GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF PLANNING

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Office of the Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: D. C. Zoning Commission

FROM: Andrew Altman
Director

DATE: August 29, 2003

SUBJECT: Setdown Report on Zoning Commission Case Number 03-26, a Proposed Consolidated Planned Unit Development on Square 235 at 2101-2125 14th Street, N.W.

BACKGROUND

This application involves lots 59, 60, 178, 203, 801, 815, 817, 818 and 820 (now 821 and 822) on Square 235. The combined properties make up the development site of approximately 78,200 square feet (1.79 acres) that occupies the entire 14th Street frontage of the square as well as portions of the V and W Street, N.W. frontages. Two north-south alleys 12-feet wide span the square from V to W Streets, N.W., and the western alley also divides this development site.

The portion of the site between 14th Street and the western north-south alley is partially developed with one- and two- story masonry commercial buildings, the office and storage lot for an automobile dealership, and a two-story masonry row dwelling in the northeast corner. The portion of the site east of the alley consists of three lots bordered by paved alleys 10-12 feet wide on four sides. Properties to the north and south are each developed with a two-story masonry building (circa 1913 and 1939) with approximate gross floor areas of 25,500 and 33,700 square feet, formerly used as commercial garages (the western end of the garage to the south actually reaches three stories). The lot in-between, former Chester Court alley right-of-way, is 26 feet wide and entirely paved.

Development in the vicinity consists of two- and three-story masonry row dwellings to the north along W Street, N.W., and the Anthony Bowen YMCA further north across W Street; three-story masonry row dwellings to the south across the other east-west alley, and the Harrison Recreation Center and park further south across V Street. To the east is the Children's Studio School (formerly the Harrison School) across the other north-south alley, and one- to three- story masonry commercial buildings to the west across 14th Street. South of the project, at the southeast corner of 14th and V Streets is a planned project with mixed-use, residential and retail.

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
Case 03-26
Exhibit 14

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO.03-26
EXHIBIT NO.14

Properties between 14th Street and the western north-south alley are zoned Major Business and Employment Center (C-3-A) and Uptown Arts Use (Arts) Overlay Districts. The balance of the square including the eastern portion of the development site is zoned Residential (R-5-B) District. Square 235 is also located within The Greater U Street Historic District. Historic preservation staff determined that both former garages contribute to the integrity of this historic district, but not the existing buildings along 14th Street. As a result, the Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB) imposed limitations on this development proposal to preserve the former garages. The project has been approved in concept by the Historic Preservation Review Board.

APPLICANT'S PROPOSAL

The Washington Metropolitan Transit Authority (WMATA) and Square 235 LLP (PN Hoffman, Inc. et al), the Applicant, propose to rehabilitate the site by:

- Replacing existing commercial buildings along 14th Street with two nine-story residential buildings with 24,000 square feet of ground floor retail, and 234 parking spaces in a two-level garage below-grade;
- Renovating the existing dwelling along W Street for residential use; and
- Renovating the contributing warehouses for residential use with interior ground floor parking for 40 vehicles, and constructing two additional floors for residential use.

This project would involve approximately 315,000 square feet of new and renovated gross square footage, and provide 240 to 300 residential units. New buildings on the western portion of the site would be designed to have the appearance of three separate structures, and be aligned to continue the existing 26-foot wide space between the warehouses along the former Chester Court to 14th Street. This open area would be maintained solely for pedestrian use. Note that the proximity of the western portion of this site to WMATA's underground railway tunnel and easement along 14th Street requires the façade of the southern building to curve away from the V Street intersection. A pedestrian bridge across the existing north-south alley would connect the new construction and the rehabilitated garage buildings.

The applicant is requesting closure of 215 linear feet of the intervening north-south alley to make the divided development site continuous. The southern 14th Street building would set back from the west side of the former right-of-way to expand the effective vehicular travel lane to 20 feet. This will allow better ingress/egress between V Street and the driveway into the below-grade parking garage. If the District Council approves the alley-closing request, the applicant would then record a public access easement covering the expanded travel lane. One loading/service bay 30 feet long and a 100 square foot loading dock would be provided behind 14th Street buildings. Access to these facilities would be via the new 20-foot easement and the remaining 12-foot wide portion of the north-south alley.

In response to HPRB comments, the Applicant modified the original development proposal along 14th Street by:

- Creating a third building form on the front façade to complement the two actual buildings;
- Increasing the building height and varying the roof line;

- Narrowing the structural bays and building widths to emphasize the verticality of the overall design;
- Setting the top two floors back to reduce their visibility from 14th Street; and
- Adding an open pagoda feature to increase the visual interest of the more traditional design of the northern building.

