

# Government of the District of Columbia


## Department of Transportation



### d. Planning and Sustainability Division

#### MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Sara Bardin  
Director, Office of Zoning

**FROM:** Anna Chamberlin, AICP   
Associate Director

**DATE:** February 4, 2022

**SUBJECT:** ZC Case No. 21-17 – 1351 Alabama Avenue SE

---

#### PROJECT SUMMARY

Congress Heights Community Partners, LLC (the “Applicant”) seeks approval of a Map Amendment to rezone a 46,165 SF property from RA-1 to MU-8B. The subject property is located at 1351 Alabama Avenue SE (Square 5914, Lot 806) and bounded by Alabama Avenue SE to the north, Congress Street SE to the east, Savannah Street SE, and Malcolm X Elementary School building to the west.

The subject site is currently undeveloped with fitness fields and a surface parking lot. The District, through the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development (DMPED), solicited a proposal to develop the subject site. The Applicant was selected for the redevelopment project and proposed a development with the following if the Map Amendment is granted:

- 180 affordable dwelling units; and
- 9,500 SF of ground-floor retail, an early learning center, and office space.

#### SUMMARY OF DDOT REVIEW

The District Department of Transportation (DDOT) is committed to achieve an exceptional quality of life in the nation’s capital by encouraging sustainable travel practices, safer streets, and outstanding access to goods and services. As one means to achieve this vision, DDOT works through the zoning process to ensure that impacts from new developments are manageable within and take advantage of the District’s multimodal transportation network.

The purpose of DDOT’s review is to assess the potential impacts of the proposed map amendment on the District’s transportation network. After review of the case materials submitted by the Applicant, DDOT finds:

- The proposed MU-8B zone would allow for approximately 214 more residential units on the property than the maximum allowed in the existing RA-1 zone (269 units versus 55 units);
- From a vehicle trip generation standpoint, maximum build-out in the proposed MU-8B zone could generate an additional 24 AM peak hour person trips and 49 PM peak hour trips, as compared to a matter-of-right development of 55 dwelling units;
- The additional trips generated by the site are not expected to have a significant impact on the transportation network;
- DDOT concurs with the proposed up-zoning to further support nearby transit. This is consistent with DDOT’s approach to infill sites which should be dense, compact, transit oriented, and improve the public realm;
- Since the site is within a ½ mile of a Metrorail station (approximately 0.10 miles from the Congress Heights Metrorail Station as the crow flies), ZR16 allows a 50% vehicle parking reduction. DDOT strongly encourages the Applicant to minimize the amount of vehicle parking provided when the site develops and would support zero (0) parking at this site;
- Any development proposals for the site will need to account for all zoning required long-term bicycle parking storage room, either below- or at-grade in an easily accessible location from the lobby, as well as short-term bicycle parking; and
- When the site develops, it is expected that all loading, trash pick-up, and vehicle parking will take place on private property without backing maneuvers and not accessed from Alabama Avenue SE.

**RECOMMENDATION**

DDOT has reviewed the Applicant’s request and determined that based on the information provided, the proposed rezoning would likely lead to a minor-to-moderate increase in the number of peak hour vehicle trips on the District’s transportation network if developed with the most intense matter-of-right uses. The Applicant’s proposed development program has fewer units (180 units) than the DDOT estimated max of 269 units, so the level of vehicle trip generation will likely be lower. Given that this site is a short distance to the Congress Heights Metrorail Station and the project is consistent with DDOT’s approach to new development that supports higher densities, walkable design, and transit oriented, DDOT has no objection to the approval of the requested Map Amendment.

**CONTINUED COORDINATION**

Given the achievable matter-of-right density possible on the subject property, it is expected that the Applicant will work with DDOT through the permitting process (e.g., public space permitting and EISF) if and when a development proposal is put forth, on the following actions to minimize impacts to the transportation network:

- Depending on the ultimately proposed development program and if any future relief is requested from the Board of Zoning Adjustment (BZA) or Public Space Committee (PSC), the Applicant may be required to scope and provide a Comprehensive Transportation Review (CTR) study or some other analysis;
- Develop and implement Transportation Demand Management (TDM) measures commensurate with the land use and scale of future development, as appropriate;

- If the property ultimately develops, the site should be designed so that loading occurs without trucks performing backing maneuvers across public space. Also, coordinate with DDOT on an appropriate Loading Management Plan (LMP), if necessary;
- Coordinate with DDOT’s Urban Forestry Division (UFD) and the Ward 8 arborist regarding the possibility of any existing Heritage Trees or Special Trees on the property; and
- Continue coordination with DDOT on the following public space design elements noted in the Streetscape and Public Realm section of this report.

**TRANSPORTATION ANALYSIS**

Vehicle Trip Comparison

DDOT conducted a trip generation analysis for the site to compare the transportation impacts of several residential development scenarios under the existing RA-1 and proposed MU-8B zones. To complete the analysis, DDOT first assessed the theoretical maximum development potential of the site based on current and proposed zoning.

The existing RA-1 zone allows for the site to be developed with low- to moderate-density development, including detached dwellings, rowhouses, and low-rise apartments (an estimated 55 dwelling units could fit on the property). If rezoned to MU-8B, the site could potentially achieve a 6.0 FAR for a multi-family residential development assuming an inclusive zoning (IZ) bonus. It is estimated that a maximum of 269 residential units with 35,000 SF retail could be constructed on-site if the rezoning to MU-8B is granted.

