

MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Zoning Commission

FROM: *JLS*
Jennifer Steingasser, Deputy Director

DATE: May 28, 2018

SUBJECT: Public Hearing Report for ZC #18-01- Grimke School Rezoning
Proposed zoning map amendment from RF-1 to ARTS-2 for the Grimke School property at 1925 Vermont Avenue, NW (Square 361, Lot 827)

I. RECOMMENDATION

Community Three Development requests a rezoning of the Grimke School property on Vermont Avenue from the RF-1 zone to the ARTS-2 zone. The proposal would not be inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan, including the Generalized Policy Map, the Future Land Use Map and the Plan’s written policies. The Office of Planning (OP), therefore, recommends that the Zoning Commission approve the requested map amendment.

II. BACKGROUND

The subject site is owned by the District, and development rights for the site were awarded to Community Three Development after the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development issued a request for proposals (RFP) for the site. While the site was then and is now zoned for residential uses, the RFP anticipated that the African American Civil War Museum (AACWM) would be maintained on the site, and that office and arts uses could also be potential uses, given the adjacent ARTS zoning and the mixed use Comprehensive Plan designation for this site. Community Three’s selected proposal includes a mix of museum, arts and office uses in the main school building, and housing on the site of the current gym.

The case was set down as a rulemaking case subject to the provisions of the Zoning Regulations, 11 DCMR Subtitle Z, Chapter 5.

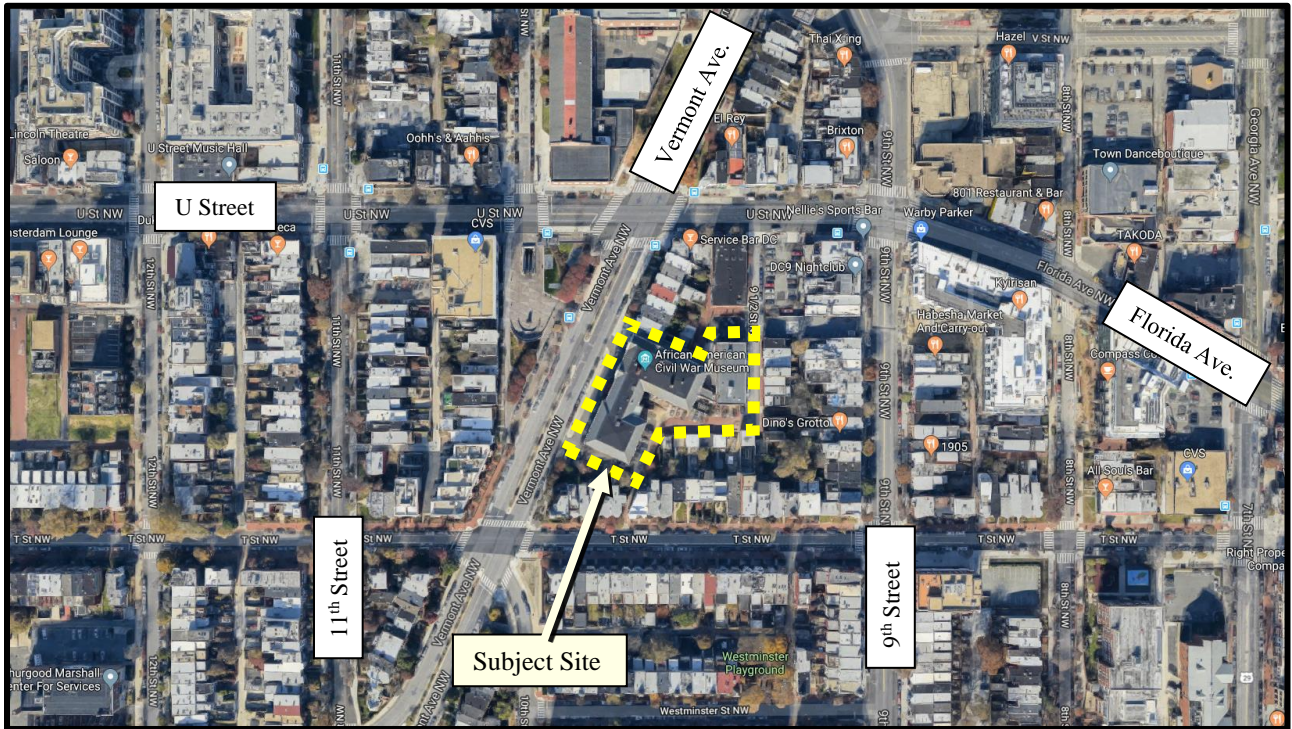
At the setdown meeting for the application, the Commission asked for a summary of the floor areas for different uses that would be included in the project facilitated by this remapping. That information is provided below, as summarized from Exhibits 1 and 11.