The Applicant also set upper building floors back substantially from V and W Street frontages. East of the alley, the existing garage building forms would be maintained while providing interior parking. Since solid masonry walls will not be opened, space used for interior parking would reduce the FAR available for residential uses.

The applicant now requests Zoning Commission approval of a consolidated planned unit development (PUD) application to take advantage of additional development flexibility allowed under the Zoning Regulations. The proposed development site is "split zoned" C-3-A and Arts Overlay district between 14th Street and the western north-south alley, and R-5-B east of the alley. This proposal therefore requires the following relief from current matter-of-right zoning:

- Relief from C-3-A/Arts District regulations pertaining to:
  - Maximum allowable residential floor area ratio (FAR)
  - Required rear yard
  - Required retail parking spaces
  - Residential recreation space
  - Limitation of one roof structure (penthouse)
  - Maximum additional allowable FAR for roof structures
  - Limit building height to a maximum of 75 feet (subject to conditions)
  - Limit the height of roof structures (above grade) to 83.5 feet
  - Require 75% of the 14th Street streetwall to a height of 15 feet be constructed to the front property line
- Relief from R-5-B district regulations regarding:
  - Maximum allowable residential floor area ratio (FAR)
  - Waiver of the requirement to include enclosed interior parking area in FAR calculations
  - Maximum building height
  - Minimum rear yard
  - Limitation of one roof structure (penthouse)
  - Maximum additional allowable FAR for roof structures
  - Waive the requirement for one loading berth 55-feet long with a 200 square foot loading platform.

Continued refinement of design plans may require additional zoning relief by the public hearing. It should also be noted that this application does not include a request to amend the Zoning Map or current zoning pattern to address these limitations. Based on this request, other aspects of the development proposal apparently conform to current Zoning Regulations.

The Applicant submitted a companion application for agency review requesting partial closure of the western north-south alley (Surveyor Order 03-2526).

ANALYSIS

The R-5-B zoning district allows a maximum 1.8 FAR for residential uses and maximum height of 50 feet as a matter-of-right. The C-3-A/Arts district allows a maximum 4.0 FAR of residential development, including up to 2.5 FAR of commercial uses, and a maximum height of 75 feet. So while the desired mix of uses in allowed, the requested development density can only be achieved through a PUD.

PUD Bulk and Intensity Relief

As explained in the "Statement of P.N.Hoffman, Inc., in Support of an Application for Consolidated Review of a Planned Unit Development," dated July 21, 2003, approval of this PUD request would yield the following benefits for the applicant:

- For the western portion of the site zoned C-3-A/Arts district:
  - Increase the allowable residential FAR from 4.0 to 4.73; and
  - Increase the allowable height from 75 to 90 feet (with no limit on the number of stories); and
- For the eastern portion of the site zoned R-5-B district:
  - Increase the allowable residential FAR from 1.8 to 3.15; and
  - Increase the allowable building height from 50 to 60 feet.

Section 2405.3 of the Zoning Regulations allow the Commission to increase the allowable PUD height or floor area ratio by 5% if "... the increase is essential to the successful functioning of the project and consistent with the purpose and (the PUD) evaluation standards ...". The Statement indicates the additional 5% increase is essential due to:

- Extra engineering costs related to construction next to the WMATA rail tunnel;
- The unusual "T" configuration and split zoning of the site; and
- Costs associated with environmental remediation.

It is also references the HPRB requirement to retain the existing warehouses and create a design compatible with the Greater U Street Historic District, and the fact that enclosed ground floor parking in the garage buildings will reduce the available FAR for residential uses.

OP finds the interior parking circumstance persuasive, however, the applicant should provide additional detail concerning the unique costs associated with site development in its supplemental statement prior to the public hearing.

Other Requested Relief

The Statement also provides the following justification for the additional requested relief.

- Reduction in the required rear yard: Assuming the requested alley closing is approved, the rear property boundary of the development site would coincide with the eastern north-south alley. The proposed development incorporates existing buildings that nearly extend to this property line now.

- Reduction of required retail parking spaces: The PUD application includes a reduction in the number of required retail spaces, a portion of which is permitted under Section

calculations if enclosed less than 50% by surrounding walls, however HPRB required that existing solid walls be maintained. Retaining the existing building forms while providing needed parking would reduce the allowable FAR available for residential development.

- Reduction in required loading berths: The Applicant desires to eliminate the requirement for one loading bay, 55 feet in length, and a loading platform of 200 square feet. The stated justification is that targeted first time homebuyers would not use larger vehicles to move into units averaging approximately 880 square feet in size. Staff has also referred this issue to DDOT.

