

**BEFORE THE BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

STATEMENT OF REASONS IN SUPPORT OF AN APPLICATION FOR AN AREA VARIANCE FROM THE
PARKING REQUIREMENTS OF SECTION 2101.1 OF THE ZONING REGULATIONS TO ALLOW THE
CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW NEIGHBORHOOD LIBRARY AT
1801 HAMLIN ST N.E., LOT 825 IN SQUARE 4210 (THE "PROPERTY").

This Statement of Reasons is submitted on behalf of the applicant, District of Columbia Public Library (the "Applicant" or "Library"), a sub-unit of the Government of the District of Columbia, the owner of the Property.

THE PROPERTY AND THE SURROUNDING NEIGHBORHOOD

Property Description. The Property is located on the south side of Hamlin Street, N.E., between 18th Street and 20th Streets, just south of Rhode Island Avenue, N.E.; it contains approximately 20,812 square feet of land area. The Property is currently zoned C-2-A

The Property is improved with a full-service neighborhood library constructed in 1958. The existing Library building is situated on the northern portion of Square 4210; the Property slopes to the south, where it is separated by a 15 foot wide alley from federal park land (Langdon Park). The alley provides access to a small parking lot at the rear of the library, which will remain. The lot is unstriped, but has space for at least 11 vehicles. The eastern side yard setback is approximately 20 feet, and it abuts a single-family residential structure. The western side of the property abuts 18th Street, which has two (2) through lanes (one in each direction) and two (2) parking lanes (on either side of the street).

Current Property Use. The Property is in use as a full-service neighborhood library, which is known as the Woodridge Branch of the D.C. Public Library

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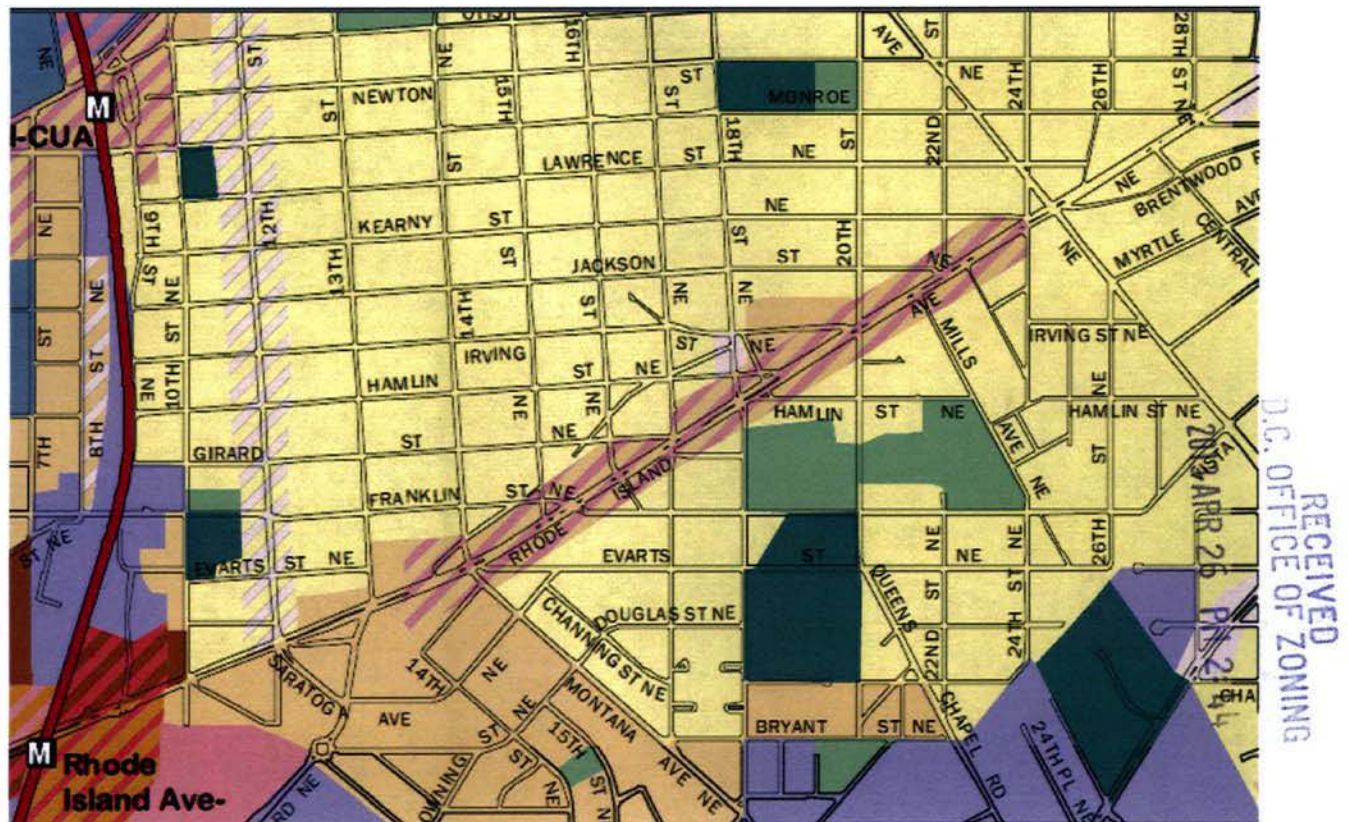
BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 18590
EXHIBIT NO. 3

