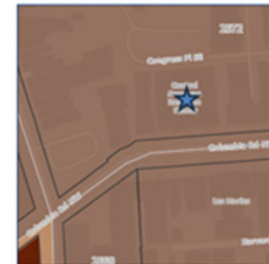
Restricted Housing and Racial Change, 1950



Restricted Housing and Racial Change, 1960

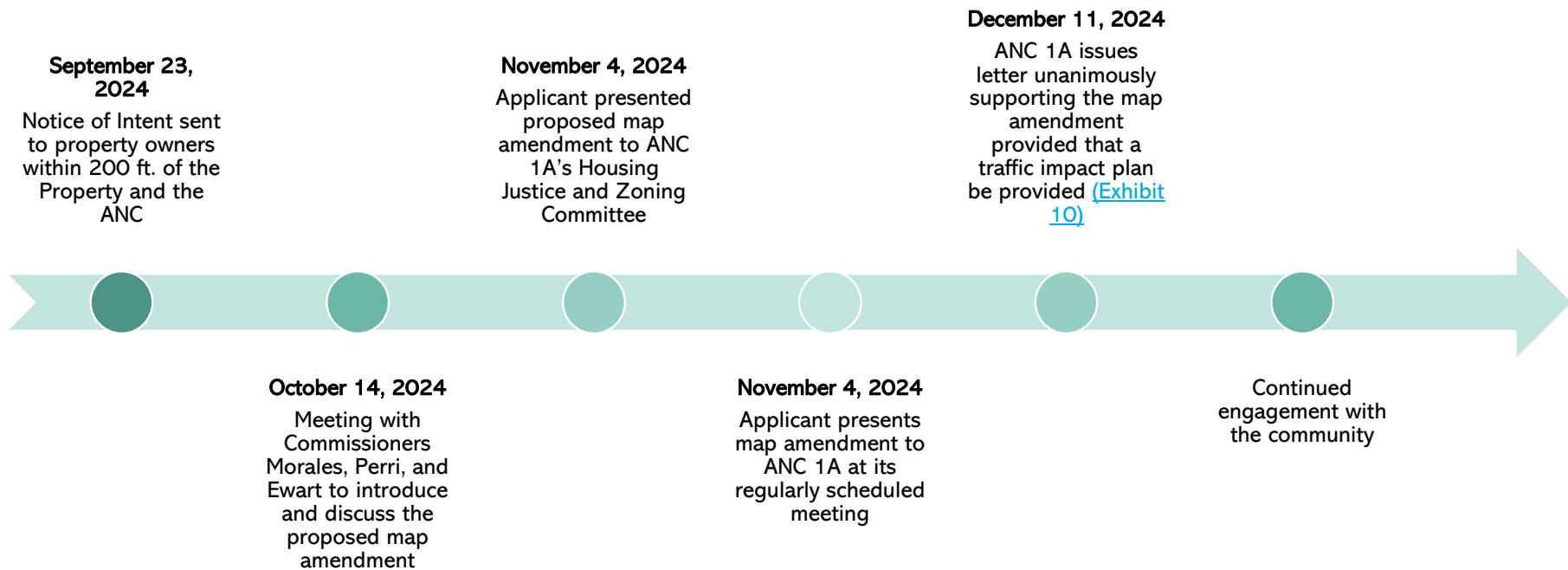


Restricted Housing and Racial Change, 1970



PART II: COMMUNITY GUIDANCE AND ENGAGEMENT

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



PART II: COMMUNITY GUIDANCE AND ENGAGEMENT

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT - SUPPORT

- ANC 1A – [Exhibit 10](#)
- Office of Planning Reports – [Exhibit 12](#) and [Exhibit 27](#)
- DDOT Report – [Exhibit 26](#)
- 14 Letters in Support
 - Shane S. Mulhern – Thrive DC ([Exhibit 24](#))
 - Amy Abott – Community Purchasing Alliance ([Exhibit 28](#))
 - Scott Borger – Breadcoin Foundation ([Exhibit 29](#))
 - Damiana Dendy – DC Jobs with Justice ([Exhibit 30](#))
 - Traci L. Hughes – All Souls Church Unitarian ([Exhibit 31](#))
 - Kate Urbank – Food Rescue US ([Exhibit 32](#))
 - Sophie Miyoshi – ROC-DC ([Exhibit 33](#))
 - Sarah Moore – L'Arche Greater Washington DC ([Exhibit 34](#))
 - Sara McGaughey, L.Ac – Little Bird Community Acupuncture ([Exhibit 35](#))
 - Richael Faithful Esq. – Richael Faithful Folk Healing & Healing Justice Practitioner ([Exhibit 36](#))
 - Laura Brown – First Shift Justice Project ([Exhibit 37](#))
 - Sara Gibson – 20 Degrees Unlocking Revenue for Social Innovation
 - Bill Mefford – The Festival Center ([Exhibit 39](#))
 - Mike Little – Faith and Money Network ([Exhibit 40](#))

PART III: DISAGGREGATED DATA REGARDING RACE AND ETHNICITY

Population Trends (Mid-City Planning Area)

- White residents remain the majority (50.5%), while Black (26.1%) and Hispanic (18%) populations have declined
- Growth in residents identifying as two or more races (3.1% to 9.26%)
- Median age decreased across all racial groups—except for American Indian and Alaskan Native residents—with the largest decrease observed among Black residents, from 46 to 39.9 years

Homeownership and Income Gaps

- Owner-occupancy increased slightly, but Black homeownership declined from 37.1% to 30.5%
- Black (\$46K+), Hispanic/Latino (\$87K+), and Native (\$37K+) populations have significantly lower incomes
- White households have the highest median income (\$160K+)

