

GOVERNMENT OF
THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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ZONING COMMISSION

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REGULAR PUBLIC HEARING

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MONDAY
SEPTEMBER 15, 2025

+ + + + +

The Public Hearing of the District of Columbia Zoning Commission convened via teleconference, pursuant to notice at 4:00 p.m. EDT, Anthony J. Hood, Chairperson, presiding.

ZONING COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT:

ANTHONY J. HOOD, Chairperson
ROBERT E. MILLER, Vice Chair
JOSEPH IMAMURA, Commissioner
GWEN WRIGHT, Commissioner

OFFICE OF ZONING STAFF PRESENT:

PAUL YOUNG, Zoning Data Specialist
SHARON S. SCHELLIN, Secretary

ALSO PRESENT:

ERIC DEBEAR, ESQUIRE, Cozen O'Connor
DEDEDRICK RIVERS, Ward Memorial AME Church
JOSHUA MITCHUM, Office of Planning
JOEL LAWSON, Office of Planning
JENNIFER STEINGASSER, Office of Planning
ALEXANDRA CAIN, ESQUIRE, Office of Attorney General

The transcript constitutes the minutes from the Regular Public Hearing held on September 15, 2025.

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1 P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

2 (4:00 p.m.)

3 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: Good afternoon, ladies and
4 gentlemen. We are convening and broadcasting this public hearing
5 by videoconferencing. My name is Anthony Hood. I'm joined by
6 Vice Chair Miller, Commissioner Wright, Commissioner Imamura, and
7 to soon to be joined by Commissioner Stidham. We are also joined
8 by Ms. Sharon Schellin, as well as Mr. Paul Young, who will be
9 handling all of our virtual operations. And I don't believe we
10 have our Office of Zoning Legal Division with us this evening,
11 but they have us well prepared. I will ask all others to
12 introduce themselves at the appropriate time.

13 The virtual public hearing notice is available on the
14 Office of Zoning's website. This proceeding is being recorded
15 by a court reporter and is also webcast live via Webex and YouTube
16 Live. The video will be available on the Office of Zoning's
17 website after the hearing. Accordingly, all those listening on
18 Webex or by phone will be muted during the hearing and only those
19 who have signed up to testify will be unmuted at the appropriate
20 time. When called, please state your name before providing your
21 testimony. When you are finished speaking, please mute your
22 audio. If you experience difficulty accessing Webex or with
23 your -- or with your telephone call-in, then please call our OZ
24 Hotline number at 202-727-0789 to receive log-in -- Webex log-in
25 or call-in instructions or if you have not signed up to testify.

1 All persons planning to testify must have signed --
2 must sign up in advance and will be called by name at the
3 appropriate time. At the time of sign-up, all participants will
4 complete the oath or affirmation required by Subtitle Z-408.7.
5 If you wish to file written testimony or additional supporting
6 documents during the hearing, then please be prepared to describe
7 and discuss it at the time of your request when submitting.

8 The subject of this evening's hearing is Zoning
9 Commission Case Number 25-01. This is the Ward Memorial AME
10 Church zoning map amendment at Square 5088, Lots 147 and 852;
11 Square 5987, Lot 74. Again, today's date is September the 15th,
12 2025.

13 The hearing will be conducted in accordance with the
14 provisions of 11-Z DCMR, Chapter 4, as follows: preliminary
15 matters; the applicant's case -- the applicant has 60 minutes,
16 but I believe we can do it sooner than that; just hit the
17 highlights, and if we can respond to the letter with
18 concerns -- I don't want to say it was opposition, but the
19 letter of concerns, the one letter that I saw -- report of the
20 other government agencies; report of the ANC -- no, report of the
21 Office of Planning and District Department of Transportation; the
22 report of the ANC; testimony of organizations and individuals --
23 organizations, five minutes; individuals, three minutes,
24 respectively -- and we'll hear in the order of those in support,
25 opposition, or undeclared; then we'll have rebuttal and closing

1 by the applicant. Ms. Schellin, can you hear me?

2 MS. SCHELLIN: (Nods head affirmatively.)

3 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: Okay. Good. At this time, the
4 Commission will consider any preliminary matters. Does the staff
5 have any preliminary matters? I have a preliminary matter, but
6 I'll let you go -- maybe I'll do mine first.

7 Okay. As I mentioned previously when we set this down,
8 I have -- I used to be -- provide labor, not necessarily to Ward
9 Memorial, but somebody who was in -- working in tandem with them.
10 They had a food distribution, and all I did was basically lift.
11 I'm not aware -- I was not aware of any of this, and I think I've
12 already done this before. I don't -- I no longer do it, I've
13 gotten older, but I just wanted to put that out there on the
14 record. I'm not aware of this case that they were having. I
15 just was lifting packages up and taking them away from the Church.
16 So we appreciate all the work they do. All right. So I've done
17 that previously, and I wanted to make sure I do it again. All
18 right. Any objections, colleagues, to me participating?

19 (No response.)

20 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: Okay. All right. Ms. Schellin, if
21 you can hear me --

22 MS. SCHELLIN: I can, yes.

23 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: Okay. I can hear you too now. I
24 can hear you now.

25 MS. SCHELLIN: Yes. Yes. In fixing my old eyes of

1 getting a bigger monitor, they switched that and it switched the
2 sound to it, and it has -- since it has no video, that meant they
3 switched the sound to it, and so that's what happened.

4 So, anyway, OP's report to approve favorably is at
5 Exhibit 23. ANC 7F, as of the report, had not provided a written
6 report, and so that was as of September 12th. The DDOT report --
7 and, I'm sorry, OP is not recommending IZ Plus apply. The DDOT
8 report, at Exhibit 21, submitted stating that they have no
9 objection. Then, as far as other government agency reports,
10 there was a report from the Office of the Attorney General's
11 office, at Exhibit 22, stating that they recommend the Commission
12 approve the map amendment also. And so that is it. The applicant
13 is planning 12 minutes or less. They are aware that the letter
14 of concern was filed just yesterday, and they will address that
15 I believe when they come up. Mr. DeBear and Pastor Rivers will
16 be presenting today.

17 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: Okay. Thank you, Ms. Schellin. As
18 they're coming up, is Commissioner Stidham joining us tonight or
19 is this the day she --

20 MS. SCHELLIN: She is out, and I don't believe she's
21 going to have access.

22 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: Okay.

23 MS. SCHELLIN: So I don't believe she will be joining
24 us.

25 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: Okay. Sounds good. I knew it was

1 one day. I just wasn't sure.

2 MS. SCHELLIN: Right.

3 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: All right. Thank you.

4 MS. SCHELLIN: She's out this week. And I forgot to
5 say that Joshua Mitchum is representing the Office of Planning
6 today.

7 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: Okay. Great. Sounds good. All
8 right. Let's bring everybody up, Mr. Young. Mr. DeBear, Pastor
9 Rivers. All right. Mr. DeBear, we'll turn it over to you.
10 Whenever you and your team are ready, we're listening.

11 MR. DEBEAR: All right. Thank you, Commissioners and
12 Chair Hood and Ms. Schellin. I just want to introduce myself.
13 Eric DeBear from Cozen O'Connor on behalf of the applicant, Ward
14 Memorial AME Church, and I have my client here as well. You're
15 muted, Pastor Rivers. There you go.

16 PASTOR RIVERS: Sorry about that. I'm Dededrick
17 Rivers, Pastor of Ward Memorial AME Church.

18 MR. DEBEAR: Thank you. And if Mr. Young could bring
19 up the presentation, we will, again, try to keep this succinct,
20 addressing what Chair Hood mentioned in his preamble, and go from
21 there. Next slide. I'm going to allow Pastor Rivers to just
22 give a brief background on the Church and explain their goals for
23 the property.

24 PASTOR RIVERS: Yes. So as you can see from the slide,
25 we've -- Ward Memorial Church is 148 years young in the very same

1 community in which it was started. Originally, the Church was
2 in the federal park that's across the street, and it was literally
3 moved to its present location. We have a history and a legacy
4 of providing services within our community, and we want to -- and
5 our goal is to continue along this vein. We're providing
6 grandfamily housing within the Ward 7 community and also an
7 opportunity for persons to become property owners within the Ward
8 7 community. And those are the goals for our property that we
9 utilize and own.

