
**WEST SIDE OF 2ND STREET, NE, BETWEEN F AND H STREETS (STATION PLACE)
CONSOLIDATED PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT AND AMENDMENT TO THE
ZONING MAP TO REZONE THE PROPERTY FROM C-M-3 TO C-3-C
Square 720, Lots 178 and 179**

Report to the Zoning Commission of the District of Columbia

February 7, 2002

Abstract

The Zoning Commission has taken a proposed action to approve a consolidated Planned Unit Development (PUD) and related zoning map amendment on the west side of 2nd Street, NE, between F and H Streets. The site will be rezoned from C-M-3 (industrial) to C-3-C (commercial), which is more compatible with adjacent low-density commercial uses across 2nd Street than industrially zoned property. The C-3-C zone also permits fewer parking spaces, and, when combined with a PUD, increased height and FAR. The proposed ten-story commercial office building with eight-story wings will include 922 parking spaces and an FAR of almost 5.9. The building, called Station Place, will house approximately 5,000 employees. The building will be constructed in three phases, and Phase I will be occupied by a federal agency, the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

Federal Interests

The identified federal interests include Union Station, which is an individually listed historic building on the National Register of Historic Places and recognized as a Special Place in the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital. In addition, the site is across F Street from the Thurgood Marshall Judiciary Building, another federal agency, and diagonally across the street from the National Register-listed Capitol Hill Historic District. Second Street, between C Street, SE and F Street, NE (the southern boundary of the project site), is identified as a Special Street in the Comprehensive Plan. Furthermore, a federal agency will occupy Phase I, with options to lease additional square footage in future phases.

Authority

Section 8 of the Planning Act of 1952, as amended (40 U.S.C. 71g), and D.C. Code, sec. 5-417.

Commission Action

The Commission concludes that the proposed consolidated Planned Unit Development and related rezoning, subject to the guidelines, conditions, and standards established by the Zoning Commission, would not adversely affect the identified federal interests nor be inconsistent with the Federal Elements of the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital.

Related Recommendation

The Commission requests that the Zoning Commission add a condition to the guidelines, conditions and standards that any future security elements located in the public right-of-way be submitted to NCPC to ensure consistency with the recommendations of the Security Task Force.

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BACKGROUND AND STAFF EVALUATION

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSAL

The District of Columbia Zoning Commission has referred the proposed consolidated PUD and related zoning map amendment to the Commission for federal interest review and comment. The objectives of the PUD process is to permit flexibility of development in return for the provision of superior public benefits, provided that the PUD process is not used to circumvent the intent and purposes of the Zoning Regulations or result in an action inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan. NCPC’s role is to review and comment on the proposed project, considering whether the proposed project has any adverse affect on the federal interest.

The Site

The subject property is located on the west side of 2nd Street, NE, between F and H Streets (Square 720, Lots 178 and 179) and is bounded by F Street on the south, 2nd Street on the east, the H Street overpass on the north (which raises to a height of 20 to 30 feet over the site) and the rail yards behind Union Station on the west. The Thurgood Marshall Judiciary Office Building is located to the south, across F Street. First Street (east) terminates at the project site.



In the vicinity of the proposed project, across 2nd Street, the area is predominantly zoned C-2-A (commercial low density) and the buildings are primarily commercial uses in townhouses and similar low-rise structures. There is a former D.C. Public School and surface parking lot located across from the site at the corner of G and 2nd Streets. Behind the C-2-A zoning, and diagonally across 2nd and F Streets are residentially zoned properties in the R-4 zone and the Capitol Hill Historic District. North of the H Street overpass is the C-3-B (commercial) zone and a three-story office building and electric substation. Union Station and the rail yards to the west of the project site are zoned C-M-3 (industrial).

The project site consists of 240,644 square feet of land area (approximately 5.5 acres) that is currently used as a surface parking lot for up to 800 vehicles. The site has 326 feet of frontage on F Street, 933 feet of frontage on 2nd Street and 139 feet of frontage on H Street.

