

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF PLANNING



Office of the Director

RECEIVED
D.C. OFFICE OF ZONING
2007 JUN 22 PM 4:40

MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Zoning Commission
FROM: *JSF*
Jennifer Steingasser, Deputy Director
DATE: June 22, 2007
SUBJECT: GWU Mount Vernon Campus Plan: 2000 - 2010
Modification and Further Processing
CASE: Z.C. Case No. 07-12

APPLICATION

George Washington University has filed for special exception relief pursuant §§ 210 and 3104 of 11 DCMR for an amendment to its Mount Vernon Campus Plan: 2000 - 2010, and further processing for replacement of Pelham Hall, by the Zoning Commission for Square 1374, Lot 850.

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning recommends approval of the campus plan amendment, and approval of further processing for Pelham Residence Hall.

MOUNT VERNON CAMPUS PLAN

The existing campus plan for the GWU Mount Vernon Campus was approved on December 15, 1999 as BZA Order 16505. The Plan lays out potential development on campus between 2000 and 2010. It allows for an overall development of 320,000 square feet. 30,000 square feet are designated for academic and administrative use leaving 290,000 square feet for residential and "campus life" construction.

Two projects have been completed under this plan, the expansion of Somers Hall and the Athletic/Parking facility. These projects total approximately 70,000 square feet, leaving 220,000 square feet remaining under the plan for future residential/campus life development. The plan calls for the replacement of the existing Pelham Hall with a 70,000 square foot structure.

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 07-12
EXHIBIT NO. 13
ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 07-12
EXHIBIT NO. 13



Figure 1: Aerial View of Campus

PROPOSAL

The University has proposed demolition of the existing Pelham Hall and construction of a new residence hall. The new hall will house around 287 students and contain support space and a dining facility below grade. The building is not expected to contain an executive training facility or underground parking as described in the campus plan.

The new building will be four stories in height and be designed to fit with the existing campus in terms of architecture and materials. The main building will be U-shaped with wings projecting to the north and south. As designed, the building will be approximately 92,300 square feet in size.

The university has designed the building to be as unobtrusive as possible to the nearest neighbors on Berkeley Terrace. While, the existing grade will shield most of the building from view, the university has designed the northern wing to be one story shorter than the rest of the building and will be planting a landscape barrier of coniferous trees to further shield the building from view.

EXISTING ZONING

The campus is located within the R-1-A and R-1-B (single family residential) Zone District. The Zoning Commission is empowered to approve the use of colleges and universities within the R-1-A and R-1-B District. Campuses are required to submit a campus plan for approval by the Commission. Individual construction projects must then be reviewed as further processing cases and conform to the approved campus plan. The proposed project requires a modification to the plan in addition to further processing.

The approved plan identifies the Pelham Hall site for a 70,000 square foot development. The university is asking for a modification to allow 92,300 square feet at this location. This will not be a net increase in development allowed on the campus, but merely a reallocation of total residential development allowed that will result in less development elsewhere on campus.

RELIEF REQUESTED

The application is in conformance with the criteria contained within § 210, COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES, as described below.

“210.1 Use as a college or university that is an academic institution of higher learning, including a college or university hospital, dormitory, fraternity, or sorority house proposed to be located on the campus of a college or university, shall be permitted as a special exception in an R-1 District if approved by the Zoning Commission under § 3104, subject to the provisions of this section.”

This application is for the use of the subject property as an academic institution of higher learning, including dormitories.

“210.2 Use as a college or university shall be located so that it is not likely to become objectionable to neighboring property because of noise, traffic, number of students, or other objectionable conditions.”

Noise and objectionable conditions

The only properties directly affected by this development are the resident neighbors living on Berkeley Terrace. The university has entered into extensive discussions with the Berkeley Terrace residents that have resulted in an agreement of support for the project by these neighbors based on a list of conditions discussed later in this report. It is not expected that the proposed dormitory will cause an increase in objectionable conditions.

Traffic

The university proposes accessing the service and loading dock from Whitehaven Parkway. This entrance is identified in the Campus Plan and the university has coordinated with St. Patrick's School, located across the street, on operational issues related to campus access points. The new structure will not add additional underground parking to the site; parking for this and other

university uses is provided in a large below-ground lot located under the tennis courts.

The applicant has met with DDOT regarding the plan and expects a DDOT report to be filed prior to the public hearing.

Number of Students

The university does not propose to change the number of students allowed on campus as limited by the existing campus plan.

