GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF PLANNING

Office of the Director

Memorandum

TO: Board of Zoning Adjustments

FROM: Andrew Altman

DATE: 9/18/00

SUBJECT: BZA Case# 16600 (Union of American Hebrew Congregations)
2027 Massachusetts Ave, NW

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF PLANNING
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The memo summarizes the Office of Planning's research, findings and recommendations to the Board of Zoning Adjustments regarding the above application's request pursuant to 11 DCMR §3104.1 for Special Exception of §508.1, and a Variance pursuant to 11 DCMR 3103.2 from §531.1 and §2001.3 (b) and (c) of the Zoning Regulations (see below).

The Project

The Union of American Hebrew Congregations (the Applicant), located 2027 Massachusetts Ave. NW, wishes to add an elevator core to provide accessibility for those with mobility impairments to all floors and an enclosed fire staircase to improve the safety of the building. The property, defined as Square 94, Lot 21, is 2,804 sf in size. It is of triangular shape and fronts on Massachusetts Ave. to the south, Q St. to the north, and 21st St. to the north; adjacent properties abut the property on the east. The subject building is a 3 story red brick building totaling 8,644 gsf (3.08 FAR).

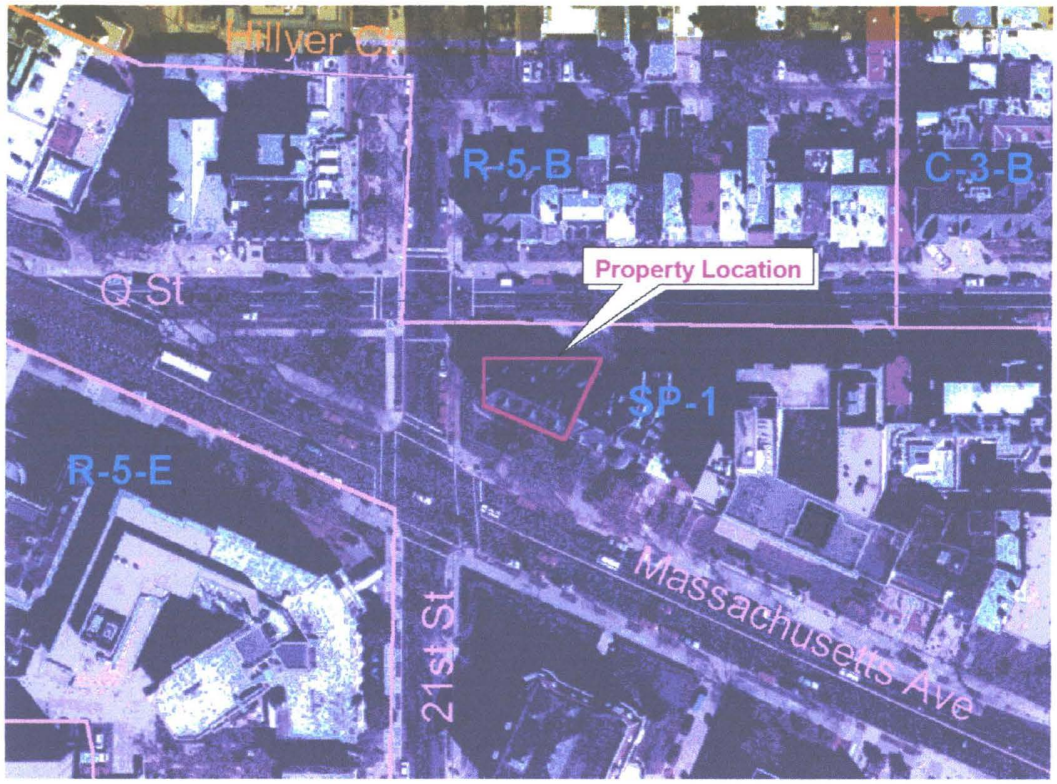
The Applicant's architect has proposed the elevator and staircase to be provided in the northeast corner notch of the building (see attached diagram). The expansion will add an additional 652 square feet to the building bringing the total of the building to 9,296 gsf or 3.32 FAR. This option was chosen over retrofitting the interior structure to support the elevator and stairs. According to the architect, retrofitting the interior would have been substantially more costly and a less efficient use of space than achieved by their proposal.

