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The Honorable Phil Mendelson

Executive Director
Marcel Acosta

IN REPLY REFER TO:
NCPC File No. ZC 24-16

July 11, 2025

Zoning Commission of the District of Columbia
2nd Floor
Suite 210
441 4th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Members of the Zoning Commission:

Pursuant to delegations of authority adopted by the Commission, I found that the proposed Proposed Map Amendment from RA-5 to ARTS-3 at Square 0210, Lot 0827 located at 1405 15th Street, NW, Washington, DC is not inconsistent with the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital* and would not adversely impact any other identified federal interests. A copy of the Delegated Action of the Executive Director is enclosed and available online at www.ncpc.gov/review/archive/2025/7/ as part of the July 2025 meeting materials.

Sincerely,



Marcel Acosta
Executive Director

Enclosures

cc: Anita Cozart, Director, DC Office of Planning



Delegated Action of the Executive Director

PROJECT	NCPC FILE NUMBER
Proposed Map Amendment from RA-5 to ARTS-3 at Square 0210, Lot 0827	ZC 24-16
1405 15th Street, NW Washington, DC	NCPC MAP FILE NUMBER 31.20(06.00)46036
SUBMITTED BY	ACTION TAKEN
Zoning Commission of the District of Columbia	Approval of report to the Zoning Commission
	REVIEW AUTHORITY
	Advisory Per 40 U.S.C. § 8724(a) and DC Code § 2-1006(a)

The Zoning Commission of the District of Columbia has submitted a proposed map amendment, Zoning Case (ZC) 24-16, to the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) for comment. The map amendment would rezone the subject property located at 1401-1405 15th Street NW (Square 0210, Lot 0827) in Washington, DC from the RA-5 zone to the ARTS-3 zone. The site is currently designated mixed-use medium-density residential and moderate-density commercial, a designation consistent with the ARTS-3 zone. The existing building is significant as it is the national memorial of the Reformed Church in the United States. The Washington congregation was established in 1868 and was located on the site since 1880. The property was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on April 18, 1991. The surrounding neighborhood contains a variety of moderate density residential row houses and apartment buildings, many of which predate the 1958 zoning regulations. Some buildings in the vicinity contain ground floor commercial space or are occupied by hotels.

The property is located on the east side of 15th Street, NW, and contains the Grace Reformed Church. The site has functioned as a church since it was first constructed but has been vacant since 2022. The property has been divided into two lots, Lots 839 and 840, and the ownership has changed from Central Atlantic Conference of the United Church of Christ to MR 1401 15th Street LLC. The property is located within the Greater Fourteenth Street Historic District and is within the Logan Circle neighborhood. The church is surrounded by high- to medium- density residential development to the west and south, with mixed-use development to the north along P Street, NW, and east along 14th Street, NW.

The ARTS-3 zone is intended to permit medium-density, mixed-use development, with a focus on employment. A religious-based use is permitted as a matter-of-right in both the RA-5 zone and the proposed ARTS-3 zone. The ARTS-3 zone currently exists adjacent to this site and is requested by the applicant as it allows a broader range of uses, including Arts, Design, and Creation, Eating and Drinking Establishments, and Retail, which increases the viability of adaptively reusing the historic but vacant structure and ensuring its preservation.

Rezoning applications consider only consistency with the Comprehensive Plan and do not include a specific development proposal. However, the applicant has stated that they propose to renovate the church for commercial uses, with the Parish House used for residential, which would not be inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan and can be accommodated on site under the proposed ARTS-3 zoning. The existing zoning of RA-F permits heights up to 90 feet, while the proposed zoning permits heights up to 65 feet (75 feet if IZ is included).

The Commission has a limited, advisory review over Zoning Commission referrals. The subject property is not located near any federal property with potential to be impacted by the map amendment. Further, federal property is not subject to local zoning. The historic preservation review process for any changes to the site or buildings will be addressed through the local review process. As such, the proposal does not adversely impact federal interests and it is not inconsistent with the Federal Elements of the *Comprehensive Plan of the National Capital*. NCPC has an advisory review of referrals from the Zoning Commission of the District of Columbia. As such, National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) reviews are not applicable.



Subject Property Street View Looking North, South and West Building Elevations



Subject Property Street View, West Building Elevations of Church and Parish House

Figure 1: Photographs of subject property, Reformed Church, on 15th Street, NW.



Figure 2: Zoning map showing subject property, Reformed Church, on 15th Street, NW.

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Pursuant to delegations of authority adopted by the Commission on March 6, 2025 and per 40 U.S.C. § 8724(a) and DC Code § 2-1006(a), I find the proposed map amendment to rezone 1401-1405 15th Street NW (Square 0210, Lot 0827), in Washington, D.C., from the RA-5 zone to the ARTS-3 zone would not be inconsistent with the federal elements of the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital* nor would it adversely impact any other identified federal interests.

Marcel Acosta
Executive Director

July 3, 2025

Date

Sent: Tuesday, July 8, 2025 12:42 PM
To: NCPC General Information <info@ncpc.gov>
Subject: Written Comments

Name: Christopher Moerman
Project Name: Proposed Map Amendment from RA-5 to ARTS-3 at Square 0210, Lot 0827
Project Number: ZC 24-16

To the Members of the National Capital Planning Commission,

I am writing to respectfully express my strong objection to the proposed redevelopment and commercialization of Grace Reformed Church, located in the heart of Washington, D.C.

This historic church is not only an architectural landmark, but also one of the few remaining presidential churches in our nation's capital. It was the spiritual home of President Theodore Roosevelt, who personally laid its cornerstone and worshipped there regularly. The sanctuary, which still houses Roosevelt's pew, stands as a unique and irreplaceable link between our civic and spiritual heritage. To re-zone this sacred space for commercial development would be to disregard its historical significance and diminish a vital piece of our shared national story.

It has been asserted that redevelopment is necessary due to a lack of willing or capable buyers. I must categorically refute this claim. My church, Grace Capital City, was prepared and ready to purchase the property, supported by a committed lender, a significant number of Roosevelt family members, and respected leaders across Washington's faith community. We were ready and willing to preserve and steward this site for its original purpose—as a house of worship and a place of public spiritual and historical value. The suggestion that no viable alternative existed is false, and it is deeply disappointing to see such a narrative used to justify what is, in effect, the erasure of a sacred landmark.

I urge the Commission to consider the long-term implications of this decision. Once sacred buildings of such national importance are repurposed or lost, they are gone forever. It is not merely a matter of land use—it is a question of legacy, stewardship, and respect for the history that has shaped our nation's capital.

I respectfully request that you vote against the proposed re-zoning and instead support the preservation of Grace Reformed Church for its original and intended purpose.

Sincerely,
Reverend Chris Moerman