

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** District of Columbia Zoning Commission

**FROM:** Anne Fothergill, Development Review Specialist  
*JL for* Jennifer Steingasser, Deputy Director, Development Review and Historic Preservation

**DATE:** December 2, 2019

**SUBJECT:** **OP Report for ZC #19-20, Voluntary Design Review for Georgetown University at 55 H Street, N.W. (Square 0622, Lot 0093)**

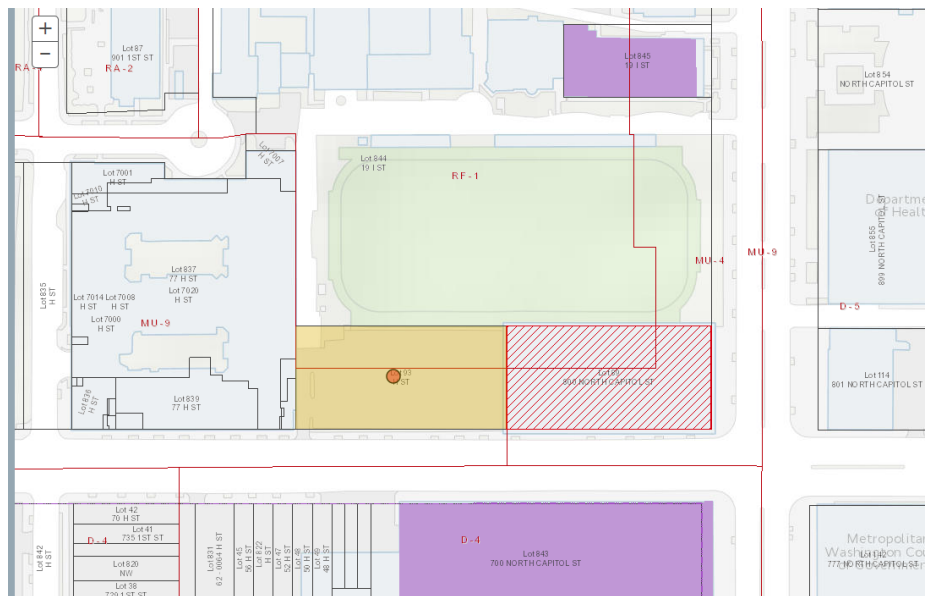
**I. RECOMMENDATION**

The Office of Planning (OP) recommends **approval** of the Voluntary Design Review application for 55 H Street, N.W. (Square 0622, Lot 0093), requested pursuant to 11 DCMR Subtitle X § 601.2. OP also recommends **approval** of the requested flexibility and Special Exception relief.

OP recommends that, if approved, there be a condition in the Order reflecting that should the building or a portion of the building no longer be used as a student residence hall exclusively for Georgetown University students, IZ requirements at the time of conversion to residential use would apply.

**II. SITE AND AREA DESCRIPTION**

The subject property is located at 55 H Street NW, which is mid-block between North Capitol Street and First Street NW on the northern side of the block. The 33,040 square feet (0.76 acres) site is currently a surface parking lot. Abutting the site are an office building to the east, an apartment building with retail to the west, and Gonzaga College High School’s athletic fields to the north. Across H Street to the south is the Government Printing Office building and surface parking. The Property is approximately 2 ½ blocks northwest of Union Station. There are two easements on the property along the east and west sides of the site - a 20-foot wide easement on the west side for an existing private alley that provides Gonzaga High School with access to its campus from H Street and a 5-foot easement on the east side between the site and the abutting building.



### **III. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The Applicant proposes to construct an 11-story U-shaped building for Georgetown University student housing. The 214,744 SF building would be 107 feet tall plus a habitable penthouse, as permitted by the voluntary design review process. The proposed FAR is 6.5 with a lot occupancy of 60%. The student residence hall would have approximately 158 units, containing a total of approximately 476 beds. The main entrances to both the residential and retail uses would be located on H Street toward the east and west sides of the building.

The ground floor of the building would include approximately 6,000 square feet of lobby and amenity space, approximately 2,000 square feet of retail space, and additional square footage for offices and support space. Also on the ground floor level, the Applicant is proposing three indoor parking spaces accessed from the west side alley and through the loading area. Adjacent to the loading/parking area would be 100 long-term bicycle parking spaces and the trash room. There would be 14 short-term bicycle parking space near the front entrances of the building on H Street. The front sidewalk would be exposed aggregate concrete matching the material and pattern of the existing sidewalk to the west and the existing street trees along H Street would remain.

On the second through eleventh floors, the building would have approximately 99 four-bedroom units, 2 three-bedroom units, 16 two-bedroom units, 10 one-bedroom units, and 30 studios with common spaces and communal kitchens. There would be a habitable penthouse with residents' amenity space including a fitness center and a student lounge.

For building materials on the H Street front façade, at the ground level there would be double-height metal windows flanked by red brick columns and the corners of the building would be red brick. There would be a terra cotta rain screen across floors three through nine and vertical solar panels on the top two floors of the south-facing elevation. The metal windows on the front façade would have small metal sun screen awnings and the two front entrances would have metal canopies with building identity signage of 24" stainless steel lettering. The side and rear elevations would also have red brick, terra cotta panels, and metal windows.

The building would be set back from the western property line due to the easement for the existing alley. The alley would be used for vehicles and bicycles to access the building's parking and loading area. At the west side corner of the building, there would be a ten foot inset at the entrance to the retail space. On the east side, the building would extend to the east side of the site until the five foot easement restriction. At the east side entry to the residential building, the front façade would be set back 12 feet from the sidewalk and the eastern wing would have the front setback for 51 feet. This section of the eastern side of the building would be 28 foot deep and would have no windows on the east side. The remainder of the east side of the building would provide a 29 foot east side setback.

There would be two courtyards for residents— one in the U-shaped area behind the building and one along the east side of the building behind the 31 foot wide eastern section of the building. The building would have approximately 5,500 SF of green roofs and 3,000 SF of solar panels on the roof. The Applicant intends to achieve LEED Gold certification.

The Applicant will provide building material samples at the Public Hearing.