The Proposal



- The applicant proposes to construct an office building that varies in height from seven to ten stories. The maximum, ten-story height would be located adjacent to the rail yards, with lower, eight-story wings projecting out towards 2nd Street. The height of each building phase immediately along the street frontage of 2nd and F Streets will be a continuous seven stories, broken only by ground level courtyards.
- The building may include some tenant-serving retail.
- The maximum building height will be roughly 89 feet from the H Street overpass and 115 feet from F Street.
- The building will have an area of almost 1.4 million gross square feet and an FAR not to exceed 5.9.
- The building will be constructed in three phases, beginning at the southern end of the site:

- Phase I will contain 650,000 square feet
 - Phase II will contain 287,000 square feet
 - Phase III will contain 460,000 square feet
- The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) will occupy the entirety of Phase I, with future options to lease additional space in Phase II.
 - The building will accommodate approximately 5,000 employees at final build out.
 - There will be a physical connection between Station Place and Union Station to provide pedestrian access between the two buildings for Station Place employees.
 - The facility will have a minimum of 922 parking spaces in two-and-one-half levels of below grade parking, six loading berths, and a service delivery bay. Up to 211 additional spaces can be accommodated through stacked parking. Vehicular access to the underground parking will be located at H Street, F Street (Phase I) and 2nd Street (Phase III). The facility will contain 190 bicycle parking spaces.
 - A new vehicle access ramp will be provided from the H Street overpass into the site, which will accommodate the majority of the traffic for the building and all of the loading. In addition to providing access for Station Place loading, access to the Union Station loading docks will be moved from 1st Street (east) to the H Street overpass. The H Street ramp will be constructed in conjunction with Phase I and will be serviceable upon the opening of Phase I.
 - The building will be constructed primarily of nonreflective glass curtainwall, with varying amounts of granite. Each phase will be architecturally varied, which will be achieved primarily through different setbacks and materials. Phase I will have a two-story granite trellis. Phase II will be clad with granite along the 2nd Street elevation, which will also wrap around the corners of the building. The elevations of Phase III have not yet been finalized.
 - There will be a courtyard between the two wings of Phase I, and a larger public plaza in front of Phase II, which will be set back 20 feet from the property line. Each courtyard/plaza will have landscaping and pedestrian amenities such as benches and water features. There will be a managed vending program in front of Phase II to animate the street and encourage pedestrian usage.
 - The project includes the construction of the Metropolitan Branch Trail in the public right-of-way on 2nd and F Streets adjacent to the project.
 - In the early 1990s, a 90-foot commercial building (as measured from the H Street overpass) with 1.6 million gross square feet was approved for this site through the Large Track Review process (all developments of three acres or more and all commercial or

mixed-use-commercial developments of 50,000 square feet or more of gross floor area must be approved through the Large Track Review process.)

Zoning

The proposed action would change the zoning classification on the site from industrial (C-M-3) to commercial (C-3-C). The consolidated PUD requested by the applicant allows for a greater building height than permitted under matter-of-right zoning (under either the existing or proposed zoning). However, the project is consistent with matter-of-right zoning for parking, lot occupancy and FAR. Below is a zoning comparison table:

	C-M-3 (Existing)	C-3-C (Proposed)	C-3-C with PUD (Requested)	<i>Proposed Building</i>
FAR	6.0	6.5	8.0	5.9
Height	90'	90'	130'	115.5'
Parking	1747	787	787	922
Lot Occupancy	100%	100%	100%	72%

COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS

The Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) reviewed the project under their authority established by the Shipstead-Luce Act, which was enacted in 1930 to "...regulate the height, exterior design, and construction of private and semipublic buildings in certain areas of the National Capital...adjacent to public buildings and grounds of major importance." CFA reviewed Station Place on three separate occasions – September 20, October 18 and November 15, 2001 – and ultimately recommended approval of the proposal, with the exception of the elevations of Phase III (they did state their approval of the overall massing and setbacks).

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA OFFICE OF PLANNING REPORT

In its report to the Zoning Commission dated November 5, 2001, the District of Columbia Office of Planning (DCOP) recommended approval of the proposed application with the following conditions:

1. Provide pedestrian access to H Street from the building.
2. Require that the middle courtyard be open for public access with the landscape and water features proposed in the developer’s amended submission.
3. Require that the applicant implement a managed vending program in the public courtyard.
4. Require implementation of the Transportation Management Program proposed by the applicant.
5. Require implementation of a Construction Management Plan and agreement with the neighbors to protect nearby houses from construction-related damage.

The conditions recommended by DCOP have been either integrated into the submission materials or addressed by the Zoning Commission in the guidelines, conditions and standards (see attached).

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Zoning Commission held three public hearings on the proposed PUD and rezoning (November 8, November 29, and December 3, 2001). The project was supported by the Washington Area Bicyclist Association and the H Street Merchants and Professionals Association, as well as some other groups and individuals. The project was also generally supported by the local Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) 6A. As a condition of their approval, the ANC recommended the inclusion of specific conditions, which relate to the areas summarized below:

- Construction impacts
- Amenities
- Design and setbacks
- Hiring and job training

The Zoning Commission addressed each of the ANC's recommended conditions, some of which were integrated into the proposed order.