- Office – 30,000 sf	- 40 residential units
- AACWM – 11,000 sf	- 12 afford. (30% of res. floor area)
- Other cultural uses – 4,000 sf	- 6 @ 50% MFI, 6 @ 80% MFI

III. SITE AND AREA DESCRIPTION

The basic parameters of the site and its surroundings are described in the table below.

Address	1925 Vermont Avenue, NW (between T and U Streets)
Legal Description	Square 361, Lot 827
Site Area	37,926 sf (0.87 ac.)
Existing Development	The Grimke School site consists of the main school building and a rear gym. The main building has two full floors above ground, and one story partially below grade. See the front façade photo below. The main building is currently vacant but, after the school use was discontinued, was used for DC government offices. The gym at the rear of the site fronts on 9½ Street, the named public alley east of the site. The gym houses the African American Civil War Museum. See aerial photo below. The main building is contributing to the historic district and will be retained; The gym is non-contributing and will be demolished.
Existing Zoning	RF-1
Existing Allowable Uses	Residential (Rowhouses and flats)
Proposed Zoning	ARTS-2
Proposed Allowable Uses	Multifamily residential, arts, office, cultural
Historic Preservation	Contributing building in the U Street Historic District
Adjacent Development	
North	Rowhouses and an alley
East	9½ Street, a named public alley, with alley rowhouses on the east side of the alley
South	Rowhouses and an alley
West	Vermont Avenue, with the African American Civil War Memorial, the east entrance to the U Street metro, and rowhouses on the west side of Vermont
Surrounding Neighborhood Character	U Street and the immediately surrounding streets have a mix of retail, commercial, entertainment and multifamily residential uses. The surrounding neighborhoods are dominated by rowhouses. Howard University and Howard University Hospital are northeast of the site.
Comprehensive Plan Policy Map	Neighborhood Enhancement Area
Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map	Moderate Density Residential and Moderate Density Commercial mixed us