10 MR. DEBEAR: Thank you, Pastor. Next slide please.
11 So, to give the Zoning Commission a brief overview, this is the
12 property. It's actually three different parcels on 42nd Street
13 Northeast. All three are currently within the RA-1 zone, and you
14 have, between the three, a total of a little over 31,500 square
15 feet.

16 Next slide please. These are the existing conditions
17 at the property. The main building is, of course, the Church
18 building located on Lot 147. You see that image in your upper
19 left corner. Next to that, in Lot 852, is the Fellowship Hall.
20 And then on Lot 74 is actually a former Child Development Center
21 building that has been vacant for I believe eight years.

22 Next slide please. Here's a little context of the
23 neighborhood. This is along the Benning Road Corridor. The
24 three lots are within a block to a block-and-a-half of the -- of
25 Benning Road, you can see there on the middle of your screen.

1 The Benning Road Metrorail is just down the street, about two-
2 and-a-half more blocks to the southeast I believe. And the Fort
3 Mahan Park, as the Pastor just mentioned, is directly across the
4 street from the Church building and other buildings.

5 Next slide. As the Zoning Commission is aware, the
6 standard for this zoning map amendment application is that the
7 request is not inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

8 Next slide please. And, certainly, we'd like to give
9 a summary of why we believe this is not inconsistent with the
10 Comprehensive Plan, starting with Future Land Map -- Use Map,
11 which designates this property in the moderate-density
12 residential character -- sorry -- designation. As the Commission
13 is likely aware, this is directly consistent with the proposed
14 RA-2 zone, as identified in the Framework Element.

15 Next slide please. The Generalized Policy Map actually
16 has two different designations for this property. The main Church
17 building and the Fellowship Hall is in the tan color. That would
18 be the Neighborhood Enhancement Area, similar to the Neighborhood
19 Conservation Area, again with -- but with more vacant and
20 underutilized land, but, certainly, envisioning the type of
21 infill development or use of, again, underutilized land that
22 could be proposed here, if the map amendment is approved.

23 Next slide please. Just to give a summary of the
24 changes to the development standards that would result from this
25 map amendment, if approved, the biggest change, obviously, would

1 be the permitted FAR would be going from the RA-1 zone of .9,
2 with 1.08 with IZ, to 1.8 and 2.16 with IZ. It also nets about
3 approximately one extra story, going from 40 to 50 feet.

4 Next slide please. Then briefly walking through the
5 Commission's racial equity tool. Next slide. I spoke, obviously,
6 about consistency with the Comprehensive Plan maps, but I did
7 also want to identify the several policies that we've highlighted
8 in our initial statement of support that we believe this proposal
9 advances. You know, something that Pastor Rivers can certainly
10 speak on, if needed, is what the vision is long-term for this
11 potential redevelopment, but, you know, finding it to be
12 consistent with the various policies that encourage both reuse
13 of institutional and religious property, but also contribution
14 to affordable housing goals, as well as, certainly, allowing for
15 aging in place, with the ultimate intent being to potentially
16 provide grandfamily housing, certainly, for church members and
17 the general public.

18 Next slide please. To go through the community
19 outreach and engagement, the neighborhood profile, this is a
20 largely Black neighborhood, consistent with much of Ward 7. The
21 Mahaning Heights neighborhood faces many of the challenges that
22 a lot of Ward 7 neighborhoods have seen for decades now;
23 certainly, less economic investment, less housing development,
24 and less employment opportunities. These have kind of been
25 created by, you know, some of the issues with housing policy,

1 including restrictive covenants, and then, you know, dealing
2 with, you know, issues with flight to the suburbs and kind of
3 rebuilding the community. And I think that's one of the themes
4 that the Church is looking to, you know, rectify by reinvesting
5 in its property and in its community and in its congregation.

6 Next slide please. We have -- you know, the Church has
7 gone out of its way, certainly, not only being a member of the
8 community and a very active member of the community outside of
9 this zoning process, but, during the zoning process, conducting
10 many meetings, dating back to last year. There was a presentation
11 to ANC 7F; a meeting with the Marshall Heights Community
12 Development Organization, which is a prominent organization in
13 this neighborhood. A community event was flyer and posted in
14 November of '24, followed by the application being filed, and
15 then meetings and discussions with our Single-Member District
16 Commissioner Orendoff, followed by a presentation to the ANC in
17 June, followed by two community events held at the Church, as
18 well as door-knocking in the neighborhood, so, certainly, a
19 substantial amount of community outreach, and that's on top of,
20 again, the Church's being an active and engaged member of the
21 community throughout its -- you know, one of its core tenets I
22 think is, certainly, being part of the community and being a
23 stakeholder with the neighbors and community members.

24 Next slide please. So to summarize the support both
25 from the community and from agencies, there is a petition of

1 support with 80 signatures, which includes 18 households within
2 a three-block radius of the property. There is also Office of
3 Planning support, of course, at both the setdown report and the
4 hearing report. There's also no objection from DDOT in a,
5 certainly, detailed report at Exhibit 21. And the Office of
6 Attorney General has submitted a letter of support as well, and
7 that's at Exhibit 22.

8 As Ms. Schellin mentioned at the outset of the hearing,
9 we do not have a written resolution from the ANC. As I just
10 summarized, we've certainly had plenty of outreach and
11 discussions with them. In June, we more or less left with the
12 feeling that they were overall supportive of the Church and its
13 mission and plans for the property, but wanted additional proof
14 of neighborhood support, and that's where the Church went and
15 held the two community meetings and got the 80 signatures of
16 support.

17 Next slide please. The disaggregated data I know is
18 primarily the Office of Planning's area, so I'm going to skip
19 over that. Next slide please. And just highlighting this, and
20 this goes directly to the IZ Plus discussion, this Planning Area,
21 the Far Northeast and Southeast, has well exceeded its target for
22 affordable housing. We're happy to talk through that with the
23 Commission as well.

24 And next slide please. And then, finally, all of the
25 racial equity criteria, we believe that these are all positive

1 outcomes that could come from this map amendment. Again, the
2 Church can speak to its overall goals for this property. We
3 understand this is just a policy issue of whether the map
4 amendment is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, but we do
5 feel like this is, you know, an excellent applicant and, you
6 know, creates significant potential for this property, not only
7 contributing to the Church's mission, but also to the overall
8 community.

9 Next slide please. And, with that, I will close the
10 presentation for now. I'm happy to answer any of the Commission's
11 questions, including to address the letter of opposition that was
12 recently filed in the record, although I will say, to stand on
13 the record of -- you know, much of that letter was directed
14 towards the Comprehensive Plan, and I think both our filing and
15 the Office of Planning's filing goes out of its way to identify
16 the many policies, not to mention the Future Land Use Map and
17 the Generalized Policy Map that this proposal is consistent with.
18 So I'm certainly happy to have a more in-depth discussion of
19 that, but with the -- with an eye toward being efficient tonight,
20 I wanted to close out my presentation-in-chief and open it up to
21 any questions the Commission might have.

22 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: Okay. Thank you, Mr. DeBear and
23 Pastor Rivers. Before I go to Commissioner Wright, I will say
24 that I wasn't too concerned about the ANC letter, because I know
25 Chair Holcomb, if he's still the Chair, if they had some issues,

1 we would have known, because they are very diligent in what they
2 do, and I'll just leave that at that. I know you all -- I've
3 watched your -- some of your outreach. I saw when they requested
4 for you to do a little more. I see you all have done that, so
5 we greatly appreciate it. And I certainly know the contributions
6 that Ward Memorial is making in Ward 7 and the city at large.
7 Okay. Let me go to Commissioner Wright; then I'll come to
8 Commissioner Imamura; and then, Vice Chair, I'll come to you.
9 Commissioner Wright.