Board of Zoning Adjustment
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The Surrounding Neighborhood The property is located on Hamlin Street, NE, where it intersects with Rhode Island Avenue, a major arterial, approximately one (1) mile from the District of Columbia border with Prince Georges County, Maryland. Hamlin Street to the east is zoned R-1-B, and consists of rather large, single-family homes on relatively large lots. To the west and north of the building are small commercial or non-profit entities, in the C-2-A section along Rhode Island Avenue. The rest of Square 4210 is largely National Park Service land, improved with four tennis courts, basketball courts and a small amphitheater, mostly on the southeastern portion of the park. Approximately 23 private homes are located in the square, along Hamlin and the southern portion of 20th Street.

The property is designated “Mixed-Use Moderate Density Commercial / Medium Density Residential” on the Future Land Use Map of the Comprehensive Plan, and the area features a wide variety of land uses, from auto repair, small retail and religious institutions along Rhode Island to single-family residential and some low- and moderate-rise apartments in the surrounding areas.

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Zoning. The Property is currently zoned C-2-A, generally considered a moderate-density commercial or mixed-use zone, in which public library use is permitted as a matter of right. The Zoning Regulations (Title 11, DCMR) describe the C-2-A district as follows, which makes clear that the library is consistent with the Future Land Use Plan and the Generalized Policy Map:

720.2 The C-2-A District is designed to provide facilities for shopping and business needs, housing, and mixed uses for large segments of the District of Columbia outside of the central core.

720.3 The C-2-A Districts shall be located in low and medium density residential areas with access to main highways or rapid transit stops, and shall include office employment centers, shopping centers, and medium-bulk mixed use centers.

720.4 The C-2-A District shall permit development to medium proportions.

720.5 The C-2-A District shall accommodate a major portion of existing commercial strip developments.

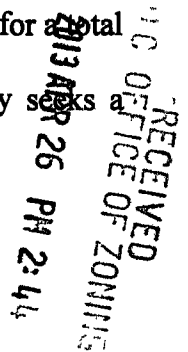


In addition, the Generalized Policy Map of the Comprehensive Plan shows the area around the library as a Main Street Mixed Use Corridor. The Comprehensive Plan notes that such areas may vary in the size of the market served, but “Their common feature is that they have a pedestrian-oriented environment with traditional storefronts. . . Any development or redevelopment that occurs should support transit use and enhance the pedestrian environment.”