Aerial Photo of the Grimke School and Surrounding Neighborhood



Front façade of the Grimke School

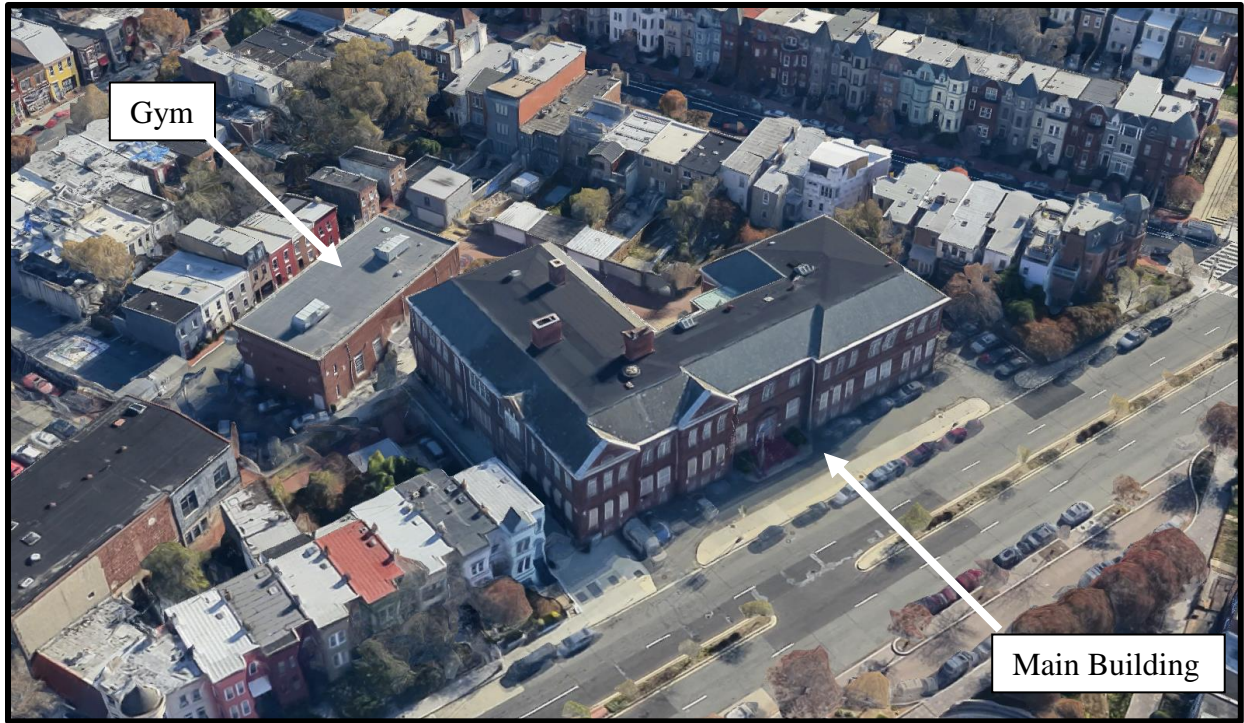
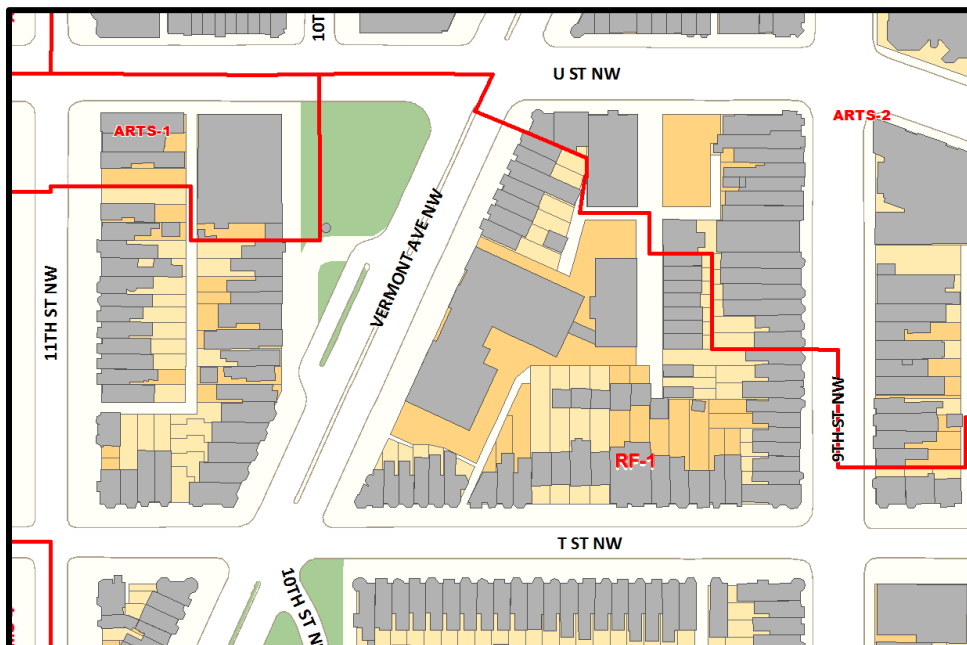


Image Copyright Google

Aerial Photo Looking Southeast

IV. ZONING

The site is currently zoned RF-1, along with many adjacent properties. Along its northeastern boundary the school site abuts the ARTS-2 zone. The applicant proposes to remap the site to ARTS-2. Please refer to the zoning map below, and a table on the next page comparing the parameters of the RF-1 and ARTS-2 zones.



Item	RF-1	ARTS-2
Height	35', 3 stories	65' 70' w/ IZ
FAR	Not regulated [1.8 effective FAR]	3.5 base FAR 4.5 max with bonuses
Lot Occupancy	60%	80%
Rear Yard	20'	15'
Uses	Primarily rowhouses and flats	Multifamily residential, arts, commercial