DDOT estimated the amount of person- and vehicle-trips that would be generated by theoretical maximum matter-of-right developments under the existing RA-1 and proposed MU-8B zones. To determine the number of trips generated by each scenario, DDOT utilized the trip rates published in the ITE *Trip Generation Manual, 10<sup>th</sup> Edition* webtool and assumed a high non-auto modeshare since the site is very close to a Metrorail Station. Table 1 below presents a summary of DDOT’s estimate of vehicle trips for each development scenario.

**Table 1 | Trip Generation Comparison**

Development Scenario	Program	AM Peak Person Trips	PM Peak Person Trips	AM Peak Vehicle Trips	PM Peak Vehicle Trips
Existing Conditions	Empty Lot	0	0	0	0
Maximum Current Matter-of-Right in RA-1 Zone 49,858 SF	55 Residential Units 0 SF Retail	24	29	5	6
Maximum Future Matter-of-Right in MU-8B Zone 276,990 SF	269 Residential Units 35,000 SF Retail	174	382	29	55
Applicant Proposal Under MU-8B Zone	180 Residential Units 9,500 SF Retail	93	159	18	25
Net Change Max RA-1 vs Max MU-8B	+214 Residential Units +35,000 SF Retail	+150	+353	+24	+49

As shown above, development of the site with the maximum number of allowable units (estimated 269 units) will add approximately 29 vehicle trips in the weekday morning commuter peak hour and

approximately 55 vehicle trips during the weekday evening commuter peak hour, as compared to the zero (0) trips generated by the vacant site today. The increase in potential trips is minor-to-moderate and likely will not have an impact on the transportation network. The Applicant’s stated development program has fewer residential units and retail square footage, therefore would generate even fewer vehicle trips.

Zoning Requirements

Table 2 below details DDOT’s estimates of the theoretical zoning requirements for each of the evaluated development scenarios. Note that the exact requirements would be determined by the Zoning Administrator and would be based on the specific development ultimately proposed.

Since the site is located within ½ mile of a Metrorail station (approximately 0.10 miles from the Congress Heights Metrorail Station), DDOT encourages the Applicant to take advantage of the 50% reduction in the parking minimum, per ZR16 Subtitle C, Section 702.1(a), if and when the site develops. Since the site is so close to a Metrorail Station DDOT would encourage the site provides no more than 0.25 spaces per residential unit, per the January 2022 DDOT *Guidance for Comprehensive Transportation Review*.

DDOT encourages the Applicant to meet or exceed the bicycle parking and showers/lockers requirements of ZR16. Additionally, all bicycle parking should be designed consistent with the 2018 *Bike Parking Design Guidelines* and include 5% of spaces designed for larger cargo/tandem bikes and 10% of spaces be served by electrical outlets for e-bikes and scooters.

**Table 2 | Zoning Requirements for Vehicle and Bicycle Parking**

Development Scenario	Program	ZR16 Min. Vehicle Parking Spaces	DDOT Max. Vehicle Parking Spaces	ZR16 Long-Term Bicycle Spaces	ZR16 Short-Term Bicycle Spaces
Maximum Current Matter-of-Right in RA-1 Zone	55 Residential Units 0 SF Retail	9	17	18	3
Maximum Future Matter-of-Right in MU-8B Zone	269 Residential Units 35,000 SF Retail	65	116	93	23
Applicant Proposal Under MU-8B Zone	180 Residential Units 9,500 SF Retail	34	55	61	12

DDOT encourages the Applicant to provide a minimum of 1 EV space for every 50 spaces. It is noted that a new District law, the Electric Vehicle Readiness Amendment Act of 2020, calls for 20% of all new off-street parking spaces to be EV-ready starting January 1, 2022. At this time, the law has not gone into effect because it has not been funded. The Applicant should be aware that this requirement may go into effect prior to pulling their building permit.

**STREETScape AND PUBLIC REALM**

If the site develops or there are any substantial renovations to future buildings, the property owner will be expected to rehabilitate streetscape infrastructure between the curb and the property lines, in line with District policy and practice. This includes curb and gutters, street trees and landscaping, streetlights, sidewalks, and other appropriate features within the public rights of way bordering the site. Specifically, there are potential access and public space issues that the Applicant should be aware of and continue to coordinate with DDOT on, if and when the site develops:

- There is a 15-foot building restriction line (BRL) along the north side of Savannah Street SE that wraps around the corner to Congress Street. The area between the property line and BRL is the building restriction area and is regulated as if it were DDOT public space. This area should remain park-like in nature with landscaping;
- All vehicular site access to the site, as well as loading facilities and trash pick-up, should be accommodated from Congress Street SE since the site does not have access to an alley system;
- The existing curb cuts will need to be brought into compliance with the District's public space regulations and are subject to review by the Public Space Committee. The curb cut at the northwest corner of Savannah Street SE and Congress Street SE should be closed;
- Sidewalks surrounding the site on Alabama Avenue SE and Congress Street should be a minimum of 8 feet in width and include tree boxes of at least 4 feet in width;
- Ensure all building entrances are at-grade with the public sidewalk so that no ramps or stairs are needed within public space;
- If there any curb cuts are proposed to a public street, the Applicant will be required to implement a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Plan, the scope of which to be determined during permitting; and
- An existing WMATA bus stop is located adjacent to the site at the corner of Alabama Avenue SE and Congress Street SE.

DDOT encourages the Applicant to participate in a Preliminary Design Review Meeting (PDRM) with the Office of Planning and DDOT to discuss the public space design if and when a future development is proposed.

In conjunction with the *District of Columbia Municipal Regulations (DCMR)*, DDOT's *Design and Engineering Manual (DEM)* and the *Public Realm Design Manual* will serve as the main public realm references for the Applicant. DDOT staff will be available to provide additional guidance during the public space permitting process.

AC:kv