PROPOSED USE OF THE PROPERTY

The Applicant proposes to construct a new neighborhood library consisting of approximately 22,000 square feet of gross floor area with modern facilities. The Library has engaged the award-winning architectural firm Bing Thom Architects, along with a local team of architects from Wiencek & Associates to design the new facility. The new library has a sleek, modern design. The proposed facility will consist of two main stories and a partial third floor reading lounge. In compliance with the District of Columbia Green Buildings Act of 2006, the building is being designed with sustainable materials and efficient mechanical systems, and must achieve at least a LEED (Leadership in Energy Efficient Design) Silver rating; however, the D.C. Public Library is operating with a higher standard, requiring that all new buildings must reach LEED Gold status. The entrance to the building will be located on Hamlin Street N.E. just east of the intersection with 18th Street.

Parking will be provided at grade on the southern portion of the Property, where an unstriped lot currently exists. The minimum number of parking spaces for a full-service neighborhood public library in a non-residential zone is 1 space per 1,000 square feet of gross floor area in excess of 3,000 square feet. 11 DCMR § 2101.1 Based on the gross floor area proposed, 11 DCMR § 2101.1 would require 20 parking spaces. The Board has the authority to reduce this requirement through a special exception by 50% if the library is located within one-half mile of a Metrorail station; however, while the site is adjacent to at least 10 Metrobus routes, it is located over one mile from Metrorail. The constraints of the site only allow for a total of eleven (11) parking spaces to be built for the new library, therefore, the Library seeks a variance of 9 spaces.



VARIANCE CRITERIA

The Board is empowered to grant an area variance where it finds three conditions:

- (1) The property is unique because, *inter alia*, of its size, shape, or other extraordinary or exceptional situation or condition relating to the property,
- (2) The owner would encounter practical difficulties if the zoning regulations were strictly applied; and
- (3) The variance would not cause substantial detriment to the public good and would not substantially impair the intent, purpose, and integrity of the zoning plan.

Washington Canoe Club v District of Columbia Zoning Commission, 889 A.2d 995 (D.C. 2005); *French v District of Columbia Bd. of Zoning Adjustment*, 658 A.2d 1023, 1035 (D.C. May 15, 1995)(citing *Roumel v District of Columbia Bd. of Zoning Adjustment*, 417 A.2d 405, 408 (D.C. 1980)). See also *Gilmartin v District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment*, 579 A.2d 1164, 1168 (D.C. 1990)(Practical difficulties or hardships must be due to the unique circumstances peculiar to applicant's property and not to the general conditions in the neighborhood; however, the statute does not preclude the approval of a variance where the uniqueness arises from a confluence of factors) See also *Monaco v District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment*, 407 A.2d 1091 (When a public service organization has inadequate facilities and applies for a variance, the Board of Zoning Adjustment may consider the needs of the public and the organization as other possible extraordinary or exceptional situation or condition of a particular piece of property. In addition, public need for a use is an important factor in granting or denying a variance).

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converge. This truncation of the lot places a further limitation on the ability to expand the use of the ground level. The site is further constrained by immediately adjacent National Park Service land on the south, a single-family house on the east, and public streets on the north and west, leaving no possibility to enlarge the site to accommodate additional parking on grade. The buildable envelope of the Property, particularly given its somewhat irregular shape, is not large enough to facilitate a new Library of the size required to fit the Library's program and to accommodate the concomitant parking requirement.

Practical Difficulty. It has been well-established in previous Library cases before this Board that the District of Columbia Library has adopted a set of standards for its modernization, which include program needs that are distinct to this extraordinarily important public service. These program standards include a standard minimum square footage of approximately 22,000 square feet, separation of patron space, community meeting rooms which can be accessed outside of regular library hours, and other standard facilities to be constructed at all Neighborhood Libraries across the system.