The Applicant also requests flexibility in project phasing to allow: Phase I building permits, for construction between 14th Street and the north-south alley, to be filed within the two years after PUD approval consistent with Section 2408.8; and Phase II permits, for construction east of the north-south alley, to be filed within two years after the Phase I construction is completed. Planning staff will continue to work with the applicant on the project-phasing schedule.

With regard to the standards for Zoning Commission approval of a PUD, staff's preliminary review indicates benefits and amenities include the preservation of an historic property, contributions for affordable housing, and improved access to the alley system. Adoption of the requested PUD would therefore provide the needed relief in accordance with the standards in Section 2403 of the Zoning Regulations.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

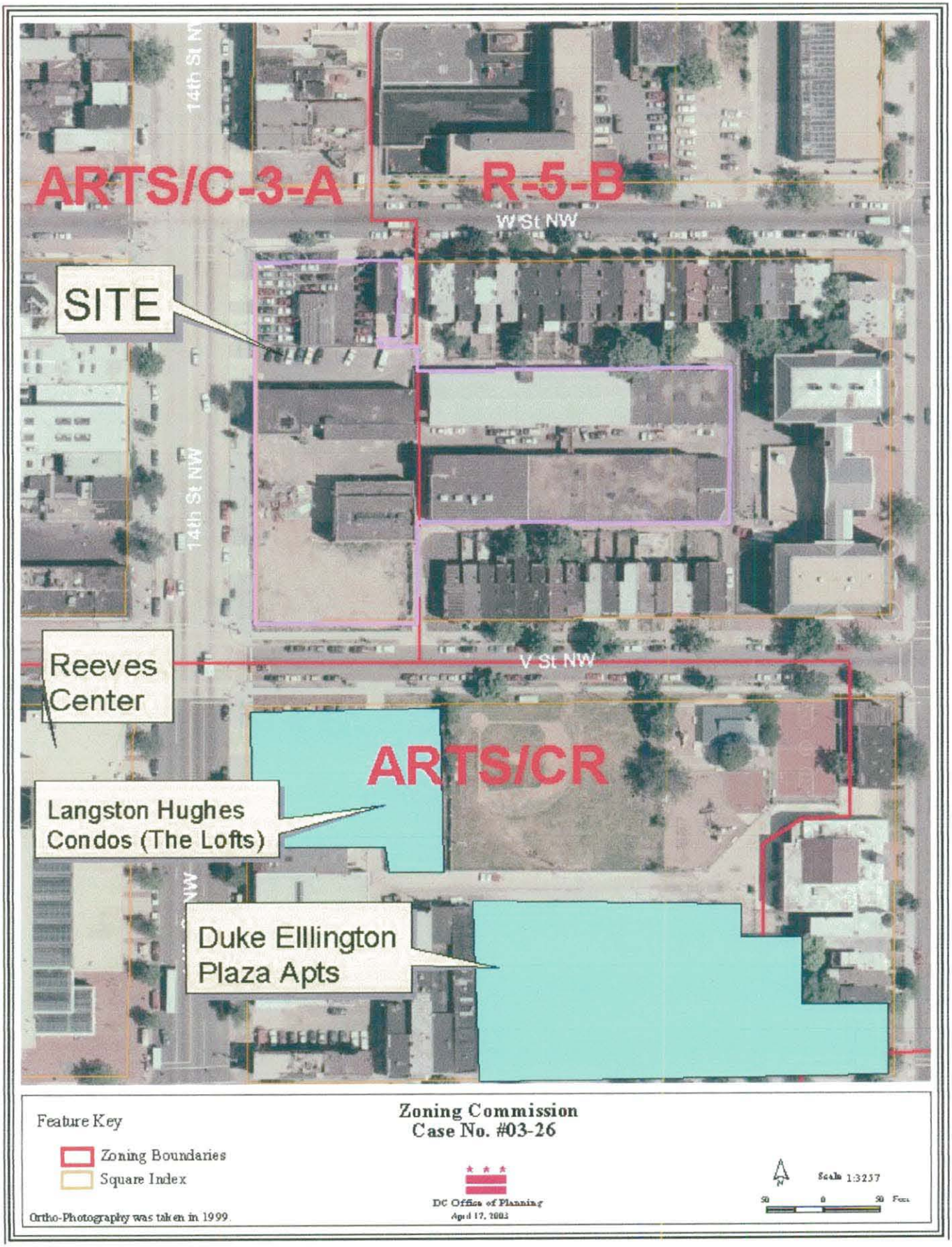
The Comprehensive Plan Generalized Land Use Map designates this area for mixture of Medium Density residential development characterized by multiple-unit housing and mid-rise apartment buildings, and Medium Density Commercial characterized by shopping and service areas that generally offer a large concentration and variety of goods ands services outside of the Central Employment Area, as predominant uses.