#### IV. ZONING ANALYSIS

The following table compares the proposal to the MU-9 zone requirements:

	<b>Zone: MU-9</b>	<b>Proposal</b>	<b>Relief</b>
<b>Lot Area</b>	N/A	33,040 SF	N/A
<b>Height</b>	90 feet	107'0" (zoning) 110' (Height Act)	Flexibility requested pursuant to DCMR 11 Subtitle X §603.1
<b>Penthouse Height</b>	20'	20' (max)	N/A
<b>Residential Units</b>	N/A	158 units/476 beds (flexibility requested to vary final counts +/-10%)	N/A
<b>Floor Area Ratio</b>	6.5	6.5	N/A
<b>Lot Occupancy</b>	N/A	~ 60 %	N/A
<b>Rear Yard</b>	23' (2.5" per 1' of vertical distance from grade to the highest point of main roof or parapet wall, but not less than 12')	0'	Flexibility requested pursuant to DCMR 11 Subtitle X §603.1
<b>Side Yard</b>	18'4" (if a side yard is provided must be at least 2" for each 1' of height of building, but not less than 5')	West: 18'8" East: Varies, minimum of 5'	Flexibility requested pursuant to DCMR 11 Subtitle X §603.1
<b>Gross Floor Area</b>	214,760 sf	214,744 sf	N/A
<b>Vehicle Parking</b>	<u>Residential:</u> 26 spaces (1 per 3 units in excess of 4 units/2)  <u>Retail:</u> N/A (not required for less than 10,000 sf)	<u>Residential:</u> 0  <u>Retail:</u> 0	<u>Residential:</u> Special exception requested to allow 0 zoning-compliant parking spaces  <u>Retail:</u> N/A
<b>Bicycle Parking</b>	<u>Residential:</u> Short Term: 8 Long Term: 52  <u>Retail:</u> Short Term: 1 Long Term: N/A (not required for less than 10,000 sf of retail)	<u>Residential:</u> Short Term: 12 Long Term: 100  <u>Retail:</u> Short Term: 2 Long Term: 0	N/A  N/A
<b>Loading</b>	<u>Residential:</u> 1 berth, 1 delivery space  <u>Retail:</u> n/a (not required if under 5,000 sf, if building has 2 or more uses, uses may share loading)	<u>Residential:</u> 1 berth, 1 delivery space  <u>Retail:</u> 0 berth, 0 delivery space	N/A  N/A
<b>Green Area Ratio</b>	0.2	0.2 (min)	N/A

## A. Design Review Flexibility

The application for Voluntary Design Review includes a request pursuant to Subtitle X § 603.1 for flexibility to allow additional height and relief from the rear yard and side yard requirements.

*603.1 As part of the design review process, the Zoning Commission may grant relief from the development standards for height, setbacks, lot occupancy, courts, and building transitions; as well as any specific design standards of a specific zone. The design review process shall not be used to vary other building development standards including FAR, Inclusionary Zoning, or green area ratio.*

*603.2 Except for height, the amount of relief is at the discretion of the Zoning Commission, but provided that the relief is required to enable the applicant to meet all of the standards of Subtitle X § 604. The Zoning Commission may grant no greater height than that permitted if the application were for a PUD.*

*603.3 An application for a special exception or variance that would otherwise require the approval of the Board of Zoning Adjustment may be heard simultaneously with a design review application, and shall be subject to all applicable special exception criteria and variance standards and the payment of all applicable fees.*

The Applicant has requested flexibility from the development standards for height, rear yard, and side yard setbacks.

In terms of the additional height request, the Zoning regulations state that as part of the voluntary design review process, the “Zoning Commission may grant no greater height than that permitted if the application were for a PUD.” The proposed height of 107 feet is within the allowed 130 foot height limit for the MU-9 zone with a PUD and within the 110 foot Height Act limit. The requested additional height would allow for more flexibility in the building design to accommodate the interior student residential and programmatic needs and the desired large outdoor communal spaces.

The rear yard flexibility allows for the U-shaped building design with two wings that extend further back on the site around a central courtyard. The rear walls of the building would abut open playing fields for the adjacent high school and not be in close proximity to another building and, as such, would not adversely affect an abutting property’s light or air.

Because of the five foot easement along the east side property line, a minimum 18’4” side yard is required for this site but compliance with that setback would create a sizable undesired gap in the streetscape. The requested east side yard flexibility allows the building to be designed to maintain a consistent street wall along H Street. However, relief is only needed for a 28 foot section of the building on the east side. The back 86 feet of the east side of the building would be set back at least 24 feet from the property line and compliant with the side yard requirements, providing light and air between buildings.

The Office of Planning recommends approval of the requested flexibility for the height and side and rear yard setbacks.

## **B. Additional Flexibility**

The Applicant has requested additional flexibility:

- a. To vary the location and design of all interior components, including partitions, structural slabs, doors, hallways, columns, stairways, mechanical rooms, and toilet rooms, provided that the variations do not change the exterior configuration or appearance of the structure;
- b. To vary the colors of the exterior materials based on availability at the time of construction, provided such colors are within the color ranges proposed in the Final Plans;
- c. To make minor refinements to the locations and dimensions of exterior details that do not substantially alter the exterior design shown on the Final Plans. Examples of exterior details would include, but are not limited to, doorways, canopies, railings, and skylights;
- d. To provide a range in the approved number of dwelling units and number of beds of plus or minus ten percent (10%);
- e. To vary the location, attributes, and general design of the approved streetscape and public space to comply with the requirements of, and the approval by, the DDOT Public Space Division;
- f. To vary the final streetscaping and landscaping materials on private property as shown on the Final Plans based on availability and suitability at the time of construction or otherwise in order to satisfy any permitting requirements of DC Water, DDOT, DOEE, DCRA, or other applicable regulatory bodies;
- g. To vary the amount, location and type of green roof, solar panels, bioretention areas, paved areas, and affected amenity spaces to meet stormwater requirements and sustainability goals or otherwise satisfy permitting requirements, so long as the Project achieves a minimum GAR of 0.2, and provides a minimum of 3,000 square feet of solar panels;
- h. To vary the final design and layout of the mechanical penthouse to accommodate changes to comply with Construction Codes or address the structural, mechanical, or operational needs of the building uses or systems;
- i. To vary the final design and layout of the indoor and outdoor amenity spaces to reflect their final design and programming, including the type and design of the shading structures located in the interior courtyards;
- j. To vary the final design of the ground floor signage, awnings, canopies, and similar features, to accommodate the specific uses within the building.