10 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Thank you. Thank you. I think
11 this application is very consistent with all of the policies that
12 have been described. I did have one question. I think we're
13 going to hear from the Office of Attorney General, who is going
14 to suggest, unlike Office of Planning, that IZ Plus should be a
15 part of this rezoning. And I do understand that there has been
16 a lot of affordable housing created in this Ward, and they've
17 more than met the goals, but the impression I had, in hearing
18 sort of the description and the goals for this project, is that
19 the intent would be to, you know, provide housing that would be,
20 you know, affordable to a lot of the neighborhood residents. And
21 so I guess I'm wondering if you're really opposed to having IZ
22 Plus or if, you know, it is something that is essentially
23 consistent with the long-term goals that you have for this
24 project.

25 MR. DEBEAR: Yeah. Thank you, Commissioner Wright.

1 So, I mean, we're not totally opposed to, certainly, IZ Plus. I
2 think not having IZ Plus with, you know, what the Office of
3 Planning recommended, gives the Church a little bit more freedom
4 to, you know, really do a project that meets their needs, meets
5 what ultimately would be their financing needs; you know, it
6 gives them just a little more freedom, I think, to not participate
7 in the IZ program. With that being said, and Pastor Rivers can
8 speak to this, and I know he mentioned it, I mean, he -- you
9 know, this is going to be a project that is, you know, affordable
10 by, you know, the definition of that term. So, again, I don't --
11 I don't feel and I don't think the Church feels very strongly
12 about it, but I think it just gives them that little bit more
13 level of freedom to have the AMI levels where they need them to
14 be ultimately. And, you know, I mean, again, I think this is
15 for the community. It's -- and the Pastor can speak to this,
16 but, you know, I think it just gives them that flexibility a
17 little bit more. And they would still have to provide eight to
18 ten percent IZ, but without IZ Plus, as you all know, so --

19 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Thank you. My other question
20 sort of had to do with -- I know you don't really have a project
21 yet, and so you are, you know, not thinking about ways you might,
22 you know, ultimately provide some compatibility with the nearby
23 single-family homes, but, you know, have you -- have you given
24 any general thought to that? I mean, a lot of projects like this
25 in other locations -- you know, we just looked at a -- you know,

1 a project in, you know, Ward 1 on U Street that, you know, has a
2 little bit of a step -- stepping down at the back of the building,
3 so that there's some compatibility with the single-family homes
4 that are nearby. I'm sure you all, you know, aren't even at the
5 point of thinking about that kind of thing yet, but maybe you
6 are. So I want to at least, you know, ask about that, because I
7 know that one of the letters we received expressed some concern
8 about, you know, a taller building's compatibility with the
9 single-family homes nearby. And have you all thought about that?

10 MR. DEBEAR: So I'll give my zoning answer first, and
11 then I'll let Pastor Rivers talk a little bit about his thoughts
12 on that. So from a zoning standpoint, obviously, we're going
13 from RA-1 to RA-2 is what the proposal is, so that only allows
14 ten more feet of height. You know, the density would double. We
15 understand that. But, certainly, there would still be lot
16 occupancy limitations. And, actually, because the RA-1 allows
17 60 percent for a religious building, the proposed RA-2 would have
18 the same lot occupancy of 60 percent. So you're only going to,
19 as a matter of right, be able to cover 60 percent of the lot.

20 On top of that, the primary -- the larger of the two
21 segments of the map amendment are really buffered from
22 neighboring uses. So there's two streets -- there's three
23 streets that it buffers. It's a corner lot on three streets,
24 and there's an alley to the rear. So you are really automatically
25 segmented from the rest of the neighborhood, at least to the

1 extent that the alley would separate us from any other private
2 homes on that block, and then, otherwise, we abut three streets.
3 So that's, certainly, from a zoning and planning perspective.
4 I'll let Pastor Rivers speak a little bit on kind of the community
5 and how he views the project moving forward.

6 PASTOR RIVERS: Yeah. And in really looking and
7 analyzing some of the other buildings, there are two apartment
8 buildings directly adjacent to our Church, and I kind of took an
9 aerial view of those apartment buildings. And like Attorney
10 DeBear just mentioned, we would only be going up an additional
11 ten feet, and there is egress and there is somewhat -- some
12 accessibility concerns I think that have already been mitigated
13 with the alley and abutting the three streets. So I feel pretty
14 good about this project, that it will not obscure anyone's view,
15 so to speak, because just looking at the current structures that
16 are there, I feel pretty good about it.

17 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Yeah. I think the alley that
18 runs behind the current Church building and hall, which is I
19 think, as I had read, 15 feet in width, definitely helps, in
20 terms of providing a transition with the single-family homes that
21 are just on the other side of the alley. I would just, you know,
22 suggest that if and when you get to the point of really looking
23 at a project, you know, truly beginning to design, that you, you
24 know, look at some ways, particularly along that back facade, to,
25 you know, provide a little bit of transition. And, you know, I

1 think it's -- you know, obviously, the Church is already a good
2 neighbor -- a great neighbor to the community, and that would be
3 another way to sort of continue that. Those were really my only
4 two questions or things that I've been thinking about, so that's
5 it. Thank you very much.

6 PASTOR RIVERS: Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: Sidenote, Vice Chair. I saw Archie
8 bring up some drawings. Did he want to try to petition Pastor
9 Rivers for the job to do the drawings for him? I saw him showing
10 drawings there.

11 VICE CHAIR MILLER: He was just, yeah, showing me some
12 artwork, but, yeah, I'm sure he would like to substitute your
13 service in that community at some point.

14 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: All right. I just wanted to put
15 that out there. I'm just joking. All right. Commissioner
16 Imamura.

17 COMMISSIONER IMAMURA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and
18 thank you, Commissioner Wright. Pastor Rivers, and Mr. DeBear,
19 thank you for bringing this forward for the Commission to
20 consider. I don't have very many questions. I think, following
21 Commissioner Wright's comments, I think we're suffering a bit
22 from whiplash a little bit, where, in general, I've always said
23 that a map amendment such as this, that's generally modest and
24 certainly not inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the
25 General Policy Map, that an architect or design team would make

1 good decisions, sound judgement, and not build out to the full
2 volume of the matter of right. And so I think that's certainly
3 something that we've recently experienced, and probably that's
4 where some of the comments from Commissioner Wright is coming
5 from and, certainly, well noted. But as the -- you know, focusing
6 just on the map amendment, itself, given that there is no project
7 here, it seems very modest to me, in terms of the upzoning here.
8 I guess the one question that I have for you, Mr. DeBear, is
9 that -- and I noticed in OP's report as well -- that there are
10 no Comp Plan policies where this map amendment is or possibly
11 could be inconsistent. So it means that this project -- or this
12 map amendment is generally pretty straightforward. But I wanted
13 to ask for your forthrightness to see if there might be a policy
14 that could potentially be inconsistent or maybe that you did
15 consider, but thought, well, after further evaluation, it was not
16 inconsistent.

17 MR. DEBEAR: Yeah. That's, obviously, a very good
18 question, Dr. Imamura. So, you know, we understand that at least
19 the land use element identifies several policies that support
20 continuity and protection for low-density neighborhoods, and we
21 understand that, you know, while this property is a block away --
22 a block-and-a-half away from Benning Road, the neighborhood
23 starts to get lower in density as you get -- you know, go north
24 of 42nd Street and to the east, certainly, and we understand
25 that. And there are policies, certainly, you could say, arguably,

1 are potentially inconsistent with our proposal in that vein. You
2 know, certainly, we also understand that the Generalized Policy
3 Map identifies part of the site for a Neighborhood Conservation
4 Area. You could argue that is potentially inconsistent. But I
5 think, when you balance it out on the whole, there are many more
6 policies that would support this map amendment and its
7 consistency with the Comprehensive Plan and would outweigh -- you
8 know, again, taking in mind the modest nature of going from RA-
9 1 to RA-2, outweighs some of the concerns identified in that
10 letter of opposition and in the Comprehensive Plan, as to, again,
11 protecting -- and I'm sure something that the Commission wrestles
12 with all the time. You know, when you have these sites that are
13 kind of -- certainly, in a neighborhood that is close to a
14 corridor or within a corridor, but also adjacent to lower density
15 areas, it's all over the city, you know, what comes first; what
16 do we give preference to? And so -- but I think, again, when
17 you balance all of that with the Future Land Use Map designation,
18 which has a wide swath of this neighborhood going in as moderate-
19 density residential, and then all the other policies encouraging,
20 you know, the provision of more housing, where reasonable --
21 there's actually a land use policy, 2.3.6, that specifically
22 encourages faith-based communities and churches to really
23 reinvest in their neighborhood. I know the Office of Planning
24 highlighted that policy as well. So I think, taken as a whole,
25 certainly, those types of policies outweigh some of the potential

1 inconsistencies that we could see.