The Comprehensive Plan states, as its first principle, the importance of stability for residential neighborhoods. District elements of the Plan provides that the residential character of neighborhoods be maintained and improved, in fact:

> "Ensuring good quality neighborhoods is of utmost importance to the District."

In Title 11, the Land Use Element, the Plan gets quite specific. Section 1103, Objectives for Residential Neighborhoods, states:

> "The residential neighborhood objectives are to conserve the essentially satisfactory qualities of the District's many stable residential neighborhoods, to enhance other neighborhoods to improve and achieve stability, to redirect public and private initiatives to neighborhoods most in need of improvement and stability, to encourage development of adequate neighborhood shopping and support services in all sections of the District, to protect residential neighborhoods from disruptive uses and to prevent concentrations of non-residential uses in residential neighborhoods."


ARTS/C-3-A
R-5-B
W St NW
SITE
14th St NW
Reeves Center
V St NW
ARTS/CR
Langston Hughes Condos (The Lofts)
Duke Elllington Plaza Apts
Feature Key
Zoning Boundaries
Square Index
Ortho-Photography was taken in 1999.
Zoning Commission
Case No. #03-26
DC Office of Planning
April 17, 2003
Scale 1:3237
50 0 50 Feet

Policies in support of these objectives include "(1) Promote the conservation, enhancement and revitalization of the residential neighborhoods of the District for housing and neighborhood-related uses; ..."

Policies in support of economic development outside of the Central Employment Area objective under Section 206.2 include:

"(b) Support appropriate development of ... the 14th Street ... corridors, including making these redevelopment efforts priority items on the working agenda for the economic development entity;
(c) Implement update plans for the longstanding urban renewal corridors that are consistent with the Plan's objectives and policies ..."

The Housing Element of the Plan also includes the following major policy:

"300.1 The District recognizes its obligation to facilitate the availability of adequate, affordable housing to meet the needs of current and future residents. However, government alone cannot provide affordable housing for all District citizens.

(a) Partnerships between the private sector, nonprofit housing providers, and the District government are necessary to meet the growing housing needs of District residents; and
(b) Community participation in the planning process is also essential to ensure that programs and actions are effective in meeting community needs, including a desired sense of community cohesion.

300.2 A central theme of the Housing Element is that the District must stimulate a wider range of housing choices and strategies through the preservation of sound older stock and the production of new units for a wide variety of household types. The District will continue to use all available public and private resources to support a variety of programs designed to do the following: ...

(d) Stimulate the construction and rehabilitation of affordable housing by private for- profit and non-profit housing providers."

The development site also abuts the Uptown Arts Special Treatment Area. Section 1130.2 of the Plan includes the following policies:

"(a) Promote the historic character of the area, and develop design criteria toward the achievement of that character; ...
(c) Encourage, promote, preserve, protect, and display the area's entertainment, arts, and architectural history; ...
(k) Address the many narrow commercial sites that exist in the area to encourage suitable scale and massing;
(l) Encourage and provide the development of adequate parking facilities to support other development policies; ...

(n) Assist in the retention of existing housing stock and provide new housing opportunities; and
(o) Encourage the retention of historic buildings."

COMMUNITY COMMENT

Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) considered this proposal during a scheduled meeting on April 3, 2002. The ANC voted to support the application. ANC Chairperson Deborah Thomas submitted a letter to the record outlining the ANC's discussion of the amenity package.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW

Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB) unanimously approval the height, massing and scale of the conceptual plans during its meeting on June 26, 2003. Final approval of actual development plans is subject to approval by SHPO staff.

RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning recommends that the Commission "set down" this application for a public hearing. OP concludes that the project is a well-designed solution to a difficult site, offers a substantial amenity package and provides substantial new housing units within a convenient distance to both Metro and the Central Employment area.

Staff recommends that the following issues be addressed in greater detail by the applicant prior to the hearing:

- Provision of more detailed information about "extraordinary" cost impacts of this development proposal to support the requested 5% increase in the total allowable FAR:
- Continue working with the DDOT to secure concurrence for the requested reduction in retail parking, and waiver of the requirement for one 55-foot loading bay and 200 square foot platform; and
- Revise proposed project phasing to be more specific.

AA/afj

Attachment: Exhibit 1 Aerial Map with Zoning