While many of the above flexibility requests are in keeping with the Zoning Commission's standard flexibility, areas (f), (h), (i), and (j) are not. Additionally, area (d), housing, is slightly different than the standard flexibility language since it is not related to the non-affordable units but that would not be applicable. Area (g), sustainability, is different than the standard flexibility in its specific requests.

Recently, the Zoning Commission approved the following flexibility in ZC 19-05, and that approved language below may be appropriate for this application:

In lieu of (f) above:

Streetscape Design: To vary the location, attributes, and general design of the approved streetscape to comply with the requirements of, and the approval by, the DDOT Public Space Division.

In lieu of (g) above:

Sustainable Features: To vary the approved sustainable features of the project, provided the total number of LEED points achievable for the project does not decrease below the minimum required for the LEED standard specified by the order.

In lieu of (j) above:

Signage: To vary the font, message, logo, and color of the approved signage, provided that the maximum overall dimensions and signage materials are consistent with the signage on the plans approved by the order and are compliant with the DC signage regulations.

This standard language is specific for signage only and does not allow flexibility for the awnings and canopies.

### **C. Special Exception Relief**

As part of this application, the Applicant requests special exception relief from Subtitle C §701.5, from the required number of parking spaces for a multiple dwelling unit residential use, pursuant to Subtitle C § 703.2. An application for a special exception that would otherwise require the approval of the Board of Zoning Adjustment may be heard simultaneously with a design review application, pursuant to Subtitle X § 603.3.

*703.2 The Board of Zoning Adjustment may grant a full or partial reduction in number of required parking spaces, subject to the general special exception requirements of Subtitle X, and the applicant's demonstration of at least one (1) of the following:*

*(a) Due to the physical constraints of the property, the required parking spaces cannot be provided either on the lot or within six hundred feet (600 ft.) of the lot in accordance with Subtitle C § 701.8;*

*(b) The use or structure is particularly well served by mass transit, shared vehicle, or bicycle facilities;*

*(c) Land use or transportation characteristics of the neighborhood minimize the need for required parking spaces;*

*(d) Amount of traffic congestion existing or which the parking for the building or structure would reasonably be expected to create in the neighborhood;*

*(e) The nature of the use or structure or the number of residents, employees, guests, customers, or clients who would reasonably be expected to use the proposed building or structure at one time would generate demand for less parking than the minimum parking standards;*

*(f) All or a significant proportion of dwelling units are dedicated as affordable housing units;*

*(g) Quantity of existing public, commercial, or private parking, other than onstreet parking, on the property or in the neighborhood, that can reasonably be expected to be available when the building or structure is in use;*

*(h) The property does not have access to an open public alley, resulting in the only means by which a motor vehicle could access the lot is from an improved public street and either:*

*(1) A curb cut permit for the property has been denied by the District Department of Transportation; or*

*(2) Any driveway that could access an improved public street from the property would violate any regulation of this chapter, of the parking provisions of any other subtitle in the Zoning Regulations, or of Chapters 6 or 11 of Title 24 DCMR;*

*(i) The presence of healthy and mature canopy trees on or directly adjacent to the property; or*

*(j) The nature or location of a historic resource precludes the provision of parking spaces; or providing the required parking would result in significant architectural or structural difficulty in maintaining the integrity and appearance of the historic resource.*

*703.3 Any reduction in the required number of parking spaces shall be only for the amount that the applicant is physically unable to provide, and shall be proportionate to the reduction in parking demand demonstrated by the applicant.*

*703.4 Any request for a reduction in the minimum required parking shall include a transportation demand management plan approved by the District Department of Transportation, the implementation of which shall be a condition of the Board of Zoning Adjustment's approval.*

For this development proposal, the Applicant is requesting relief from the 26-space parking requirement. The building would have three parking spaces, but these parking spaces would be accessed across and through the loading spaces, which makes them not compliant with the zoning regulations so technically the Applicant is proposing zero parking spaces. The proposal would meet criteria (b) and (e) above since the building would be residences for students and located in a transit-oriented downtown location.

The proposed building is centrally located and well served by mass transit. The building would be located less than three blocks from the metro at Union Station with easy access to multiple bus lines, car and bike sharing, and the University provides shuttle services for students. The proposed student

housing use should not create a significant demand for parking since the majority of students living in the building would not own vehicles. If a student living in the building was to have a vehicle, the University has stated that they would assist the student in securing off-site parking.

Per Section 703.4, the Applicant has proposed a transportation demand management program that will be reviewed by DDOT (see Exhibit 9D).

The requested parking relief would be consistent with the purpose and intent of the zoning regulations and should not have an adverse effect on the use of neighboring properties. The Office of Planning finds the proposal meets the special exception review criteria and recommends approval of the requested relief from the parking requirements.

## **V. DESIGN REVIEW STANDARDS**

### *Subtitle X*

**604.1** *The Zoning Commission will evaluate and approve or disapprove a design review application subject to this chapter according to the standards of this section and for Non-Voluntary Design Reviews subject to this chapter according to the standards stated in the provisions that require Zoning Commission review.*

**604.2** *For non-voluntary design review, the application must also meet the requirements of the provisions that mandated Zoning Commission approval.*

The subject application is for Voluntary Design Review.

**604.3** *The applicant shall have the burden of proof to justify the granting of the application according to these standards.*

**604.4** *The applicant shall not be relieved of the responsibility of proving the case by a preponderance of the evidence, even if no evidence or arguments are presented in opposition to the case.*

The Statement in Support (Exhibit 2) is the Applicant's submission of evidence to prove the case.

