

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF PLANNING



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Office of the Director

Memorandum

TO: District of Columbia Zoning Commission
FROM: *H.S. Fev*
Ellen McCarthy, Director
Office of Planning
DATE: October 20, 2006
SUBJECT: Final Report for GWU and DC Public Schools #06-17
Consolidated Planned Unit Development and Map Amendment

APPLICATION

The District of Columbia Public Schools and The George Washington University have petitioned the Zoning Commission to approve their request for a Consolidated Planned Unit Development (PUD) and related map amendment from R-5-D to SP-2 for modernization and addition to the historic Grant School at 2130 G Street and for construction of a new dormitory building for the university in the 2100 block of F Street. The site is Square 80, Lots 55 and 829.

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning recommends approval of the PUD and related map amendment.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

The project includes the historic Grant School, which currently houses the School Without Walls, and property on F Street which includes tennis courts owned by the university and the School Without Walls parking lot currently owned by DCPS. The existing Grant School was constructed in 1882 and is one of the earliest surviving school buildings in the District. It is a three-story brick school building and was granted landmark status on May 25, 2006. The lot also contains a parking lot extending south to F Street. Both properties are currently zoned R-5-D and are in the campus boundaries of George Washington University.

The immediate area on the north of F Street is zoned R-5-D and lies within the campus boundaries. To the south of F street, properties are zoned R-5-E. While the site is largely surrounded by university buildings, the square to the south has several privately owned residential structures of various densities.

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia

CASE NO. 06-17

EXHIBIT NO. 24
ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 06-17
EXHIBIT NO. 24