Theoretically, there are three potential ways in which the full parking requirement of 20 spaces could be accommodated. First, given the proximity of the site to other public lands, the Library could seek to enlarge the site. This is not possible, however, since the site is bounded on two sides by public streets, on the east by a single family dwelling, and on the south by National Park Service, rather than District-controlled, land. Second, the Library explored adding an additional row of parking at the rear of the building. Because the Zoning Regulations require a nine (9) foot length for parking spaces, and twenty (20) feet of width for drive aisles, there is simply not enough room to accommodate any additional parking and the required drive aisles on

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Uniqueness. The site sits on a slope, generally sloping down to the south from the highest ground at Rhode Island Avenue. In addition to the particular programmatic needs of the Library, which, under *Monaco* may be considered extraordinary conditions inherent in the Property (and will be discussed further herein), there are two aspects of the site which make it unique and which result in the inability to conform strictly to the existing Zoning Regulations for off-street parking:

First, the soil at the site is of poor quality, and extremely unstable. Although the architects would have liked to take advantage of the sloping site to provide parking under the building, the site soil conditions make that impossible. In fact, because of the unstable soil, a substantial portion of the lower level of the existing building was never excavated. Digging the existing foundation and building above would have required driving piles and building abutment pile caps; the original structure was instead constructed using a slab on grade for the northern half of the building to avoid the significant cost and disruption of driving piles, while the rear/southern portion was excavated. The Library originally planned on using the southern portion of the Property for housing mechanical functions in the new building; however, the Library's consulting engineering firm concluded that the excavation therefor was unwise and cost prohibitive due to these unstable soils. Instead, the Library's consultants recommended adding a ten (10) foot depth of compacted geotechnical fill for most of the previously excavated portion of the site, and adding another slab on top of the compacted fill and the remaining slab for the existing building, then constructing the new library on top. These conditions make it impossible to place parking underneath the library in a basement level.

In addition, the site includes an unusual configuration of the lot at the northwest corner, which is chamfered to mirror the situation where Hamlin Street and Rhode Island Avenue

site The site is only 124 feet from north to south. In the current design, nine (9) feet of that is already consumed by the 11 spaces being provided. Adding a second row would mean that a minimum of 38 feet, or almost one-third of the ground floor of the Library site would be taken up by parking. It is not possible to accommodate this amount of space for parking and still achieve the program requirements that must be met on the ground floor, including book drop, circulation, staff work areas, the children's room, restrooms, and a community meeting room with separate access to the building for use after regular Library hours. The remainder of the space is necessary for circulation within the building (aisles, elevator and two sets of stairs), plus mechanical systems. These ground floor requirements make it impossible to provide any more space at grade for parking.

Moreover, the District of Columbia, through the adoption of the Green Building Act, requires all DC government buildings to meet LEED Silver standards. The DC Public Library, mindful of the importance of the example set by its buildings and the significance of their role in the community, has adopted a standard of LEED Gold. Meeting this standard while remaining within public sector budget constraints is challenging. The Library must try to achieve the requisite number of "points", but in the most cost-effective manner possible. Providing additional parking on site could penalize the building in terms of compliance with LEED requirements, generating the need for additional, more costly measures to accumulate sufficient LEED points. In addition, to meet stormwater run-off requirements set by DC Water, and to achieve LEED points, the architect has called for the construction of an extensive green roof and skylights to provide natural lighting for the interior. These features, while highly desirable and important to LEED compliance, limit the amount of mechanical equipment that can be located on the roof. Therefore, the small amount of below grade space that will remain excavated must

be filled with the mechanical equipment that would otherwise be on the roof, creating a further, and substantial, practical difficulty in putting more parking underground to comply with a strict interpretation of the Zoning Regulations.

Finally, the library explored meeting its parking requirement by providing parking for vehicles underground, but as described above, this was extremely cost prohibitive due to unstable soils across the site.

The inability to expand the lot, the significant program requirements that must be met on the ground floor, and the poor quality of the soil underlying the Property constitute serious practical difficulties in meeting the strict application of the Zoning Regulations on this site.

No Adverse Impact. The requested relief can be granted without harming the public good or impairing the intent, purpose, and integrity of the zone plan. First, the project is largely intended to serve the residents of the immediate neighborhoods of Woodridge and other areas of Ward 5 within walking distance to the Library. Second, the current library on the Subject Property, which has been in that location for over fifty (50) years, provides only 11 parking spaces. This has not engendered serious complaints from the patrons or the surrounding community. The proposed development will provide 11 on site parking spaces, including two ADA-accessible parking spaces. Additionally, there are numerous on-street parking spaces available immediately adjacent to the proposed building along Hamlin, Rhode Island, and 18th Street.