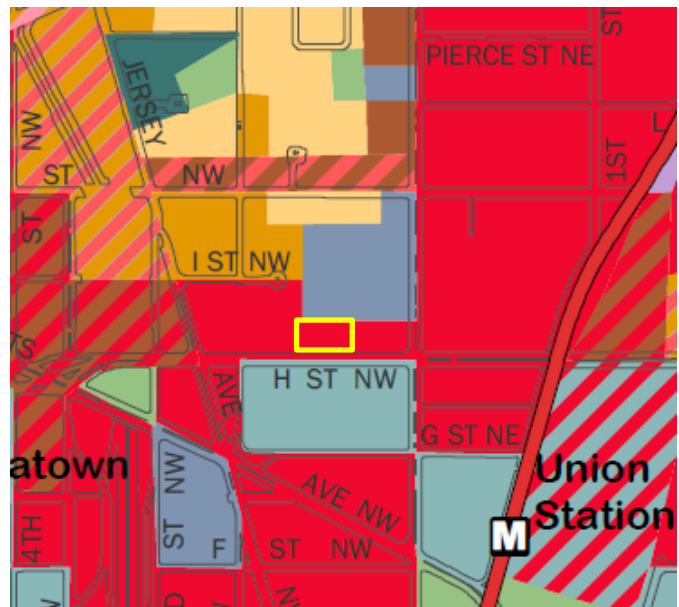
**604.5** *The Zoning Commission shall find that the proposed design review development is not inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan and with other adopted public policies and active programs related to the subject site.*

The proposed development is not inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan's General Policy Map and the Future Land Use Map and various policies of the Citywide Elements and the Central Washington Area Element. The project is also not inconsistent with guidance found in the NOMA Vision Plan & Development Strategy, which was adopted by the DC Council in 2009 as the Small Area Plan. Analysis of the Comprehensive Plan's Citywide and Area Elements as well as the Small Area Plan can be found in the Appendix.



### Future Land Use Map

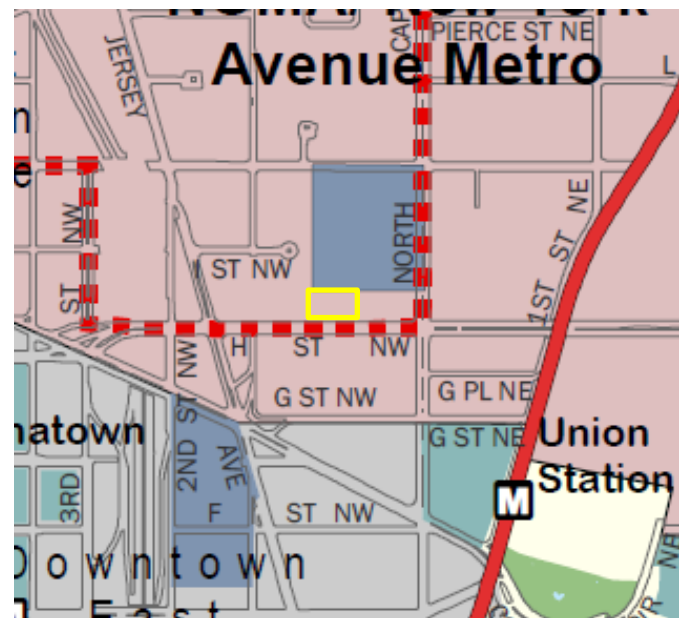
The Future Land Use Map (“FLUM”) designates the Property as appropriate **high density commercial**, which is also typified by high density residential and mixed use buildings. The current zoning for the subject property is MU-9 (formerly C-3-C), which is a mixed use zone, and the Applicants are not proposing a map amendment for this property.



### Generalized Policy Map

The Generalized Policy Map places the subject property within a Land Use Change Area, where change to a different land use from what exists today is anticipated. The proposed development is not inconsistent with the goals of the Land Use Change Area designation as it will involve the redevelopment of a currently underutilized surface parking lot with an infill building and new housing and retail uses.

Additional Comprehensive Plan analysis related to specific Citywide and Area Elements as well as the 2006 NOMA Vision Plan & Development Strategy can be found in the Appendix.



**604.6 The Zoning Commission shall find that the proposed design review development will not tend to affect adversely the use of neighboring property and meets the general special exception criteria of Subtitle X, Chapter 9.**

The proposed development would not have an adverse effect on the use of neighboring property and is in keeping with the general purpose and intent of the zoning regulations. The MU-9 zone is a high-density zone that permits residential, commercial, and other uses, including multiple dwelling residential buildings and university uses.

The proposed building will reflect the scale and density of the surrounding buildings. The building would be within the 6.5 FAR limit and have 60% lot occupancy, well below the 100% maximum that is allowed in the zone. The proposed building would fill in a gap in the streetwall along H Street but would be set back from the abutting buildings to the east and west providing light and air and privacy to those buildings. There would be ample space between the new building and the building to the north, located across the open playing fields, and that property owner would continue to have access to the west side alley. The development would maintain the two existing side easements and would not adversely affect those easement holders and the use of those neighboring properties.

**604.7 *The Zoning Commission shall review the urban design of the site and the building for the following criteria:***

**(a) *Street frontages are designed to be safe, comfortable, and encourage pedestrian activity, including:***

- (1) *Multiple pedestrian entrances for large developments;***
- (2) *Direct driveway or garage access to the street is discouraged;***
- (3) *Commercial ground floors contain active uses with clear, inviting windows;***
- (4) *Blank facades are prevented or minimized; and***
- (5) *Wide sidewalks are provided;***

The proposed design of the building and site would encourage safe and engaged pedestrian activity. The building's two main entry points are from H Street NW and easily accessed by foot. There would be vehicle access through the existing alley along the west side of the building and no new curb cuts are proposed. The ground floor retail use and building lobby would have large windows that should be clear and inviting and pedestrians can see into and through the building. The Applicant proposes to mimic the material and design of the sidewalks to the west for continuity along H Street.

**(b) *Public gathering spaces and open spaces are encouraged, especially in the following situations:***

- (1) *Where neighborhood open space is lacking;***
- (2) *Near transit stations or hubs; and***
- (3) *When they can enhance existing parks and the waterfront;***

The Applicant proposes courtyards at the rear and side of the building for residents to use. These would not be public gathering spaces but they would provide open and green spaces for the enjoyment of many new residents living in a dense urban neighborhood. The building would also have interior common spaces for residents to gather. The sidewalk would have street trees along the width of the front façade of the building.