2 COMMISSIONER IMAMURA: Thank you, Mr. DeBear, for
3 addressing that head on. I appreciate that. I'm in agreement,
4 and I think if and when a project does materialize, I'm confident
5 that Pastor Rivers and the Church will continue its community
6 outreach for the community to have substantive input on a future
7 project, should there be one. So, again, thank you very much,
8 both of you, for bringing this forward to the Commission tonight.
9 It certainly has my support, and I'm interested to hear what Vice
10 Chair Miller and Chair Hood have to say.

11 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: Okay. Thank you. Vice Chair Miller.

12 VICE CHAIR MILLER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank
13 you, Pastor Rivers and Eric DeBear for bringing this zoning map
14 amendment application forward, which is clearly consistent with
15 the Comprehensive Plan, not only the Future Land Use Map, but
16 other housing and affordable housing policies and the faith-based
17 policies that you just mentioned, Mr. DeBear.

18 On that subject of -- and thank you for -- I appreciate
19 my colleague's comments, which I fully agree with all of them and
20 I was going to raise at least of one of them, and I might raise
21 it again -- raise it again, just to be sure I understand the --
22 but on the faith-based, I know that -- I thought that the -- I
23 know that the District has a policy -- you just cited it -- in
24 the Comp Plan to retain faith-based institutes and to create --
25 encourage their reinvestment in the community. And, Pastor

1 Rivers, we applaud all of the good works that you've done in your
2 community. Is there a tax incentive program that is associated
3 with faith-based institutions using underutilized land that they
4 control for housing -- affordable housing, Mr. DeBear or Pastor
5 Rivers; do you know? I thought -- I know there was talk of it.
6 I just don't know if there's funding for it or if it even -- or
7 if that's part of your vision or hope, in terms of accomplishing
8 your vision. Do you know if there is a tax -- is there a tax
9 incentive program for faith-based institutions to have affordable
10 housing?

11 PASTOR RIVERS: So, to my knowledge, we are still
12 exploring that, because there are some gray areas, in terms of
13 the language and understand of it. I mean, there are some tax
14 exemptions and benefits for churches, for the sole fact of owning
15 the property in its current state. But in terms of -- to the
16 extent of those flexibilities and benefits to the Church, when
17 you go down the affordable housing route, that is something that
18 we are still exploring, but our main goal was to focus on the
19 Office of Planning part, because if we couldn't get this
20 designation and if we don't get this designation, then there
21 won't be a plan.

22 VICE CHAIR MILLER: Right. Right.

23 PASTOR RIVERS: Yes, sir.

24 VICE CHAIR MILLER: And this map amendment would
25 facilitate that vision of having more affordable housing. I

1 think the -- either the OP or the DDOT report -- I know we don't
2 have a project before us, Mr. Chairman and colleagues; it's a map
3 amendment, so we're not reviewing a project, but I think there
4 is a vision here that the Church has, which has been alluded to
5 in their own statement, and the DDOT -- I think it was the DDOT
6 report that said that the maximum potential under the existing
7 RA-1 zoning for housing units was 38. I mean -- and that's -- I
8 think that if the Church -- I think that includes if the Church
9 wasn't even there and going to be redeveloped on its
10 property -- and 76, double, which is what the RA-1/RA-2 density
11 difference basically is -- density, not height. It's only ten
12 feet difference in height, but the density does -- so -- and even
13 though we don't have a project before us, Pastor Rivers, can you
14 just share what you conceptually are hoping that this map
15 amendment will facilitate, in terms of an all-affordable housing
16 project. I heard -- I saw some reference to grandfamily and as
17 being a grandfamily, that you just happened to witness a
18 grandchild walking in. I'm interested in that, just for others
19 and -- or senior -- but it was all-affordable. Is there a total
20 number of units that you're envisioning? If you can just briefly
21 share what the vision might be, even though we don't have a
22 project -- we're not reviewing a project that's before us, that
23 would facilitate that type of project. We understand that.

24 PASTOR RIVERS: Yes, sir. I'll be more than happy to
25 give you a very high-level overview of what we potentially would

1 like to consider developing on our property. On the larger parcel
2 of land that abuts to Clay Street, our goal is to explore what's
3 called grandfamily housing, not necessarily senior housing,
4 because all grandparents are not seniors or senior citizens
5 anymore.

6 In the District of Columbia, to our knowledge, when we
7 started this process, there was only one community that's
8 dedicated to grandfamily housing, and I think that's the property
9 that's owned by Bible Way. And then since we've been exploring
10 this notion, there's another property that's now under
11 development, as we understand them.

12 DC has a large grandfamily population and a
13 grandfamilies program where over 3,000 grandparents or custodial
14 adults who have the responsibility of raising children, their
15 families, who are not in the foster system. The majority of
16 these persons live in Ward 7 and Ward 8. So our -- what we are
17 envisioning is not another senior citizens building; it is not
18 another purely affordable housing unit, but we are looking at
19 making sure that we are able to explore options that would provide
20 safe, efficient, wraparound housing for a certain population, and
21 that population is the grandfamilies population.

22 And then on the smaller parcel of land, because the
23 land -- these parcels are not very large, we would like to
24 consider condominium units to help more persons east of the river
25 become property owners, where they would actually own property

1 in the District. There were a lot of blood, sweat, and tears
2 from members of this congregation who, you know, made significant
3 sacrifices for the Church to own this property. And I'm happy
4 to report that the Church owns this property without any
5 mortgages, liens, or loans. Persons have approached us, since
6 I've been at this Church for eight years, to buy this property.
7 And we feel that it's in the best interest of the community that
8 we retain ownership of the property and develop a strategy that
9 will benefit the community in which we are located.

10 VICE CHAIR MILLER: Well, I appreciate that vision and
11 that record of staying in the community and helping the community
12 that you've had for so many years. And I certainly want to help
13 facilitate that vision that you have. So I don't think I have
14 any other questions, Mr. Chairman. I think I'll explore the IZ
15 Plus question with the Office of Planning, since Commissioner
16 Wright already discussed that with the applicant, unless they
17 discuss it with OP before I do, which they probably will. So
18 thank you, Mr. Chairman.

19 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: Thank you. I don't have any
20 questions. I appreciate all the question that my colleagues have
21 asked, as well as looking at the record. I will make a comment
22 to the Office of Planning. I have to do stuff, so I seize the
23 moment at the time. The young lady, Ms. Chapman, I think,
24 especially when we're going through the rewriting of the Comp
25 Plan now, I think some of what I read in there would be more

1 advisable at that time. And I -- Pastor Rivers, I want to commend
2 you and Ward Memorial for not selling your property. A lot of
3 churches are, and a lot of churches are finding other ways to
4 offset and come into development. And I want to commend Ward
5 Memorial for doing that, because I know all of the great things
6 you all do for the community, and I know -- and I see -- I saw
7 the lines of people who were in need for food. I saw that. And
8 that's what church is all about, outreach and doing the work of
9 the Lord. So I want to say that on the record. I want to commend
10 you all. And I do know we have a concern, and I believe that
11 concern can be addressed, and I do know that you all have probably
12 put together some kind of programmatic view for why you're asking
13 for this zoning change, but I think that it's well advised for
14 the city to move in that direction. And as one of my other
15 colleagues or maybe a number of them said, you definitely have
16 my support. I do have some questions for OAG. I appreciate
17 OAG's report. As the Vice Chair mentioned, I don't necessarily
18 agree with IZ Plus here in this area. I can think of some areas
19 where we really need to have it. I get what they're saying, but
20 I'll wait for Ms. Cain to come, so we can have that discussion.
21 So, again, I don't have any questions. I'll just leave it at
22 that. Ms. Schellin, do we have any -- is Chair Holcomb here? I
23 don't think he is, but I have to check.