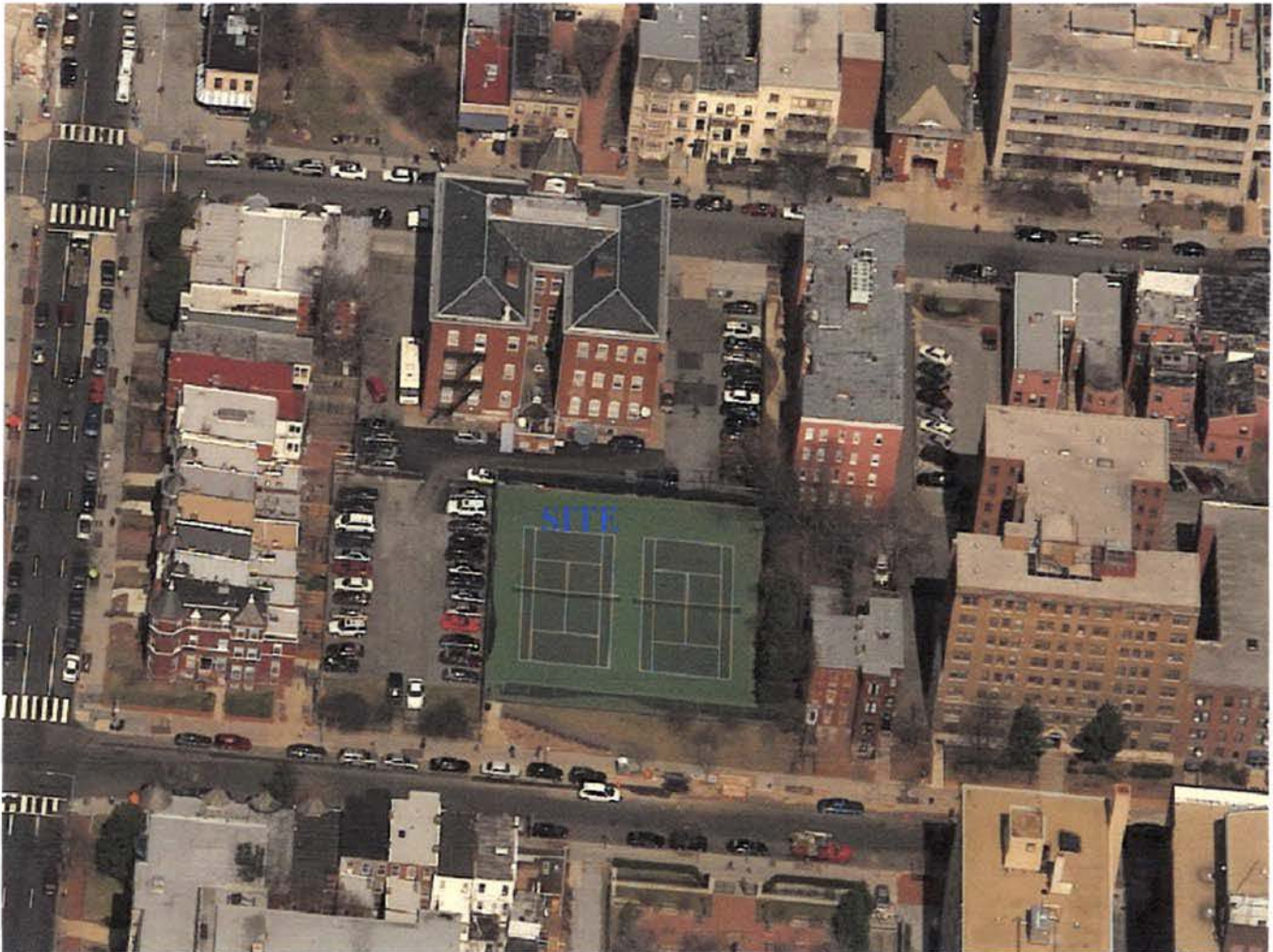


Figure 1: Aerial View

PROPOSAL

The proposal is for two buildings on the site. The Grant School would be modernized and expanded to continue housing the School Without Walls. The site of the tennis courts and parking lot to the south would be used by GWU to construct a new 90 foot dormitory building for university use. In light of its pending landmark status, the Grant School would be saved in its entirety with the inside to be modernized and improved. The proposal calls for a four story addition to the east of the existing school to provide over 26,000 more square feet of classroom and multi-purpose space for a total of 50,450 square feet in the new school.

The new dormitory is proposed to front on F Street providing approximately 474 new campus beds. It would be ten stories and 90 feet in height. It is proposed at 182,188 square feet. The building would provide at least three levels of underground parking totaling around 178 spaces. The FAR for the entire site, including both buildings, is just under 5.1.



Figure 2: Site Area

ZONING

The site is currently zoned R-5-D and lies entirely within the University's campus boundary. There is sufficient FAR remaining under the existing campus plan so that the project would be approvable as a further processing. However the University wants to avoid using aggregate density from the campus plan and therefore the site would need to either take advantage of the density bonus being sought by the new GWU campus plan or seek a rezoning. In order to process this project on a separate timetable from the campus plan and remove the site from the existing campus density cap, the university is seeking a

map amendment to SP-2. Also, the Grant School is not part of the campus and not subject to the density allowances of the campus plan.

Even with a rezoning to SP-2, some additional zoning relief will be required with the PUD. The following table shows the areas of relief needed:

Zoning Tabulation

	R-5-D MOR	SP-2 MOR	GW Dorm	DCPS	Total PUD
FAR	4.5	6.0			5.09
Height	90 ft	90 ft	90 ft	89 ft	90 ft
Lot Occupancy	75%	80%	74%	81.5%	77.5%
Rear Yard	22'6"	18'9"	0'	0'	Relief Required
Side Yard	0'	0'	0'	0'	0'
Parking	N/A	N/A	178 spaces	0 spaces	Relief Required
Roof Structures	1:1 setback	1:1 setback	Complies	Relief Required	Relief Required
Courts	10 ft	12 ft	Relief Required	Relief Required	Relief Required

FLEXIBILITY

FAR

The applicants are seeking density above the matter-of-right for the subject zone district. While the proposed FAR would be achievable through the proposed campus plan PUD or by use of remaining FAR under the existing campus plan, the applicants have opted to seek a map amendment to SP-2 to achieve the desired FAR. The proposed SP-2 district allows a matter of right FAR of 6.0.

Rear Yard

The applicant proposes constructing both buildings to the common rear lot line. Neither building, therefore, would have the required rear yard, but this would not affect any existing structures.

Parking

Parking for the GW dormitory is governed by the existing campus plan and will continue to be governed by any new campus plan. The provision of 178 new parking spaces for the university under this building will serve university needs and support the university parking program. The existing School Without Walls parking spaces will not be replaced on-site, but will be provided to the school by the university from existing parking stock off-site. 30 spaces will be provided to the school in perpetuity. This situation will require relief from the on-site parking requirement for the school.

Roof Structures

Due to historic constraints on the School Without Walls site, the applicant has proposed penthouse structures on the addition that do not meet the one to one setback requirements.

PUD EVALUATION STANDARDS

The purpose and standards for Planned Unit Developments are outlined in 11 DCMR, Chapter 24. Section 2400.1 states that a PUD is “designed to encourage high quality developments that provide

public benefits.” The proposed development will be filling two needs. First, the Grant School has been in need of major renovations and modernization for years. This project will provide the funding to bring the facility up to the high standards of its program. Second, GW is in need of more undergraduate dormitory space on their campus. The new building will help the university continue to provide more housing for its students on campus as required under condition 9 of the existing campus plan. Further, the applicant is requesting that the proposal be reviewed as a consolidated PUD. This will allow the utilization of the flexibility stated in Section 2400.2.

The overall goal is to permit flexibility of development and other incentives, such as increased building height and density; provided, that the project offers a commendable number of quality public benefits and that it protects and advances the public health, safety, welfare, and convenience.”

Section 2403 further outlines the standards under which the application is evaluated.

2403.3 The impact of the project on the surrounding area and the operation of city services and facilities shall not be found to be unacceptable, but shall instead be found to be either favorable, capable of being mitigated, or acceptable given the quality of public benefits in the project.