**(c) *New development respects the historic character of Washington's neighborhoods, including:***

- (1) ***Developments near the District's major boulevards and public spaces should reinforce the existing urban form;***
- (2) ***Infill development should respect, though need not imitate, the continuity of neighborhood architectural character; and***
- (3) ***Development should respect and protect key landscape vistas and axial views of landmarks and important places;***

The proposed infill building replaces an incompatible surface parking lot with a visually interesting building that respects the character of the neighborhood and the architecture of surrounding buildings, both recent construction and historic. The proposed building does not imitate the neighborhood architectural character but maintains and respects it with a compatible infill design, large windows, red brick and other compatible materials, an articulated façade with multiple projections and recessions, and overall helps to provide an active streetscape and continuous streetwall.

***(d) Buildings strive for attractive and inspired façade design, including:***

- (1) ***Reinforce the pedestrian realm with elevated detailing and design of first (1st) and second (2nd) stories; and***
- (2) ***Incorporate contextual and quality building materials and fenestration;***

The proposed building has strived for an attractive and inspired façade design incorporating contextual and compatible building materials that draw from other buildings but also bring new quality materials to the block. The fenestration pattern is also contextual with a high level of glazing on the front façade and sun screens above the windows providing a projecting visual and functional feature. The pedestrian experience will be enhanced by large windows along H Street with visibility through the building and brick piers between the windows that offer a change in texture of the building when viewed from the sidewalk.

***(e) Sites are designed with sustainable landscaping; and***

The Applicant proposes sustainable landscaping throughout the site including courtyards that function as bio-retention areas and green roofs. The project is expected to be certified LEED Gold.

***(f) Sites are developed to promote connectivity both internally and with surrounding neighborhoods, including:***

- (1) ***Pedestrian pathways through developments increase mobility and link neighborhoods to transit;***
- (2) ***The development incorporates transit and bicycle facilities and amenities;***
- (3) ***Streets, easements, and open spaces are designed to be safe and pedestrian friendly;***
- (4) ***Large sites are integrated into the surrounding community through street and pedestrian connections; and***

**(5) *Waterfront development contains high quality trail and shoreline design as well as ensuring access and view corridors to the waterfront.***

The Applicant proposes site and building design that would promote connectivity internally and with the neighborhood and city. The building would complete the street wall, which would enhance the pedestrian connections. Vehicles will access the building from the existing alley along the west side of the building and no new curb cuts are proposed. The pedestrian entrances to the building are off H Street NW. The building would have 100 long-term bicycle parking spaces and 14 short-term bicycle parking spaces to accommodate residents, staff and visitors who choose to travel by bike. The large windows on the ground floor for the entire width of the building would enhance the pedestrian experience. Overall, the Applicant proposes to replace a surface parking lot with a visually interesting building that maintains the existing easements and enhances the pedestrian experience on the block.

***604.8 The Zoning Commission shall find that the criteria of Subtitle X § 604.7 are met in a way that is superior to any matter-of-right development possible on the site.***

The proposed project would result in a development that would be superior to a matter-of-right development on the site. The Applicant designed the site and building with consideration of the surrounding neighbors as reflected in the setbacks, fenestration, massing, materials and overall site and building design. Additionally, the Applicant intends to achieve LEED Gold certification, which is well above a matter of right project and would fulfill a primary goal of sustainability for the District.

The proposed building has a number of quality materials and front façade articulation that are superior to a standard building. The front façade along H Street would have a terra cotta rain screen that wraps the middle portions of the building and breaks up the window rhythm and provides additional articulation. The building was designed to relate visually to the adjacent buildings. The lower edge of the rain screen would align with the base of the buildings to the east and west, the upper edge of the rain screen would align with the height of the apartment building to the west, and the cornice would align with the lower cornice of the eastern office building.

The site design shows a large central landscaped courtyard at the rear of the building as well as another courtyard along the east side of the property, which would provide open space for residents and bioretention areas that contribute to the development's sustainability goals.

At the ground level, the significant amount of glazing in the pedestrian-oriented double-height windows complements the ground-level design of the surrounding buildings. The front of the building would be designed to allow visibility through the building to the rear courtyards, providing views of green space from the front of the building and creating a connected and open street-level atmosphere. The side and rear elevations also have brick, which is in keeping with the architectural character of surrounding buildings to the west, east, and north.

The roof of the building would have environmentally sustainable design features, including vegetative roof areas and photovoltaic panels. The upper portion of the front façade also has solar panels on the south-facing exposure.

## **VI. AGENCY COMMENTS**

DOEE provided comments to OP on the positive aspects of the project including the LEED v4 Gold certification, the courtyards serving as bio-retention areas, solar panels and green roofs. DOEE indicated that they would not be filing a report.

DDOT indicated they would be filing a separate report including a review of the Applicant's TDM plan. No comments from other agencies were received by OP or filed to the record as of the date of the filing of this report.

## **VII. COMMUNITY COMMENTS**

No community comments had been filed to the record at the time of this report.

## **VIII. APPENDIX**

### **A. Comprehensive Plan Detailed Analysis**

JLS/af

## APPENDIX A – Comprehensive Plan Analysis

### A. Citywide Elements

#### Land Use Element

**Policy LU-1.1.5: Urban Mixed Use Neighborhoods:** Encourage new central city mixed use neighborhoods combining high-density residential, office, retail, cultural, and open space uses in the following areas:

1. Mt Vernon Triangle;
2. North of Massachusetts Avenue (NoMA);
3. Downtown East;
4. South Capitol Street corridor/Stadium area;
5. Near Southeast/Navy Yard;
6. Center Leg Freeway air rights; and
7. Union Station air rights.

The location of these areas is shown in the Central Washington and Lower Anacostia Waterfront/Near Southwest Area Elements. Land use regulations and design standards for these areas should ensure that they are developed as attractive pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods, with high-quality architecture and public spaces. Housing, including affordable housing, is particularly encouraged and should be a vital component of the future land use mix.