The property is located in the Dupont Circle and Massachusetts Avenue Historic District. Built around the turn of the century, it is considered to be a contributing building. The property is

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zoned SP-1, which allows non-residential use of up to 2.5 FAR and height of up to 65 feet. Since the building was built prior to the District's enactment of modern zoning in 1958, its current FAR exceeds that allowed by zoning by 0.58 FAR, and is therefore considered a non-conforming building.



Community Comments

The project has received approval from the two community stakeholders affected by the development; they are the Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) 2B and the Dupont Circle Conservancy. Their approval was contingent upon several requirements.

The ANC required the Applicant to:

- Provide proper parking signs for the parking spaces on the Q Street side, and
- Enclose their garbage held on site.

The Dupont Circle Conservancy's concerns centered on the architectural treatment of the addition's windows, the shed roof, and bracket detail. The architect addressed these concerns and has incorporated them into the design.

Agency Comments

Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB) staff have reviewed and approved the project in concept and have directed the applicant to work on the design details, materials, and finishes for

final approval. HPRB staff report notes, "The architect had created a sympathetic new addition that reads as a new structure and relates to the nineteenth century townhouses that line the north side of Q Street."

Findings

1. The building's historic nature and unique shape present the applicant with an extraordinary or exceptional situation. If the BZA were to require strict adherence to the code, it would add the expense of improving the building's structural integrity such as strengthening the floor joists and would substantially reduce the useable space of the building resulting in undue hardship to the owner. (3103.2)

2. The proposed project will not increase the building's intensity of use. FAR is a measure of the density and intensity with which a property is used. By setting limits on FAR, zoning controls the external effects such as traffic congestion caused by this use. The addition of an elevator and emergency staircase will not increase the intensity, but merely improve the current level of use by providing handicap access to all floors and safe emergency egress. It is therefore in "harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations." (§3104.1)

3. In accordance with §508.3, the Applicant has worked diligently with the community and HPRB to ensure the building's bulk, height and design are in harmony with existing uses and structures on neighboring property. Therefore the project will not affect adversely the use of neighboring property. (§3104.1)

4. The current non-conforming building has an FAR of 23% greater than allowed by zoning. The addition, in achieving items 1 through 3 will bring the total of non-conforming square feet to33% greater than what is allowed by zoning. Given the overall size of the building, the project's use of other-wise dead space, and the way in which the addition relates to the nearby nineteenth century townhouses, the project can be granted without substantial detriment to the public good. (§3103.2)

Recommendation

Based on the four findings above, the Office of Zoning recommends that the Board of Zoning Adjustments approve the applicant's request with the following conditions pursuant to its authority under §508..5 of the Zoning Regulations:

1. The applicant shall provide proper parking signs on the Q Street side of the building.

2. The applicant shall enclose its garbage as request by the ANC 2B, and

3. The applicant shall continue to work with HPRB staff on the materials and details of the design.

Relevant Zoning Regulations

§ 508.1 Construction of a new office building or construction of an addition to a building for office use, or conversion of an existing building to office use, shall be permitted in an SP District if approved by the Board of Zoning Adjustment in accordance with the conditions specified in §3108 of Chapter 31 of this title, subject to the provisions of this section.

§508.3 The use, height, bulk, and design shall be in harmony with existing uses and structures on neighboring property.

§508.5 The Board may require special treatment in the way of design, screening of building, accessory uses, signs and facilities as it shall deem necessary to protect the values of neighboring property.

§ 531.1 Except as provided in §537, the maximum permitted floor area ratio in the SP district shall be as set forth in the following table:

District	Apartment House or Other Residential Use	Other Permitted Use	Maximum Permitted
SP-1	4.0	2.5	4.0
SP-2	6.0	3.5	6.0

§2001.3 Enlargements or additions may be made to the structure; Provided that the following requirements are met:

(b) The addition or enlargement itself shall conform to use and structure requirements; and

(c) The addition or enlargement itself shall not increase or extend any existing nonconforming aspect of the structure, and shall not create any new nonconformity of the structure and addition combined.