Seniors, Youth, and Disability

- The senior population is higher in the planning area (32.1%) than it is Districtwide (12.6%)
- The planning area has fewer children and lower disability rates than District average

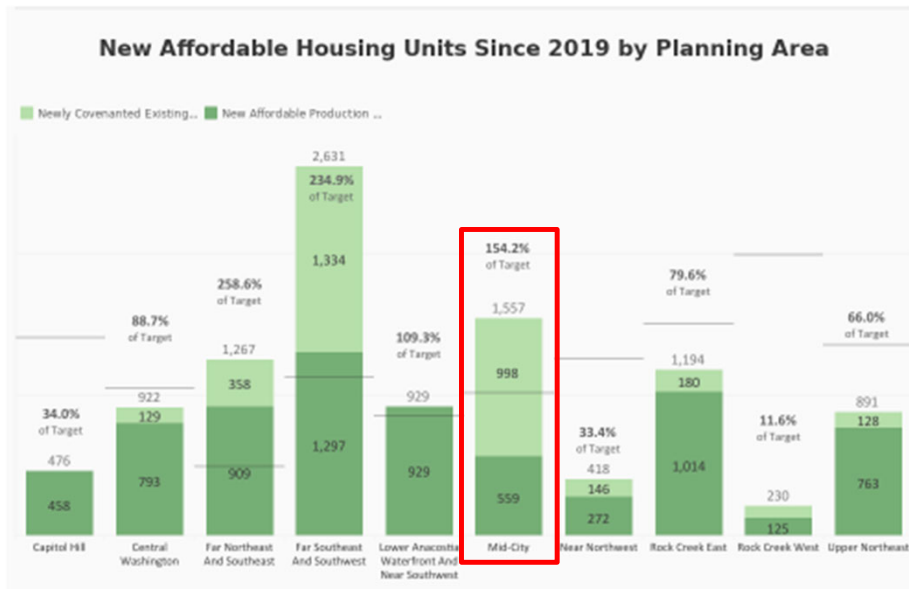
Equity Outcomes and Intersectionality

- Minority groups in Mid-City tend to be older, lower-income, and rent-burdened
- More affordable housing could attract and retain diverse residents, helping to improve the race and ethnic diversity of Mid-City

PART III: DISAGGREGATED DATA REGARDING RACE AND ETHNICITY HOUSING EQUITY GOALS

Housing Equity Report (2019)

- The Report presents goals for the future distribution of affordable housing units to be produced across the District's ten planning areas, ensuring each contributes an equitable share of affordable housing to the District's overall number of affordable units
- Planning area has an affordable housing production goal of **1,010 units** and a total housing production goal of **4,210 units**
- Has produced **1,557 affordable units**, or **154.2% of the target amount**
- Citywide affordable units has met **88%** of the target (12,000 by 2025)
- OP recommends that the map amendment be subject to IZ+



DMPED 36,000 by 2025 Dashboard as of January 2025

PART IV: ZONING COMMISSION EVALUATION

Indicator	Outcome
Direct Displacement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Displacement will not occur on the Property. The building is currently used by the church for church uses, which will be relocated upon redevelopment of the Property. There are no residential residents currently residing on the Property.
Indirect Displacement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential increase in permitted residential density can increase the supply of housing units, therefore contributing to a decrease in the cost of housing overall. Potential increase in residential density will result in the provision of IZ+, providing units affordable at various MFI levels.
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential increase in permitted residential density can increase the supply of housing units, therefore contributing to a decrease in the cost of housing overall. Increase in amount of housing that can be provided to households earning no more than 60% (rental) or 80% (ownership) MFI. 50% MFI units for any IZ set aside generated by penthouse habitable space. Increased potential for larger units due to gain in overall permitted density.
Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Located 0.2 miles from the Columbia Heights Metrorail station, which serves the Green Line and provides access to Metrobus routes 52, 54, 59, and H8. Redevelopment is likely to include improvement of pedestrian connectivity with streetscape enhancements as required by DDOT. Improved stormwater infrastructure as required for redevelopment of Property. Incorporate resiliency features into redevelopment. Future redevelopment and adaptive reuse of the building will adhere to applicable Building Code requirements and energy-efficient building systems and technologies.
Access to Opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased residential density can result in jobs related to office management and maintenance. Location of housing near public transit provides access to jobs. Increased employment during construction of new development. Location of housing near public transit provides access to jobs. Increased employment during construction of new development. The Property is in close proximity to public transit, including Metro stations and multiple bus lines, providing access to employment areas throughout the region. Increased density will grant more residents access to day-to-day needs and public transportation. Proximity to public schools, neighborhood library, parks, open space, recreation, and community center.
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ANC 1A issued letter unanimously supporting the map amendment provided that a traffic impact plan be provided (Exhibit 10). As requested by ANC, Applicant will prepare a traffic study as part of the building permitting process.

POTENTIAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN INCONSISTENCIES

Potential Inconsistency	Outweighing Policy
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• E-3.2.2: Net-Zero Buildings• E-3.2.3: Renewable Energy• T-1.1.8: Minimize Off-Street Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• FLUM• GPM• Policies in the Mid-City Area Element, Land Use, Transportation, Housing, and Environmental Protection Citywide Elements• Housing Equity Plan

CONCLUSION

- The map amendment is not inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan as viewed through a racial equity lens.
- Any potential inconsistencies with individual Comprehensive Plan policies are far outweighed by:
 - Consistency with the FLUM and GPM
 - Consistency with other competing Comprehensive Plan priorities relating to the Mid-City Area Element, and Land Use, Transportation, Housing, and Environmental Protection Citywide Elements
 - Housing Equity Report