**Policy LU-1.3.2: Development Around Metrorail Stations:** Concentrate redevelopment efforts on those Metrorail station areas which offer the greatest opportunities for infill development and growth, particularly stations in areas with weak market demand, or with large amounts of vacant or poorly utilized land in the vicinity of the station entrance. Ensure that development above and around such stations emphasizes land uses and building forms which minimize the necessity of automobile use and maximize transit ridership while reflecting the design capacity of each station and respecting the character and needs of the surrounding areas.

**Policy LU-1.4.1: Infill Development:** Encourage infill development on vacant land within the city, particularly in areas where there are vacant lots that create “gaps” in the urban fabric and detract from the character of a commercial or residential street. Such development should complement the established character of the area and should not create sharp changes in the physical development pattern.

**Policy LU-1.4.2: Long-Term Vacant Sites:** Facilitate the reuse of vacant lots that have historically been difficult to develop due to infrastructure or access problems, inadequate lot dimensions, fragmented or absentee ownership, or other constraints. Explore lot consolidation, acquisition, and other measures which would address these constraints.

**Policy LU-2.2.4: Neighborhood Beautification:** Encourage projects which improve the visual quality of the District’s neighborhoods, including landscaping and tree planting, façade improvement, anti-litter campaigns, graffiti removal, improvement or removal of abandoned buildings, street and sidewalk repair, and park improvements.

**Policy LU-3.2.2: Corporate Citizenship:** Support continued “corporate citizenship” among the city’s large institutions, including its colleges, universities, hospitals, private schools, and nonprofits. Given the large land area occupied by these uses and their prominence in the community, the city’s institutions (along with the District

*itself) should be encouraged to be role models for smaller employers in efforts to improve the city's physical environment. This should include a continued commitment to high quality architecture and design on local campuses, expanded use of "green building" methods and low impact development, and the adaptive reuse and preservation of historic buildings.*

The proposal is not inconsistent with the Land Use policies. The proposal will redevelop a surface parking lot site with an infill development that closes the gap in the streetwall. The proposed student residential and retail uses are located in a targeted urban mixed use neighborhood where mixed use development is encouraged. The proposed building will provide student housing near a metrorail station with no parking provided on site and an intent for residents to use transit. The proposal would support a local university's housing needs and their commitment to high quality architecture green building technologies.

### **Housing Element**

***Policy H-1.1.3: Balanced Growth:*** *Strongly encourage the development of new housing on surplus, vacant and underutilized land in all parts of the city. Ensure that a sufficient supply of land is planned and zoned to enable the city to meet its long-term housing needs, including the need for low- and moderate-density single family homes as well as the need for higher-density housing.*

***Policy H-1.1.4: Mixed Use Development:*** *Promote mixed use development, including housing, on commercially zoned land, particularly in neighborhood commercial centers, along Main Street mixed use corridors, and around appropriate Metrorail stations.*

***Policy H-1.1.6: Housing in the Central City:*** *Absorb a substantial component of the demand for new high-density housing in Central Washington and along the Anacostia River. Absorbing the demand for higher density units within these areas is an effective way to meet housing demands, create mixed-use areas, and conserve single-family residential neighborhoods throughout the city. Mixed income, higher density downtown housing also provides the opportunity to create vibrant street life, and to support the restaurants, retail, entertainment, and other amenities that are desired and needed in the heart of the city.*

***Policy H-1.3.5: Student Housing:*** *Require colleges and universities to address the housing needs of their students, and promote the use of such housing by their students.*

The proposal is not inconsistent with the Housing policies. The proposal is to develop new housing on currently underutilized land. The development would be mixed use with some ground floor retail on the site. The building would provide student housing in the downtown area, adding hundreds of student residents to the area assisting with streetscape activation and more vibrant street life.

### **Environmental Protection Element**

***Policy E-1.1.3: Landscaping:*** *Encourage the use of landscaping to beautify the city, enhance streets and public spaces, reduce stormwater runoff, and create a stronger sense of character and identity.*

***Policy E-3.1.1: Maximizing Permeable Surfaces:*** *Encourage the use of permeable materials for parking lots, driveways, walkways, and other paved surfaces as a way to absorb stormwater and reduce urban runoff.*

***Policy E-3.1.2: Using Landscaping and Green Roofs to Reduce Runoff*** Promote an increase in tree planting and landscaping to reduce stormwater runoff, including the expanded use of green roofs in new construction and adaptive reuse, and the application of tree and landscaping standards for parking lots and other large paved surfaces.

***Policy E-3.2.1: Support for Green Building*** Encourage the use of green building methods in new construction and rehabilitation projects, and develop green building methods for operation and maintenance activities.

The proposed development is not inconsistent with the Environmental Protection Element. The proposal to remove a surface parking lot in the downtown area is a significant improvement for reducing stormwater runoff. The new building would have green roofs and solar panels and an environmentally sustainable design that would achieve LEED Gold certification.

### **Transportation Element**

***Policy T-1.1.4: Transit-Oriented Development:*** Support transit-oriented development by investing in pedestrian-oriented transportation improvements at or around transit stations, major bus corridors, and transfer points. See also Section LU-1.3 of the Land Use Element for transit oriented development policies.

The proposal features a new student housing building in a location that is near multiple transit options that are all pedestrian-oriented.

### **Parks, Recreation and Open Space Element**

***Policy PROS-4.3.3: Common Open Space in New Development:*** Provide incentives for new and rehabilitated buildings to include “green roofs”, rain gardens, landscaped open areas, and other common open space areas that provide visual relief and aesthetic balance.

The proposed building has multiple green roofs and landscaped open space and bioretention areas.

### **Urban Design Element**

***Policy UD-2.1.1: Design Character:*** Create a more coherent design character for Central Washington by improving the physical linkages between the monumental core, the business subdistricts on the perimeter of the National Mall, and the expanding mixed use areas to the east and southeast of Downtown. Urban design strategies should focus on making the entire area more walkable, discouraging monolithic architecture, improving signage and streetscape features, and adding new land uses which make the area more lively, interesting, and dynamic.