24 MS. SCHELLIN: No, sir.

25 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: Okay. All right. Let's move on.

1 Let's go to the Office of Attorney General.

2 MS. SCHELLIN: Yes, Ms. Cain.

3 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: And, Pastor Rivers, let Ms. Jessie
4 know -- I haven't seen her in a while, but let Ms. Jessie know,
5 keep up the good work and tell her I said thank you for all she
6 does and they do over there.

7 PASTOR RIVERS: Yes, sir. Will do.

8 MS. CAIN: Good evening, Chairman Hood, members of the
9 Commission. Alexandra Cain with the Office of the Attorney
10 General's Equitable Land Use section. I'm pleased to be here
11 this evening in support of the map amendment application of Ward
12 Memorial AME Church. I do want to echo, Commissioner Hood, your
13 comments. We are in support of the application, obviously, and
14 we are very pleased with the way the Church is using their
15 properties creatively to continue to provide that benefit to the
16 community and addressing those sort of particular needs of the
17 surrounding community with the grandfamily housing and all that,
18 so a very commendable project or, you know, application before
19 us. As was noted, our written statement is in the record at
20 Exhibit 22.

21 If you can go to the next slide please, Mr. Young. So,
22 as I noted, OAG is recommending approval of the map amendment,
23 which will double the permitted residential density on the site,
24 thereby enabling the applicant to achieve its stated of community
25 serving development with higher levels of affordability and

1 potentially grandfamily housing that the Pastor discussed. This,
2 in turn, will advance the Comprehensive Plan's affordable housing
3 goals and housing goals by increasing residential density near
4 transit corridors and near transit hubs.

5 Now, OAG is also recommending the application of IZ
6 Plus to the map amendment, which we believe will help insure that
7 the increased density provides that higher minimum level of
8 affordable housing. Now, the applicant has recognized the need
9 for more affordable housing options to serve the surrounding
10 community, as evidenced in its preliminary plans, as you just
11 heard discussed, and in its initial application, it did indicate
12 that it was anticipating that IZ Plus would apply to the site.

13 Now, in addition to that, OAG also believes that the
14 higher level of affordable housing provided by IZ Plus will
15 support both the area's current affordable housing needs and
16 mitigate the displacement impacts caused by future development
17 that's anticipated in the surrounding area.

18 Next slide please, Mr. Young. So, as noted, the map
19 amendment will double the buildable density on a key site that
20 is proximate to the Benning Road Northeast Corridor. This is a
21 WMATA high-frequency bus corridor, and the site is located
22 approximately half a mile from both the Benning Road and the
23 Minnesota Avenue Metro Stations, as you can see on that map insert
24 to the left. So this additional density proximate to transit
25 supports multiple Comprehensive Plan goals, including those in

1 housing, affordable housing, transportation, and economic
2 development. Locating housing, and particularly affordable
3 housing, near transit helps increase the overall affordability
4 by reducing household transportation costs and also encourages
5 efficiencies in the transit system by concentrating transit users
6 along those priority corridors and around Metro stations.
7 Further, this additional residential density and proximity to
8 transit helps support existing and new local-serving businesses.
9 As Mr. DeBear noted, the map amendment is consistent with both
10 the site's FLUM and GPM designations, which call for moderate-
11 density residential development, in support of the District's
12 housing goals.

13 Next slide please. So not only is the site proximate
14 to transit, but it is also surrounded by several areas in Ward 7
15 that the Comprehensive Plan has identified for future
16 development. Now, as I noted, the site is only about half a mile
17 from both the Minnesota Avenue and the Benning Road Metro
18 Stations, and it's closer still to their adjacent transit
19 corridors. Now, both Metro Station areas were subject to FLUM
20 and, in the case of Benning Road, also GPM amendments in 2021,
21 which you can see by the black outline around those areas on the
22 maps. And these amendments increase their anticipated density
23 in support of future development that will be in alignment with
24 the Comprehensive Plan's focus on transit-oriented development.
25 The site is also approximately a mile from the Nannie Helen

1 Boroughs Corridor to the north, which was also subject to FLUM
2 amendments in 2021 and to a Small Area Plan in 2024, which call
3 for increased residential and commercial development. Now,
4 finally, a little bit farther afield, but still, I think, relevant
5 to the discussion tonight, the site is approximately two miles
6 from the RFK Stadium Campus, which, as I'm sure we all know, is
7 slated to begin a major redevelopment effort over the next few
8 years that is going to bring thousands of new residents and
9 visitors to the surrounding area.

10 Next slide please, Mr. Young. So all this new
11 development increases the risk of economic displacement for
12 existing residents in Ward 7. The Comprehensive Plan defines
13 economic displacement as occurring when housing demand is not met
14 by an adequate supply at a variety of income levels, resulting
15 in rising housing costs, overburden existing residents and force
16 them to leave their communities, sometimes the District
17 altogether, to find more affordable housing options.

18 Now, the Comprehensive Plan notes that the problem of
19 displacement is a complex one and it can affect all neighborhoods,
20 including those with relatively high levels of affordable
21 housing, so that includes areas like the Far Northeast/Southeast
22 Planning Area, which largely aligns with Ward 7. And the
23 pressures of housing availability and affordability can already
24 be seen, looking at some of the census data that's available, so
25 we've pulled out some of that here. So if you look at the table

1 on the left, this is looking at the residential rental vacancy
2 rates at the District, the Ward, and the census tract level.
3 And, as you can see, both the Ward 7 and the site census tract
4 have a lower rental vacancy rate than the District as a whole,
5 meaning that there is greater demand for rental units in those
6 areas, as opposed to the District.

7 Looking to the other side at the percentage of units
8 that are considered rent-burdened, meaning they're paying more
9 than 30 percent of their income in rental costs, again, both the
10 Ward and census tract are higher than the District average, with
11 paying -- with over 50 percent of households being considered
12 rent-burdened. So based on all of this, it's not surprising that
13 the Comprehensive Plan in the Far Northeast/Far Southeast
14 Planning Area Element specifically calls for the protection of
15 the area's existing vulnerable residents to insure that they are
16 able to remain in their neighborhoods and to reap the benefits
17 of the increased growth and prosperity that is anticipated for
18 the area over the coming years.

19 Next slide please, Mr. Young. So, as I noted, the
20 Comprehensive Plan recognizes the complexity of displacement as
21 a problem, and, in response to that, it calls for long-term
22 policies and tools to address it, and we believe IZ Plus is one
23 such tool. Now, IZ Plus not only works towards the equitable
24 distribution of affordable housing, but its higher set-aside
25 requirements also insure that affordable housing will keep pace

1 with increased future development. Now, OAG believes that IZ
2 Plus should apply to the map amendment, given the area's current
3 need for affordable housing options and as a mitigation against
4 the displacement impacts of the future nearby development, which
5 will increase affordability and displacement pressures.

6 Now, the applicant, itself, has recognized the
7 need -- has recognized these issues, and, as I noted, at least
8 initially, was anticipating that IZ Plus would apply. We believe
9 that IZ Plus will align with the applicant's stated community-
10 based focus that's sort of the long-term view that they're taking
11 of reinvesting in the community and wanting to be a long-term
12 presence there by responding to the community's need and for --
13 excuse me -- need for increased affordable housing options. In
14 addition, we believe that IZ Plus will insure that if the
15 applicant's development plans change, the site will continue to
16 provide the additional affordable housing that is needed and
17 anticipated by the applicant in their application and thereby
18 meeting the Comprehensive Plan's call to protect the existing
19 residents from the detrimental impacts of the increased
20 development, while allowing them to actually benefit from all the
21 good things that come out of that increased growth and economic
22 prosperity.