V. COMPREHENSIVE PLAN POLICIES

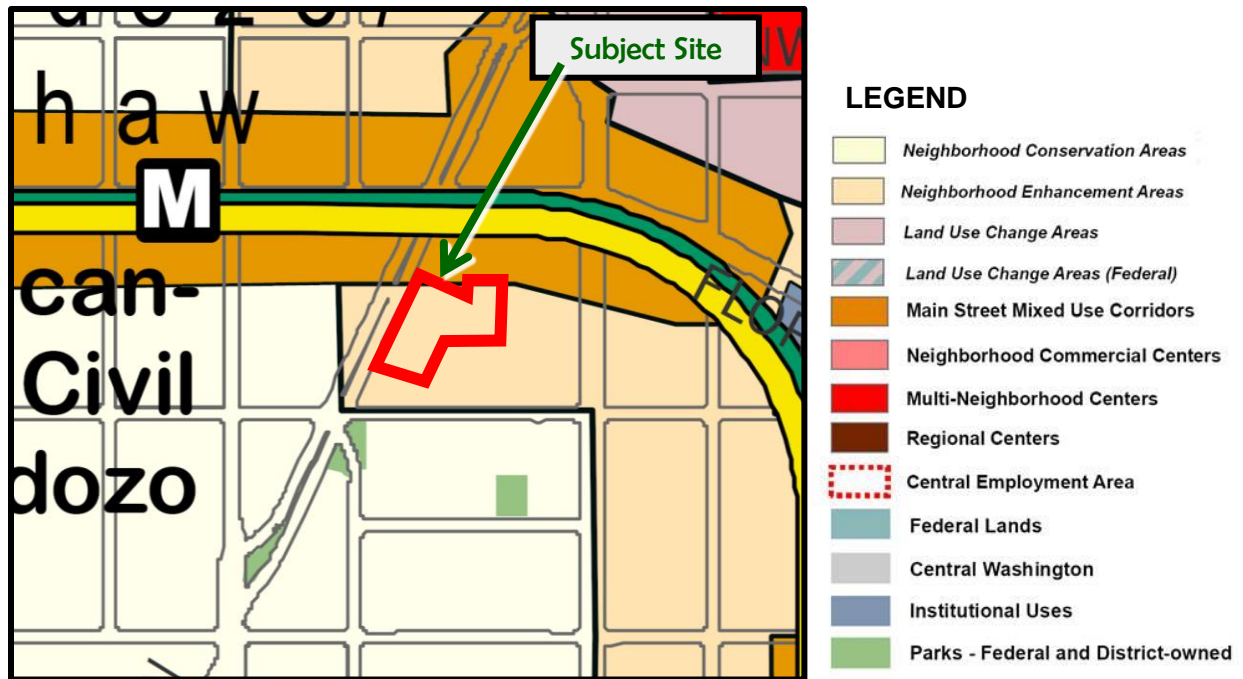
The proposed zone would allow development consistent with major policies from the Land Use, Housing, Economic Development, Historic Preservation, Arts and Culture and Mid-City elements. Please refer to OP's setdown report at Exhibit 9 for a complete examination of relevant policies.

VI. COMPREHENSIVE PLAN LAND USE MAPS

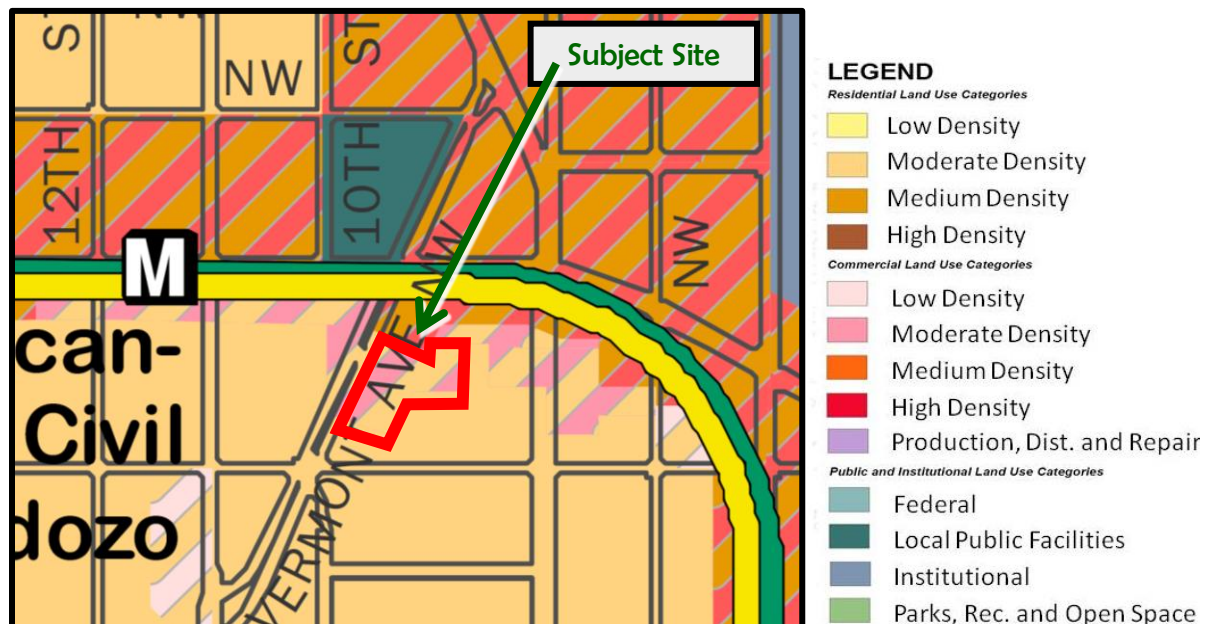
The Comprehensive Plan's Generalized Policy Map describes the subject site as part of a Neighborhood Enhancement Area, areas that are characterized as having potential for redevelopment of vacant land that "reflect the historical mixture and diversity of each community..." (Comprehensive Plan, § 223.6). The Comprehensive Plan goes on to state:

The guiding philosophy in Neighborhood Enhancement Areas is to ensure that new development "fits-in" and responds to the existing character, natural features, and existing/planned infrastructure capacity. New housing should be encouraged to improve the neighborhood and must be consistent with the land use designation on the Future Land Use Map. The unique and special qualities of each area should be maintained and conserved, and overall neighborhood character should be protected as development takes place. Publicly-owned open space within these areas should be preserved and enhanced to make these communities more attractive and desirable. (§ 223.7)

Finally, the Plan states that "New development in these areas should improve the real estate market, reduce crime and blight, and attract complementary new uses and services that better serve the needs of existing and future residents. (§ 223.8) The proposed zoning would facilitate the re-use of an underutilized, publicly owned site with additional housing and complementary commercial uses, while allowing new development on the site to fit in to the neighborhood. The proposed ARTS-2 zone, therefore, would not be inconsistent with the Neighborhood Enhancement Area designation.



The Future Land Use Map (FLUM) indicates that the site is appropriate for moderate density residential and moderate density commercial mixed use.



Moderate Density Residential is “used to define the District’s row house neighborhoods, as well as its low-rise garden apartment complexes. The designation also applies to areas characterized by a mix of single family homes, 2-4 unit buildings, row houses, and low-rise apartment buildings.” (Comprehensive Plan § 225.4)

Moderate Density Commercial is characterized by areas where “Retail, office, and service

businesses are the predominant uses. Areas with this designation range from small business districts that draw primarily from the surrounding neighborhoods to larger business districts that draw from a broader market area. Buildings are larger and/or taller than those in low density commercial areas but generally do not exceed five stories in height. The corresponding Zone districts are generally C-2-A, C-2-B, and C-3-A, although other districts may apply.” (ibid. § 225.9)

As seen in the preceding paragraph, the Comprehensive Plan refers to the zone nomenclature of the 1958 Regulations. What, under the 2016 Zoning Regulations is known as ARTS-2, was, under the 1958 Regulations called ARTS/C-2-B. The proposed zone is therefore consistent with the Future Land Use Map designation.

VII. DUKE PLAN

The Development Framework for a Cultural Destination District Within Washington, DC’s Greater Shaw / U Street (the DUKE Plan) was adopted by Council in 2005 and provides guidance for development in the 7th Street/Georgia Avenue and U Street/Florida Avenue commercial corridors, as well as immediately surrounding areas.

As specified in the DC Code, small area plans supplement the Comprehensive Plan by providing detailed direction for areas ranging in size from a few city blocks to entire neighborhoods or corridors. (Comprehensive Plan, § 104.8) The DUKE Plan includes several policies that generally support or specifically relate to the subject site, and those policies supplement and add specificity to the Comprehensive Plan. The proposed map amendment would not be inconsistent with the following policies.

The District of Columbia, other partner agencies, and private landholders have a unique opportunity to use public and private owned assets to leverage considerable community and citywide benefits within the Shaw/Howard University and U Street/African-American Civil War Memorial/Cardozo Metro station areas (p. 4)

The “African-American Civil War Memorial Sub-district” will be an active civic and cultural gateway to the Shaw community. The primary use within this section of the overall plan will be cultural uses and activities at which residents demonstrate the best in civic pride. (p. 28)

Relocate Fire/EMS and Corrections from Grimke. Consider an interpretive museum for the African-American Civil War Memorial and possibly other museum uses at Grimke School. (p. 29)

Allow for commercial, residential and/or cultural use of the Grimke School; properties between Grimke School and the southeast corner of the intersection of U Street and Vermont Avenue; properties on the south of U Street on the 900 block and properties on the 1900 block of 9th Street. In doing so, be mindful of the historic preservation regulations which also impact these properties and that some residential and mixed uses properties are currently within residential or light manufacturing zones. Continue to require retail in

properties fronting on U Street and 9th Street. (p. 37)

Designate the Grimke School for adaptive reuse to include among other uses facilities for an interpretive museum for the African American Civil War Memorial and its Foundation, a welcoming and orientation center for visitors to the area, and potentially other cultural facilities (e.g., the Black Fashion Museum); initiate a design and programming study to determine capacity and feasibility; and implement. (p. 42)

JS/mrj