***Policy UD-2.1.4: Architectural Excellence:*** Promote excellence in the design of Downtown buildings and landscapes. Particular attention should be focused on ground floor (street) levels, with greater architectural details used to improve visual image.

***Policy UD-2.2.1: Neighborhood Character and Identity:*** Strengthen the defining visual qualities of Washington's neighborhoods. This should be achieved in part by relating the scale of infill development, alterations, renovations, and additions to existing neighborhood context.



***Policy UD-2.2.5: Creating Attractive Facades:*** Create visual interest through well-designed building facades, storefront windows, and attractive signage and lighting. Avoid monolithic or box-like building forms, or long blank walls which detract from the human quality of the street.

The proposal is not inconsistent with the Urban Design Element, and since the Applicant has chosen to go through voluntary design review, they have shown a commitment and intention for exemplary design and architecture. The new building would replace a surface parking lot with a residential development with ground floor retail. The building's articulated façade would be complementary to the neighboring buildings and the building's brick piers and terracotta screen would add texture and projections to the façade. The large ground floor windows would provide visual interest to the pedestrians on the street level.

### **Educational Facilities Element**

***Policy EDU-3.3.1: Satellite Campuses:*** Promote the development of satellite campuses to accommodate university growth, relieve growth pressure on neighborhoods adjacent to existing campuses, spur economic development and revitalization in neighborhoods lagging in market activity, and create additional lifelong learning opportunities for DC residents.

***Policy EDU-3.3.2: Balancing University Growth and Neighborhood Needs :*** Encourage the growth and development of local colleges and universities in a manner that recognizes the role these institutions play in contributing to the District's character, culture, economy, and is also consistent with and supports community improvement and neighborhood conservation objectives. Discourage university actions that would adversely affect the character or quality of life in surrounding residential areas.

***Policy EDU-3.3.3: Campus Plan Requirements:*** Continue to require campus plans for colleges and universities located in residential and mixed use zone districts. These plans should be prepared by the institutions themselves, subject to District review and approval, and should address issues raised by the surrounding communities. Each campus plan should include provisions that ensure that the institution is not likely to become objectionable to neighboring property because of noise, traffic, number of students, or other similar conditions.

***Policy EDU-3.3.4: Student Housing:*** Encourage the provision of on-campus student housing in order to reduce college and university impacts on the housing stock in adjacent neighborhoods. Consider measures to address the demand for student housing generated by non-District institutions with local branches.

***Policy EDU-3.3.5: Transportation Impacts of Colleges and Universities:*** Support ongoing efforts by colleges and universities to mitigate their traffic and parking impacts by promoting ridesharing, carpooling, shuttle service, bicycling, and other transportation demand management measures. The provision of adequate on-site parking for institutional uses also should be encouraged.

The proposal is not inconsistent with the Educational Facilities Element. The new residential building would be a component of Georgetown University's Capitol Campus, which is consistent with the University's recent Campus Plans. The development would provide student housing in a university facility that would reduce student pressure on other housing stock in the District. The proposal would address the transportation needs of student residents with bicycle parking and a transit-oriented location, minimizing the need for vehicles.

## **B. Area Element**

### **Central Washington Area Element**

**Policy CW-1.1.1: Promoting Mixed Use Development:** *Expand the mix of land uses in Central Washington to attract a broader variety of activities and sustain the area as the hub of the metropolitan area. Central Washington should be strengthened as a dynamic employment center, a high-quality regional retail center, an internationally-renowned cultural center, a world-class visitor and convention destination, a vibrant urban neighborhood, and the focus of the regional transportation network. New office and retail space, hotels, arts and entertainment uses, housing, and open space should be encouraged through strategic incentives so that the area remains attractive, exciting, and economically productive.*

**Policy CW-1.1.3: Incentives for Non-Office Uses:** *Because market forces tend to favor office development over other land uses in Central Washington, take action to attract the other desired land uses within the area. For example, the District's zoning regulations should include incentives for mixed use development, including housing, ground floor retail, educational uses, and arts facilities, in locations consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.*

**Policy CW-1.1.4: New Housing Development in Central Washington:** *Encourage the development of new high-density housing in Central Washington, particularly in the area north of Massachusetts Avenue, east of Mount Vernon Square, and the L'Enfant Plaza/Near Southwest. This area includes Mount Vernon Triangle, Northwest One, NoMA, and the L'Enfant Plaza/Near Southwest. Ground floor retail space and similar uses should be strongly encouraged within these areas to create street-life and provide neighborhood services for residents. A strong Downtown residential community can create pedestrian traffic, meet local housing needs, support local businesses in the evenings and on weekends, and increase neighborhood safety and security.*

**Policy CW-1.1.12: Reinforcing Central Washington's Characteristic Design Features:** *Reinforce the physical qualities that set Central Washington apart from all other major American city centers, including the L'Enfant framework of diagonal avenues and park reservations, relatively low building heights, the great open spaces of the National Mall and Tidal Basin, the large number of historic and/or monumental buildings, and the blending of historic and contemporary architecture.*

**Policy CW-1.1.13: Creating Active Street Life and Public Spaces:** *Promote active street life throughout Central Washington through the design of buildings, streets, and public spaces. This should include:*  
*e. Encouraging active ground floor uses, and discouraging wide building entrances, large internal lobbies, and street-facing garage entrances and loading areas;*

**Policy CW-1.2.4: Recreation for New Downtown Residents and Workers:** *Ensure that emerging residential and employment centers such as Northwest One, NoMA and Mount Vernon Triangle include adequate parks, open spaces, and recreational facilities for residents, workers and other users. The use of payment-in-lieu-of-taxes (PILOTs) to fund such improvements should be explored.*

**Policy CW-2.8.1: NoMA Land Use Mix:** *Promote NoMA's development as an active mixed use neighborhood that includes residential, office, hotel, commercial, and ground floor retail uses. A diverse mix of housing, serving a range of household types and incomes, should be accommodated.*

The proposed building is located in the Central Washington Area and is not inconsistent with the policies of the Central Washington Area Element. The Applicant is not proposing an office building but

instead a university student residential building with ground floor retail on a currently underutilized site in the Central Washington area. The building would provide outdoor and indoor recreational spaces for the students. The proposal will increase the number of people living in the area, and help to create an activated streetscape. The ground level of the building would have large windows with views into and through the building to the green courtyard at the rear to enhance the pedestrian experience and create visual interest and active street life on H Street NW.