23 Next slide please. So that concludes my testimony. As
24 I noted, OAG is recommending approval of the map amendment and
25 recommending that the Zoning Commission apply IZ Plus. With

1 that, I conclude my testimony, and I'm happy to answer any
2 questions that the Commission may have. Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: Thank you, Ms. Cain, for all the
4 time and attention you put into this report. I think it was very
5 well done. I do have a question, but I'm going to let my
6 colleagues go first. Commissioner Wright, you have any questions
7 of OAG?

8 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: No, I don't. I think it was a
9 great report. I find it very persuasive. I think that, although
10 there is a lot of affordable housing in this immediate area, it
11 is also an area that is changing, that has the potential to go
12 through some changes that may affect the ability for current
13 residents to stay in the neighborhood. And I think that the IZ
14 Plus would be a nice backstop way of assuring, you know,
15 affordable units that, again, sound like it's consistent with the
16 vision and the ideas that the Church has for the site anyway,
17 but I appreciate the presentation. Thanks.

18 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: Thank you. Commissioner Imamura.

19 COMMISSIONER IMAMURA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and
20 thank you, Ms. Cain for your report or testimony tonight. I do
21 have one question. I was looking somewhere in the record, and
22 I'm trying to find it again. As it's already been stated that
23 the area has met its affordable housing goals, and I think it's
24 just above maybe or over maybe by 450 units or so, which isn't
25 that much, but I am curious whether or not OAG believes that

1 there is a point of saturation and what you believe that point
2 of saturation is, based on the targets that have been set by the
3 Mayor's Office.

4 MS. CAIN: That's a good -- it's a good question,
5 Commissioner Imamura. I think one thing to keep in mind is that
6 the Mayor's 2019 housing order was established, obviously, with
7 setting goals for 2025, but those goals are sort of a preliminary
8 step for the goals that the Comp Plan calls for, for 2050. So
9 the idea is that it is setting up all the Planning Areas in the
10 District to meet 50 percent affordable by 2050, so that has to
11 accommodate new development that's coming in, market rate that's
12 coming in as well. So I don't quite know sort of what the point
13 of saturation is. Obviously, you know, we understand the concerns
14 about not wanting to concentrate, you know -- you know,
15 affordable housing in one area of the city versus another, but
16 IZ is fundamentally mixed-income, so even under IZ Plus, even
17 with that 20 percent set-aside, 80 percent would still be
18 available for market rate. So I think those are sort of the two
19 things to keep in mind when sort of considering, I guess, the
20 long-term view of it.

21 COMMISSIONER IMAMURA: Great. Thank you. I appreciate
22 your answer, Ms. Cain. And to your point that things continue
23 to change and evolve in -- across the city, not just in this
24 area, but citywide, and so those are the affordable housing goals
25 or targets set, but it's always good to sort of revisit and

1 rebaseline and reset, right? And I appreciate your testimony
2 tonight and will give it some further consideration. Mr.
3 Chairman, that's all that I have.

4 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: Thank you. Vice Chair Miller.

5 VICE CHAIR MILLER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank
6 you, Alexandra Cain for the OAG testimony and data in support of
7 this map amendment and for your advocacy for the IZ Plus
8 designation. We -- OP has consistently recommended and we've, I
9 think, consistently adopted their recommendations not to do --
10 designate IZ Plus in areas that have exceeded their housing equity
11 targets or have a disproportionate amount of affordable housing
12 vis a vis the District, which Ward 7 certainly does have in this
13 Planning Area. I think it's -- I think I saw some figure that
14 it was 258 percent -- it was over 1,200 units of affordable
15 housing and it's only 490 that were in -- that have been produced,
16 and the 490 was in the 2019 goal.

17 And you're right that that goal, that -- those targets
18 are going to be re-evaluated in the current Comp Plan amendment
19 cycle, and it's an evolving, changing city, as we all know. And
20 I think it was a good point that you made that IZ -- even with
21 IZ Plus, it's only 20 percent of the set-aside at the income
22 levels which are set in proportion to the household income levels
23 for the entire Washington Metropolitan area. So the median family
24 income level for the Washington Metropolitan area now I think is
25 almost \$160,000, so our IZ -- even under the IZ Plus program,

1 rental is only 60 percent of that and homeownership, which is a
2 commendable goal, Pastor Rivers, is 80 percent, and so it's a
3 high -- it's a high income level. IZ is not -- doesn't get at
4 actually the lower affordable -- lowering -- the very lowest
5 income. That will take tax -- other tax-incentive subsidy
6 programs, federal and District, which I hope will continue to be
7 able to exist and -- because the need is so great, obviously.
8 And I think we had some data -- maybe you provided it -- how
9 the -- how the rental rates are very low in this area -- this
10 Planning Area and the demand for affordable housing at all levels
11 is great. So I really don't have any questions for you, but I
12 just wanted to comment in reaction, and so thank you for -- thank
13 you for being here. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

14 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: Sure. I, too, want to thank you,
15 Ms. Cain, for giving us your report. I appreciate the -- what
16 went into the report, and it made me stop for a moment and think
17 about the reconsideration of the IZ Plus, but I would associate
18 myself with the Vice Chair's comments, but I don't want you to
19 stop doing those reports, because at some point in time the
20 wheel's going to turn. I just don't think it's ready now, and
21 I'll tell you why, and I know it's not necessarily germane to
22 this case. I -- when I go in different neighborhoods, and I go
23 through Ward 7, and I'm going to be frankly honest, and as
24 Commissioner Imamura mentioned about the oversaturation, I not
25 only heard it from the Office of Planning, there is someone --

1 and we've seen this individual -- there's two of them --
2 consistently here in Zoning, and I'm not going to call their
3 names. I'd be in more trouble probably than I'm already going
4 to be in now. But I went to an event in Ward 7 and they came up
5 to the -- they were nice to my wife, but they came up and got on
6 me about affordable housing and putting -- being all over in Ward
7 7. So I think that when I look at the whole spectrum of things,
8 as the Vice Chair was mentioning and Commissioner Imamura, the
9 oversaturation. Now, if this came to me in another area where
10 we didn't have continuous and oversaturation, then I would not
11 have -- I would not look at it twice. But I do know that we
12 concentrated over there, because we started doing there first,
13 because it was not acceptable in other areas, but I don't want
14 you to stop pushing that. And I also know that if there's anybody
15 that I know that's going to honor and do what they can, it's the
16 Church. So, you know, it's just like me having to one time --
17 and the Vice Chair may remember -- having to swear in a priest.
18 To me, you know, that's not easy, because I'm already -- those
19 are the people I believe who are at the top of the line, but,
20 anyway, I'm getting off schedule -- I'm getting off on a sidebar
21 here, but I believe the Church is going to do -- they have done
22 what's right over there for 148 years. And, Pastor Rivers, you
23 all look good for 148 years, but I'm just saying, for 148 years
24 they've done what's right, and I believe they're going to continue
25 to do what's right. And, as Commissioner Imamura mentioned, at

1 some point in time, we probably are going to have to revisit
2 this, but I just don't think this is the applicable time at this
3 moment, but I appreciate the report. That report stopped me in
4 my tracks, made me really start considering it, and that's where
5 I've kind of come down to, so I -- we appreciate your report,
6 Ms. Cain. Mr. DeBear, you have any questions of OAG?

7 MR. DEBEAR: I do not, Chair.

8 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: Okay. All right. Ms. Cain, thank
9 you very much. We appreciate it.

10 MS. CAIN: Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: All right. Let's go to DDOT. Ms.
12 Schellin, do we have anyone from DDOT? We usually don't.

13 MS. SCHELLIN: Usually not for map amendments. There
14 is a report I believe in the record that I mentioned, but no.

15 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: And that was in support.

16 MS. SCHELLIN: Yes.

17 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: Okay. So --

18 MS. SCHELLIN: No objections, rather.

19 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: No objections. And, Vice Chair, we
20 don't have the ANC report, so you don't have to get ready for
21 that.

22 MS. SCHELLIN: Right.

23 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: Let's go to the Office of Planning.

24 MS. SCHELLIN: And, just to save time, I will tell you,
25 at this time there are no witnesses in any category, just so you

1 know when you get there.

2 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: Okay. Well, I'm going to call for
3 it again.

