ALL
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENT PROPOSALS

DISPOSITION RECOMMENDED

1/31/97

ZONING COMMISSION
CASE No. 96-14 C
EXHIBIT No. 37

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District of Columbia
CASE NO.96-14
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Proposed Amendment Submission ID Number: 96-049

Proposer: Office of Planning (OP)

Section: 1139 Generalized Land Use Map (Map 1)

Proposed Change: Add a new paragraph 1139.53 to read:

Both frontages of 16th Street, N.W. between Scott Circle, N.W. and H Street N.W., plus squares 182 and 196 (excluding the southeast quadrant of square 196) adjacent to and south of Scott Circle, N.W., are included in the mixed use medium-high density commercial high density residential land use designation.

Rationale: This amendment would better conform the land use designation to the existing scale and character of development and would better reflect public policies affecting this important street. The current designation of high density commercial implies a policy of rezoning to a significantly more dense commercial zone classification, followed by demolition and redevelopment with high density office buildings. This result would be unjustified for several reasons. First, there are no vacant sites in this area (other than the site of an approved planned unit development); thus, any new development requires demolition of existing, viable buildings and uses. Major office development should be directed to the numerous vacant and underutilized sites farther to the east in Downtown and in the North Capitol Street/Union Station area, where major new office development is permitted under zoning, encouraged by public policies and will be net new economic development.

Second, the existing development pattern has a number of positive attributes that should be generally retained and not replaced by other development. Existing buildings are in the range of 40 to 90 feet in height and medium to medium-high in density (floor area ratios of 2 to 5.5), whereas the existing high density commercial land use designation implies a zone classification with a matter-of-right density of 6.5 to 10 FAR. Existing buildings have a diverse character, including traditional as well as modern buildings, four hotels, institutional buildings such as the National Geographic and the Third Christian Science building at moderate density, rowhouse scale and midrise office buildings of a traditional design, large office buildings of modern design, and a large apartment building. The hotels and the apartment house should be retained rather than be encouraged to be replaced by major office buildings. The hotels (the Hay Adams, Capitol Hilton, Sheraton-Carlton and Jefferson) are significant Washington landmarks and are important elements in the city's hospitality and tourism industry.

Third, the public policy of maintaining 16th Street as a street of special character, rather than being a location suitable for development of general office buildings, is exemplified in several formal planning policies and designations. Sixteenth Street has symbolic importance in the L'Enfant Plan, since it is the major approach to the White House. Sixteenth Street acquired additional symbolic importance when it was designated as a Memorial Street in remembrance of those killed in World War I. This street is also designated a Special Street in the Comprehensive Plan of the National Capital. The applicable policies generally encourage a dignified, stately design and activity pattern. Finally, 16th Street is a Special Treatment Area in the Comprehensive Plan, with specific policies similar to those that apply to Special Streets.

The mixed use designation on the Generalized Land Use Map will help retain the existing mixed use (Special Purpose) zoning, which fits the needs of this important street quite well. Hotels and apartment houses are encouraged by having a greater permitted density than office and other permitted uses. Office development requires a compatibility review by the Board of Zoning Adjustment regarding the design relationship with nearby buildings, which is appropriate in view of the special character of the existing built environment. If a higher density office building is proposed, the desired process would be a planned unit development, so that the specific scale and design of the building can be evaluated in a public process. The proposed land use designation is not intended to imply that 16th Street is a historic district that should be substantially preserved "as is." Some gradual redevelopment will occur, but it should be carefully designed and subject to public review, given all of the cited above factors.

NOTE: All proposed text additions are in **boldface**; proposed text deletions are in ~~strikeout~~.

Analysis:	See rationale..
Recommendation:	Recommended for adoption.