The project provides public benefits in terms of funding the substantial construction for the Grant school. It also will help the university to further the goals of both its current and pending campus plans by helping to bring all of its undergraduates onto the campus. The wider neighborhood has often objected to off-campus housing of university students.

PUBLIC BENEFITS AND AMENITIES

For approval of a PUD, the community benefits should be found to be generally commensurate with the additional FAR and other flexibility requested.

2403.9 Public benefits and project amenities of the proposed PUD may be exhibited and documented in any of the following or additional categories:

- (a) Urban design, architecture, landscaping, or creation or preservation of open spaces;*
- (b) Site planning, and efficient and economical land utilization;*
- (c) Effective and safe vehicular and pedestrian access, transportation management measures, connections to public transit service, and other measures to mitigate adverse traffic impacts;*
- (d) Employment and training opportunities;*
- (f) Housing and affordable housing;*
- (h) Environmental benefits, such as stormwater runoff controls and preservation of open space or trees;*
- (i) Uses of special value to the neighborhood or the District of Columbia as a whole;*

1. Reconstruction/Modernization of Grant School

The applicants have signed a memorandum of understanding for the two sites. In return for the land under the existing parking lot and the extra FAR from the Grant School site, the University is

contributing the majority of the cost of rehabilitating and constructing an addition to the existing public school. The total contribution under the existing plan would total approximately \$12 million. This is a major benefit to the school itself and a large contribution to DC Public Schools.

2. Site Design

The applicant has worked with the Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB) and HP staff in designing the school addition. The plans provide much needed additional space while being respectful of the landmarked building. The new dormitory provides a large open courtyard to the north that will provide open space for university students and light and air to the rear patio of the school. Both buildings have been designed with efficient land utilization and attractive design in mind.

3. Streetscape Improvements

As part of the proposed 2006 campus plan, the university is completing a comprehensive streetscape plan for the campus. The university is expected to proffer improvements, as needed, to the full streetscapes on the north side of the 2100 block of F Street and the south side of the 2100 block of G Street. The improvements will conform with the proposed streetscape plan.

OP finds that the proffered benefits (including streetscape improvements) are generally commensurate with the requested density. The applicant has continued to work with HPRB on the design of the school addition and with OP on the streetscape improvements.

At public hearing, OP requests more detail from the applicant regarding the streetscape improvement proffer as well as details for the Commission regarding the memorandum of understanding between the University and DCPS. OP continues to recommend environmentally sensitive design in all new university buildings.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AND PUBLIC POLICIES

The Generalized Land Use Map includes the site in the GWU campus designated as Institutional in use. The proposed uses would be consistent with this designation. The proposed development would be consistent with land use and policies of the Comprehensive Plan.

The PUD is also consistent with other sections of the Comprehensive Plan including the following Major Themes of the Plan:

- Section 102 - Stabilizing and Improving District Neighborhoods,
- Section 103 - Increasing the Quantity and Quality of Employment Opportunities in the District
- Section 106 – Respecting and Improving the Physical Character of the District
- Section 107 - Preserving and Ensuring Community Input

Section 1319.1 offers an objective for the preservation of historic features. The preservation and reuse of this landmark specifically furthers this goal. Also, in accordance with Section 1340.3, the development plan should not adversely affect the surrounding residential areas, but rather should improve such neighborhoods by improved landscaping, better lighting, enhanced policing, and provision of on-campus housing.

The proposed development should meet the above objectives in terms of improving the physical character of the site and preserving the historic structure. The applicant should make every effort to further the goals of Section 1340.3 through this project and the campus as a whole by addressing landscaping, lighting, policing, and potential negative impacts of this development. The applicant has stated that they will provide detailed plans for landscaping, lighting, and other streetscape improvements at the hearing.

The proposal furthers the goals of the public facilities sections of the Plan. Both the general plan in Section 608 and the Ward 2 Plan in Section 1313 call for coordinated planning to support the location, rehabilitation, and maintenance of public facilities. This proposal provides a public-private partnership that provides significant support for DCPS facilities.

Finally, the application is consistent with the conditions of the existing campus plan, particularly condition 9. The plan requires a percentage of GW undergraduates to be housed on campus and encourages all GW uses to be removed from the surrounding residential neighborhood.

AGENCY COMMENTS

As of the date of this report, OP has not received a written report from DDOT regarding this application. The applicant has provided DDOT with a traffic study and should have further information from them prior to the hearing.

COMMUNITY COMMENTS

On October 19, 2006, ANC 2A voted 4-2 to oppose the PUD application. While the ANC expressed strong support for the School Without Walls, they had objections to both the zoning method being employed and the “cumulative impact” of the FAR in this part of campus. Members of the Commission were unhappy with using the PUD process and rezoning when the project could be achieved as further processing without any other zoning changes. They are also concerned with the mass of the building and the further concentration of student housing in this section of campus.

RECOMMENDATION

OP believes that the proposed PUD is not inconsistent with the elements of the Comprehensive Plan and recommends approval of the application.