4 MS. SCHELLIN: Yes, absolutely.

5 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: Somebody may show up, and then
6 I'll -- we'll be in trouble, so let's go to the Office of
7 Planning.

8 MR. MITCHUM: Good evening, Mr. Chair and members of
9 the Commission. My name is Joshua Mitchum with the Office of
10 Planning for Zoning Commission Application 25-01. May I have
11 the -- oh, there it is. Okay. All right. Thank you. So next
12 slide please. So, as stated earlier, the proposed map amendment
13 would rezone the properties from RA-1 to RA-2, and is intended
14 to implement changes, as recommended by the Comp Plan.

15 Next slide please. The Future Land Use Map designates
16 the property for, again, residential moderate-density uses, and
17 the Generalized Policy Map designates the property as
18 Neighborhood Enhancement Areas and Neighborhood Conservation
19 Areas. The proposed RA-2 rezoning would not be inconsistent with
20 the FLUM and GPM designations, as the RA-2 zone allows for more
21 density and, subsequently, more potential for the production of
22 affordable housing units while conserving the overall residential
23 neighborhood character. Overall, when viewed through a racial
24 equity lens, the proposal, on balance, would not be inconsistent
25 with the Comp Plan policies of the Far Northeast and Far Southeast

1 Planning Area in which the area element in which the property
2 resides in.

3 Next slide please. Oh, actually, that may be the last
4 slide. My fault. The December -- again, as we spoke about, the
5 December 2024 housing equity update from DMPED indicates that the
6 Planning Area has greatly exceeded its target amount and,
7 therefore, that was the basis of OP's original recommendation
8 that IZ Plus not be applied to the property, due to the large
9 amount of affordable housing already available.

10 So, in conclusion, OP recommends that the proposed map
11 amendment be approved. I would like to thank you, Mr. Chair and
12 members of the Commission, and I'm happy to answer any questions.

13 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: Thank you, Mr. Mitchum, for a very
14 well done report. Let's see if we have any questions.
15 Commissioner Wright. Okay. Let me go -- okay. There you go.

16 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Yep. I do not have any questions.
17 Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: Commissioner Imamura.

19 COMMISSIONER IMAMURA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I do.
20 I just have one question -- rather, two. Mr. Mitchum, thank you
21 for your report tonight. I don't think it would be fair to ask
22 OAG the question that I did about saturation and not ask OP the
23 same question. And in your testimony here tonight, you had
24 mentioned the fact that this Planning Area has achieved more than
25 its -- the targeted goal and that the original position of OP is

1 no IZ Plus. And so I guess my question is twofold here. One,
2 if it's the original position of OP to not include IZ Plus, is
3 there a new position to include IZ Plus? If not, that's okay.
4 But the other part of my question is what is the position of OP,
5 in terms of the saturation point? Is there a data point to that?

6 MR. MITCHUM: Joel, I don't know if you want to jump
7 in or if -- anything or -- if not, I can --

8 MR. LAWSON: I can jump in briefly. Good evening,
9 everybody. Joel Lawson with the DC Office of Planning. So I
10 think I would start out with reminding everybody that IZ would
11 still apply, so IZ would apply to this property, and we're,
12 obviously, very supportive of this project that would allow for
13 the provision of new housing opportunities and options for this
14 neighborhood, which would include, you know, new affordable
15 units.

16 As has been discussed, you know, previously, certainly,
17 the principal goal of IZ, in addition to providing more affordable
18 housing, was to provide a more equitable distribution of that
19 affordable housing throughout all parts of the District of
20 Columbia, and IZ, overall, has been pretty successful in that.
21 You know, where new developers -- development has happened, we've
22 had more affordable units, and where IZ Plus is applied, it's led
23 to that more equitable distribution, not that there isn't a lot
24 more that needs to be done, but it's a start, and it's what can
25 happen through inclusionary zoning. But, as Joshua noted just

1 earlier, this area does have a large number of affordable units,
2 and we certainly, like the Chair, have heard comments from
3 neighborhoods that a more broad range of housing and housing
4 options and opportunities is needed in all of our neighborhoods,
5 including this one. That's why we're recommending IZ be applied,
6 but we're not recommending IZ Plus. We do look forward to this
7 additional study that will be happening and the discussion and
8 conversation through the Comprehensive Plan process, you know,
9 and that may lead to, you know, some new policy direction. For
10 now, we're kind of going with the policy direction that we have.

11 COMMISSIONER IMAMURA: Very good. Thank you, Mr.
12 Lawson, and thank you, Mr. Mitchum, for your report tonight and
13 the work that you do for this great city.

14 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: Okay. Thank you. Thank you, Mr.
15 Lawson and Mr. Mitchum. Let's see, Vice Chair, you have any
16 questions for the Office of Planning?

17 VICE CHAIR MILLER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank
18 you, Mr. Lawson and Mr. Mitchum for your testimony here today and
19 your response to the questions. Yeah, so you're -- as part of
20 the Comp Plan 2050 amendment cycle that has just been launched
21 and probably won't be completed until at least -- I don't know
22 when -- a year from now. I don't -- I mean, I don't know when
23 it will be, but there -- so there is a -- certainly, a look at
24 new housing targets for all of the Planning Areas; is that
25 correct?

1 MR. LAWSON: I think, certainly, with any rewrite of a
2 Comprehensive Plan, the provision of housing and the provision
3 of affordable housing will be just simply central to all of the
4 conversations.

5 VICE CHAIR MILLER: Right. And the -- and you -- and
6 you said there might be some revisiting of the policy of not
7 recommending IZ Plus designation under certain criteria that
8 you're currently using because of the perception or reality of
9 oversaturation or inequitable distribution of affordable housing
10 in certain -- in certain neighborhoods, but there might -- there
11 might be some -- there's going to be some study or review with
12 the community about how appropriate that is, especially -- and
13 this is putting my editorial spin on it -- given the not-too-low
14 income thresholds in the inclusionary zoning program, as I
15 mentioned previously in my previous comments, and the not too
16 burdensome set-aside requirements, especially when an applicant
17 is not objecting to it. So is there going to be -- there may be
18 some revisiting of the criteria you use for your recommendations
19 for not -- when you don't designate IZ Plus?

20 MR. LAWSON: Well, you know, again, we're not leading
21 that Comprehensive Plan review process, but, as kind of restated,
22 I can't imagine -- there will be a great deal of outreach and
23 discussion with all neighborhoods throughout the District, and
24 it would be hard to image those conversations happening without
25 discussions of where housing is provided, how that housing is

1 provided, and the whole housing affordability issue.

2 VICE CHAIR MILLER: Okay. Thank you very much for that
3 response, and thank you both and the Office of Planning for all
4 your work.

5 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: I'm just going to piggyback on
6 Commissioner Imamura's question and add my comments to his. That
7 was very well done, so I'll leave that alone. Let's see if we
8 have any questions of the applicant? Mr. DeBear, you have any
9 questions of the Office of Planning?

10 MR. DEBEAR: No. Thank you, Chair.

11 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: Okay. All right. Mr. Lawson, Mr.
12 Mitchum, thank you all for your report and your responses.
13 Greatly appreciate it.

14 MR. MITCHUM: Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: Again, Ms. Schellin, I'm going to
16 ask again, do you we have -- I know we don't have the ANC. Do
17 we have anybody here? Let me just say it like that.

18 MS. SCHELLIN: We have no one to testify in support,
19 no one to testify in opposition, no one to testify in undeclared.

20 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: Okay. Thank you. Mr. DeBear, you
21 have any closing or any rebuttal or closing?