“210.3 In R-1, R-2, R-3, R-4, R-5-A, and R-5-B Districts, the maximum bulk requirements normally applicable in the Districts may be increased for specific buildings or structures; provided, that the total bulk of all buildings and structures on the campus shall not exceed the gross floor area prescribed for the R-5-B District. In all other Residence Districts, similar bulk increases may also be permitted; provided that the total bulk of all buildings and structures on the campus shall not exceed the gross floor area prescribed for the R-5-D District. Because of permissive increases as applicable to normal bulk requirements in the low-density districts regulated by this title, it is the intent of this subsection to prevent unreasonable campus expansion into improved low-density districts.”

The gross floor area permitted within the R-5-A District is permitted up to a maximum ratio of 1.8. The campus plan has an approved FAR of 0.49. The proposal will slightly increase the existing FAR on campus, but not change the total limit for FAR and development set in the campus plan. corner of the campus.

“210.4 As a prerequisite to requesting a special exception for each college or university use, the applicant shall have submitted to the Commission for its approval a plan for developing the campus as a whole, showing the location, height, and bulk, where appropriate, of all present and proposed improvements, including but not limited to the following:
(a) Buildings and parking and loading facilities;
(b) Screening, signs, streets, and public utility facilities;
(c) Athletic and other recreational facilities; and
(d) A description of all activities conducted or to be conducted on the campus, and of the capacity of all present and proposed campus development.”

The application contains a description and plans of the proposed building. The proposal does not make changes to the remainder of the campus plan which remains in effect until December 31, 2010.

“210.5 Within a reasonable distance of the college or university campus, and subject to compliance with § 210.2, the Commission may also permit the interim use of land or improved property with any use that the Commission may determine is a proper college or university function.”

The subject application does not propose any off-campus interim use of land or improved property.

“210.6 When a major new building that has been proposed in a campus plan is instead moved off-campus, the previously designated site shall not be designated for, or devoted to, a different major new building unless the Commission has approved an amendment to the campus plan applicable to the site; provided, that for this purpose a major new building is defined as one specifically identified in the campus plan.”

The subject application does not propose to move off-campus any major new building that had been proposed in a campus plan.

“210.7 In reviewing and deciding a campus plan application or new building construction pursuant to a campus plan, the Commission shall consider, to the extent they are relevant, the policies of the District Elements of the Comprehensive Plan.”

The Comprehensive Plan recommends the following objective:

- 1629.1 “The objectives for land use/zoning are as follows:
(e) Meet various citizens’ needs with educational, recreational and cultural facilities;”

OP believes that the proposed plan amendment and further processing advances the educational goals of the District and thus of the Comprehensive Plan.

“210.8 As an integral part of the application requesting approval of new building construction pursuant to a campus plan, the college or university shall certify and document that the proposed building or amendment is within the floor area ratio (FAR) limit for the campus as a whole, based upon the computation included in the most recently approved campus plan and the FARs of any other buildings constructed or demolished since the campus plan was approved.”

With the addition of a new residence hall replacing the existing Pelham Hall, the aggregate FAR for the campus will still be well below the 0.49 FAR approved for the campus through the campus plan.

COMMUNITY COMMENTS

The university has documented 19 meetings with various community organizations. The proposal was presented to ANC 3D at regular meetings in May and June 2007. As of this date, no report has been received from the ANC in favor or opposition.

The university has also completed negotiations and submitted a written agreement with the directly adjacent neighbors along Berkeley Terrace. This agreement lays out the conditions under which the Berkeley Terrace residents have agreed to support the proposed change. Three of these are agreement between the University and the neighbors on further meetings and future negotiations. These include a no-build zone around the perimeter of campus that OP supports in concept and could be made a condition of approval by the Commission. Points two and three are specific changes to campus operations that OP also supports as conditions to approval. These are the restriction of the perimeter road on campus to one-way use by University vehicles with the exception of special events, and the elimination of five parking spaces identified in the letter.

The University has also had discussions with neighbors living on the W Street side of campus, further from the proposed residence hall. The main two issues that OP has heard from this group include the more specific limitation of development on this side of campus and the necessity for a stormwater management plan. OP notes that the amendment to the plan will result in less development on the remainder of campus and does not see a need to define more particularly what other projects will be reduced prior to the discussions for a plan in 2011. OP does support the completion by the university of a stormwater management plan for the campus to alleviate stormwater impacts on surrounding neighbors.

CONCLUSION

The Office of Planning has reviewed the proposed campus plan amendment and further processing for George Washington University Mt. Vernon Campus and finds that it is generally in conformance with Section 210 of the Zoning Regulations. Subject to the conditions recommended by GWU and campus neighbors, the Office of Planning recommends approval of the proposed campus plan.

JS/tp