### **C. Small Area Plan**

The 2006 NOMA Vision Plan & Development Strategy, which was adopted by the DC Council in 2009 as the Small Area Plan, states:

*The NoMA area presents an incredible opportunity for the District, with the possibility of well over 20 million square feet of development. If the land is developed with a 50/50 mixture of commercial office and residential uses, with a substantial amount of ground floor retail, it could be a major new neighborhood - vibrant, healthy and serving as an attractive connection between the Near Northeast and Eckington on the east and north, and Mount Vernon Triangle, Northwest One, Shaw, Bates and Bloomingdale on the west and south.*

**Summary Recommendations:**

**Land Use Mix**

*Provide a diverse mix of uses that creates a variety of options for living, working, shopping, recreation, and culture.*

**Transportation & Infrastructure**

*Pursue a balanced approach to transportation, creating a pedestrian-friendly neighborhood with improved transit accessibility and vehicular circulation.*

**Public Realm & Open Space**

*Create a vibrant, highly walkable environment with landscaped streets and attractive open spaces, active ground floors and pedestrian links.*

**Identity & Building Design**

*Design to a new standard of architecture and urban design to create a lasting, competitive identity.*

**Existing Neighborhoods**

*Preserve and enhance rowhouse neighborhoods and guide new development to address unmet community needs.*

**Environment & Sustainability**

*Address sustainability with high performance design and environmentally-friendly planning, design, and construction.*

**H Street West Character Area: West of 2nd Street NE**

**VISION**

*Significant retail, hotel and other uses within development of air rights over the tracks to expand upon the regional retail draw and transit hub at Union Station. There is an opportunity to enhance the services available to NoMA and other existing adjacent neighborhoods and provide a central point along H Street to connect neighborhood-scale retail to the east and new uses to the west. The intersection of H Street and North Capitol Street should be a hub of activity.*

- *Take advantage of new construction and high visibility of air-rights buildings to create a dramatic addition and focal point for the NoMA area and DC.*
- *Combine hotels, retail and other uses in the air rights development*
- *On H Street west of North Capitol, emphasize existing brick architecture with new architecture of the highest quality, inspired by the red-brick Government Printing Office buildings.*
- *Brick articulation encouraged.*
- *Large window openings, consistent regulating lines & architectural continuity.*
- *Historic preservation and creative, adaptive re-use of historic structures.*
- *North Capitol as a “seam” instead of a barrier.*

### **DESIRED LAND USE MIX**

#### **OFFICE/RESIDENTIAL GOALS:**

- *High density.*
- *Target 50/50 mix of Commercial/ Residential uses.*

#### **RETAIL GOALS:**

- *Mix of retail focus areas, including:*
  - *Neighborhood-serving retail along H Street*
  - *Anchor retail including potential air-rights development over tracks (connecting into Union Station anchor), and potential medium-box retail opportunities nearby to Union Station (such as U.S. Government Printing Office buildings)*
  - *Potential recreation element as part of air-rights development over tracks*

#### **IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS**

- *A limited amount of Residential Tax Abatements available for a limited time period.*
- *Omit Transferable Development Rights (TDR) receiving zones in NoMA from areas where Inclusionary Zoning would be required. TDRs have already maximized development potential, and few or no incentives remain to developer to provide affordable housing.*

### **INFRASTRUCTURE, TRANSPORTATION, ENVIRONMENT & OPEN SPACE**

- *Work with DDOT to develop a Pedestrian Plan for the area.*
- *Metropolitan Branch Trail developed as transportation as well as recreation spine: connections between Metropolitan Branch Trail and air-rights development and Union Station.*
- *Potential future re-organization of Gonzaga High School’s athletic facilities (open space) to allow for development parcel facing North Capitol Street.*
- *Potential new public street (extension of I Street) between Gonzaga and existing playing field upon completion of athletic field relocation and development of parcel facing North Capitol Street.*
- *Proceed with the next step in planning: a Conceptual Public Realm Plan, comprising streets, open spaces, transit hubs, landscape guidelines, etc.*
- *Engage DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities to pursue and fund artist/underpass projects.*
- *Landscaping & Public Realm plan for street improvements.*

### **BUILDING DESIGN**

- *Work closely with developers with actual projects on the boards.*
- *Increased design review for projects of significant importance (i.e., prominent site, extremely large development site, modification of historic resource, etc).*

- *For large residential building types, encourage building type with residential ‘townhouses’ embedded in base of larger building.*
- *Most buildings will reach height limits with potential TDR floor area.*

***ACTIVE GROUND FLOORS: Framing the Street***  
***DISCOURAGED Motorcourt drop-offs***

*ENCOURAGED: Active lower floor uses and pedestrian-oriented design at ground level. Avoid large ‘motor court’ drop-offs.*

***MATERIALS AND DURABLE QUALITY***

*Encourage high quality materials for the entire building, with a special emphasis on detailing and durability for the first 2 floors.*

- *Richer materials, more intensive details and lighting to enhance pedestrian views at the first 2 floors*
- *Avoid easily damaged materials, such as EIFS at first 2 floors*

The Applicant proposes an infill building that is not inconsistent with the guidance found in the Small Area Plan. In keeping with the guidance language in the Small Area Plan, the proposed development would:

- Replace a surface parking lot with a mixed-use building providing new student residential and commercial uses
- Provide transit accessibility and vehicular circulation
- Create a vibrant, highly walkable environment with landscaped streets and active ground floors and pedestrian links
- Design to a new standard of architecture and urban design
- Guide new development to address unmet community needs
- Address sustainability with high performance design and environmentally-friendly planning, design, and construction.
- Provide additional residents to enhance the “hub of activity” at H and North Capitol Streets
- Incorporate brick into the building and visually connect to the red-brick GPO building
- Feature large window openings and a pedestrian-oriented design and enhanced pedestrian views at the ground level
- Be subject to design review