22 MR. DEBEAR: Just a short closing, Chair. We thank the
23 Commission's time tonight in consideration of this map amendment.
24 We believe we've outlined how this proposal in the map amending
25 is consistent with a number of policies in the Comprehensive

1 Plan, including the Future Land Use Map and the Generalized Policy
2 Map. You know, we do feel as though IZ Plus would not be
3 appropriate, as stated in the Office of Planning report, for the
4 reasons the Office of Planning has set forth, and just to add on
5 that it would give the Church a little more flexibility on top
6 of the fact that this neighborhood is oversaturated with
7 affordable housing at the moment. And, with that, I will close.
8 Thank you

9 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: Okay. Thank you, Mr. DeBear and
10 Pastor Rivers. We appreciate you all presenting your case, and
11 we will take it from there. Colleagues, I think this is -- I
12 think we are ready to move forward, unless I hear an objection.
13 We do know what's really out there, the IZ Plus. I think they
14 have made the case -- the Office of Planning and others have made
15 the case of not to add it. And I think, in this situation, I
16 would not want to handcuff a church, because if you notice -- and
17 I'll be frankly honest -- Black churches in the District of
18 Columbia are having a hard time as it is, and it's good to see
19 them, when they come forward, to be able to even start doing
20 development. And I'm not making it a color issue, but that's
21 the reality. And we've helped a lot of churches -- this
22 Commission has -- Israel Baptist, Matthews Memorial, the churches
23 on the waterfront. Even though they were not African American
24 congregations, they've got new churches. So I think here we have
25 another church in front of us out in another neighborhood, and I

1 would like to see us follow suit. I'm not really inclined to
2 handcuff this church. I would not add IZ Plus, which I think
3 all the diction shows. And I am inclined to -- at some point to
4 revisit it, as we've already said. And let me just open it up,
5 but I will be voting in favor of this application, as it stands.
6 Let me see what others have to say. Commissioner Wright.

7 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: No, I think you make good points.
8 I think we could just move forward.

9 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: Okay. Commissioner Imamura.

10 COMMISSIONER IMAMURA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm
11 in agreement with you and just also want to underscore your
12 comment to Ms. Cain to continue to put forward their advocacy and
13 recommendations and at some point (indiscernible), but I think
14 this is ripe for action and I'm prepared to vote in support.

15 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: Okay. Thank you. Vice Chair Miller.

16 VICE CHAIR MILLER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I agree
17 with my colleagues. I'm prepared to move forward with this map
18 amendment to facilitate an all-affordable development that's the
19 vision of Ward Memorial Church and use -- put to good use -- good
20 work's use underutilized property on their land, and I thank them
21 for their stick-to-itiveness in staying in the community. And I
22 think their vision will more -- would more than satisfy IZ or IZ
23 Plus, because I think they have a 100 percent affordable housing
24 vision here and may need additional programs up beyond IZ, which
25 doesn't reach to the very low income levels, unfortunately, but

1 is helpful. It's one incremental step in the process, and we
2 just have one little part of the process that we can influence.
3 So I hope there is a revisiting of the IZ designation. We're in
4 a difficult economic climate, and I'm glad the Church is moving
5 forward with the project.

6 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: Okay. Thank you. With that, I'm
7 going to ask Commissioner Wright -- she's taken the lead all
8 night -- could you make a motion please?

9 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Absolutely. I move -- and this
10 is preliminary action, as I understand it, because this is a two-
11 vote case. So I move that we take preliminary action on Zoning
12 Commission Case Number 25-01, Ward Memorial AME Church zoning map
13 amendment at Square 5088, Lots 147 and 852, Square 5987, Lot 74,
14 and that we include regular IZ, not IZ Plus, per the
15 recommendation of the Office of Planning. And that is my motion.

16 COMMISSIONER IMAMURA: Second to approve the proposed
17 action.

18 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: Okay. It's been moved and properly
19 seconded. Any further discussion?

20 (No response.)

21 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: Not hearing any, Ms. Schellin, did
22 we ever get approval to do a roll -- I mean, by the other vote,
23 as opposed to a roll -- well, you know what? Until we --

24 MS. SCHELLIN: I haven't come across in my e-mail just
25 yet.

1 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: All right. Ms. Schellin, could you
2 do a roll call vote please?

3 MS. SCHELLIN: Yes. Commissioner Wright.

4 COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Yes.

5 MS. SCHELLIN: Commissioner Imamura.

6 COMMISSIONER IMAMURA: Yes.

7 MS. SCHELLIN: Commissioner Hood.

8 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: Yes.

9 MS. SCHELLIN: Commissioner Miller.

10 VICE CHAIR MILLER: Yes.

11 MS. SCHELLIN: The vote is four to zero to one to
12 approve proposed action in Zoning Commission Case Number 25-01,
13 and that's approving without IZ Plus, and the minus one is
14 Commissioner Stidham, who is not present, not voting. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: Okay. Ms. Schellin, do we have
16 anything else tonight before us?

17 MS. SCHELLIN: Just to ask that the applicant provide
18 a draft order. Well, it actually would be a draft rulemaking.
19 Actually, since it's a rulemaking -- I take that back -- we do
20 not usually have the applicant provide -- let's see, this is --
21 I'm sorry. This is a map amendment, so we do want a draft order
22 within two weeks please. That is it.

23 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: Okay. Are we all on the same page?

24 (All Commissioners nod head affirmatively.)

25 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: Before I close this hearing out, Ms.

1 Schellin, I'm looking at our next schedule. We don't meet again
2 until the 25th?

3 MS. SCHELLIN: We do not meet this week, and on --
4 whoops, I'm December. Wow. You guys have a pretty busy fall.
5 So you guys do not meet again until next Thursday, which is the
6 25th. You are correct. That would be your meeting.

7 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: Now, is that a meeting?

8 MS. SCHELLIN: It is.

9 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: And we only have one thing on the
10 meeting?

11 MS. SCHELLIN: I'm not going to say that. I'm not
12 confirming that just yet.

13 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: Well, what I was going to do is do
14 a closed hearing. See, that's what --

15 MS. SCHELLIN: Oh, yes. There will probably be more.
16 OP may file some setdowns and stuff, so, at this time, I'm not
17 sure if there will be more.

18 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: Well, let's do it this way.

19 MS. SCHELLIN: It's too early probably.

20 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: Let me do it this way. Ms. Schellin,
21 when you send out, ask everyone to be -- how do we do that? I
22 don't know. We'll figure it out.

23 MS. SCHELLIN: If there are any cases on there, you
24 will just have to have your closed meeting before the meeting.
25 I mean, it will have to be during the meeting, unfortunately,

1 because you don't have any other time to get together. The agenda
2 is not finalized, unfortunately.

3 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: Let's talk this out, and I'm
4 talking -- because we can't come in -- if we do a closed meeting
5 at 3:15, I can't come on at 3:10 and announce it, because you
6 all publicize it at four o'clock. Okay. That's all right.

7 MS. SCHELLIN: Right.

8 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: Hopefully --

9 MS. SCHELLIN: It has to basically be an emergency
10 public meeting --

11 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: If we need it.

12 MS. SCHELLIN: -- emergency closed meeting. I'm sorry,
13 an emergency closed meeting.

14 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: All right. That's the way we'll do
15 that. So I'm just trying to still --

16 MS. SCHELLIN: Unfortunately, because we don't have
17 anything close enough that week after our agenda --

18 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: Right.

19 MS. SCHELLIN: -- that Thursday or Monday after the
20 agenda is finalized.

21 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: So we're going to work through this.
22 That's why I'm taking the time to do this. I want to make sure
23 we do it right.

24 MS. SCHELLIN: Yeah.

25 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: I actually watched (indiscernible)

1 again today, like I don't have anything else to do, but I want
2 to make sure we get this thing right. So we're going to -- if
3 we do have to have -- I'm just letting my colleagues know, if we
4 do have to have a meeting on the case, we're going to go into
5 emergency session, if we have to.

6 MS. SCHELLIN: Right.

7 CHAIRPERSON HOOD: All right. We got a plan. Thank
8 you. All right. I want to thank everyone for their participation
9 tonight. Again, we want to thank Mr. DeBear and Pastor Rivers
10 and, also, everyone who participated and my colleagues. With
11 that, this hearing is adjourned. Have a nice week.

12 (Whereupon, the above-entitled public hearing
13 adjourned at 5:20 p.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T I O N

This is to certify that the foregoing transcript

In the matter of: Public Hearing

Before: DC Zoning Commission

Date: 09-15-25

Place: Webex Videoconference

was duly recorded and accurately transcribed under my direction; further, that said transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

Deborah B. Gauthier

Deborah B. Gauthier