There was also opposition to the proposed project. Both the Capitol Hill Restoration Society (CHRS) and the Stanton Park Neighborhood Association (SPNA), who together created a task force to review and evaluate the proposed project, opposed the project. Among their primary concerns was the desire for additional building setbacks along 2nd Street and at the corner of F and 2nd Streets based on the need for a greater transition area between the project and the low-rise commercial and residential neighborhood to the east, and concern about physical security elements in public space. The CHRS and SPNA, as well as others, also raised concerns about construction management issues, traffic and environmental review.

FEDERAL INTEREST EVALUATION

Staff finds that the proposed consolidated PUD and related rezoning would not adversely affect the character of the adjacent Special Place (Union Station) or nearby Special Street (2nd Street), or the Thurgood Marshall Judiciary Building. Furthermore, this project will provide consolidated office space for the SEC in the District of Columbia.

While staff understands the desire of the CHRS and SPNA to set back the building along 2nd street, staff believes that the placement of the building on the lot does not constitute an adverse affect on the federal interest. Since the beginning of the review process, this project has been coordinated through CFA and the Office of Planning, and many changes have been made to the building design to help mitigate the setback concerns raised by the CHRS and SPNA. The changes have included:

- Creating the appearance of three separate building phases.
- Setting back Phase II to create a public plaza.
- Creating a physical break between Phase II and Phase III above the 4th floor roughly on-axis with G Street.
- Creating a lobby entrance and further articulating the H Street façade.
- Setting back the upper floors along 2nd Street, F and H Streets.
- Reducing the penthouse height where feasible.

Related to the concern about setback, is the issue of future security features in the right-of-way, particularly as they relate to the SEC/Phase I. At the present time, however, the amount of security proposed as part of Phase I is limited to retractable bollards at the parking garage entrance/exit on F Street and fixed bollards at the SEC entrance at the terminus of 1st Street (east). The design of the proposed bollards must be approved by the Commission of Fine Arts, and, if they are located in the public right-of-way, the D.C. Public Space Division. While the SEC has indicated that they wish to maintain an open courtyard as part of Phase I, future security concerns may warrant closing off the courtyard to the public. Should the SEC determine that additional security measures are necessary around the perimeter of the site, staff would expect such features to be integrated into the streetscape. Elements such as reinforced signs, street furniture and lights are examples of how perimeter security can be seamlessly integrated into the streetscape. The approval of the design and placement of these security elements would be required from both CFA and the D.C. Public Space Division. In light of the NCPC Security Task Force's ongoing preparation of the Urban Design and Security Plan, staff requests that any future security elements located in the public right-of-way be submitted to NCPC to ensure consistency with the Urban Design and Security Plan.

Another concern that was raised at the public hearings was compliance with the environmental review process and the need for an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The Office of Planning determined that the project is exempt from the District of Columbia Environmental Policy Act because the project site boundaries are within the exempted Central Employment Area. Staff concurs with the determination that the tenancy of a federal agency within a building does not constitute a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment, under the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and consequently would not require preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement.

However, in accordance with the Commission's Environmental Policies and Procedures, the PUD submitted for review is Categorically Excluded from further evaluation pursuant to NEPA as specified at Section 8, paragraph 8 of NCPC's environmental procedures. The presence of contaminated soils at certain locations within the project will be addressed by separate and required environmental compliance permitting processes in accordance with District of Columbia and federal hazardous materials regulations. The record indicates that the regulations will be complied with.

In summary, staff finds that the proposed new Station Place development does not adversely affect the federal establishment or identified federal interests, nor is it inconsistent with the Federal Elements of the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital.

CONFORMANCE WITH THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The proposed PUD would be located adjacent to the Union Station terminal, which is a historic landmark and is designated a Special Place in the Preservation and Historic Features Element of the Comprehensive Plan. A portion of the proposed development would be significantly visible to arriving passengers and to visitors approaching the plaza entrance to this historic facility from the Capitol Hill precinct. In addition, the project site is adjacent to a federal facility, the Thurgood Marshall Judiciary Building. Second Street, in the vicinity of the project site, is also a Special Street in the Comprehensive Plan. An applicable policy in the Element specifies:

Special Streets and Places should be maintained and enhanced in a manner that promotes their roles as major features that help establish the images and the symbols of the National Capital in the minds of its residents and visitors.

The District of Columbia's Generalized Land Use Map designates the area for mixed-use medium high-density commercial and production and technical employment.