The Proposed Use is in Harmony with the General Purpose and Intent of the Zoning Regulations and Zone Maps. The Property is located in a neighborhood characterized predominantly by low-density and moderate-density commercial development, and low- and moderate-density residential development, institutional uses and federal park land. The

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proposed development will continue the library use on the Property, but will result in enhanced and updated library services consistent with other neighborhood libraries in the District which have been recently renovated or redeveloped

Neighborhood libraries are designed to serve the communities in which they are located. It is anticipated that the vast majority of library patrons should be able to walk to the branch situated in their local community. The current parking regulations require a great deal of parking—1 space per 1,000 square feet of gross floor area in excess of 3000 square feet—for neighborhood libraries in C-2-A zones. Given the Library's program requirements, the proposed square footage of the new Woodridge Branch would, under the current regulations, require 20 parking spaces. As indicated above, providing such a large amount of parking would not be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan's designation of the area as a Main Street corridor, in which pedestrian activity is to be emphasized

The proposed use is not likely to adversely affect the use of neighboring property. The proposed development will only modestly increase the existing footprint of the Library (by approximately 2,000 sf), and will provide the same amount of space for parking as exists currently. The current library has existed on the site for more than 50 years, with no apparent significant adverse impacts.

Parking demand in the area is reduced by the fact that most of the commercial establishments along Rhode Island Avenue have their own parking lots and by the presence of large amounts of open space both abutting the Library and across 20th Street. Langdon Park, in its entirety, comprises approximately 8.25 acres, and it is across 20th Street from additional parkland of more than 11 acres, which includes the Langdon Recreation Center.

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As observed above, neighborhood libraries are designed to serve the communities in which they are located, and have been located so that the majority of library patrons will be able to walk to the facility. In addition to the eleven (11) spaces located behind the library, a significant number of on-street parking spaces are available on both sides of 18th Street between Rhode Island Avenue and Franklin Street, as well as in front of the Property along Hamlin Street. Of the eleven (11) single family homes located on this stretch of Hamlin, it appears that four (4) have their own off-street parking spaces with curb cuts on Hamlin, and others may have access to parking in the rear, off of the alley. Many other homes in the surrounding neighborhood also have parking for vehicles on site. Finally, several major Metrobus routes run within one block of the Property, along Rhode Island Avenue, 18th Street, and Franklin Street, all of which provide easy access to transit for patrons traveling to the library from outside the immediate area.

There are a number of schools within walking distance (see map on next page), demonstrating that many of the prime users of the Woodridge Library are within an easy walk, bike, or bus trip, further reducing the demand for parking

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- 4 Noyes Elementary School**
2725 10th St NE, Washington, DC 20018
(202) 576-6071
- 5 Tree of Life Community Public Charter School**
2315 18th Pl NE, Washington, DC 20018
(202) 832-1108 [More Info](#)
- 6 Dcgovt-Schls-Pblc-Elementary Schools-Langdon**
1900 Everts St NE, Washington, DC 20018
(202) 576-6048 [More Info](#)
- 7 Mary McCloud Bethune Charter School**
1404 Jackson St NE, Washington, DC 20017
(202) 459-4710 [More Info](#)
- 8 National Cllgte Prprtry PBLC CHRTR**
2703 12th St NE, Washington, DC 20018
(202) 832-7737
- 9 St Francis De Sales School**
2019 Rhode Island Ave NE, Washington, DC 20018
(202) 529-5394 [More Info](#)
- 10 Luke Moore Academy Senior High Sch**
1001 Monroe St NE, Washington, DC 20017
(202) 576-7005

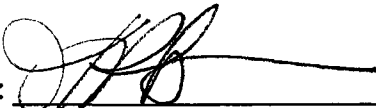
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CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, it is respectfully submitted that, upon receipt of all of the Applicant's proof and all other support of record for the variances requested, such relief be granted.

Respectfully submitted,

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EXHIBIT LIST

- A. Plat
- B. Plans
- C. Photographs
- D. List of Property Owners within 200'

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