BEFORE THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT

In re: Application of :

THE PHILLIPS COLLECTION : Application No. 16618

and :

BRIAN E. and JENNIFER B. GIANNATTASIO :

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF ZONING
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STATEMENT OF REASONS IN SUPPORT OF APPLICATION FOR VARIANCE/SPECIAL EXCEPTION

Introduction

The Phillips Collection, one of America's premier art museums, is housed in a historic group of buildings at 1600-21st Street, NW, in the Dupont Circle Historic District (Lot 74 in Square 66). A carriage house on adjacent Lot 819 to the rear of the principal structure serves as a garage and storage.

In order to carry out a long-held desire of Duncan Phillips to create an Education Center for the study and appreciation of modern art, and to respond to the need for additional administrative staff space and improved visitor services, The Phillips Collection developed a plan which entails acquisition of and expansion into the adjacent 15-unit apartment building at 1618-21st Street, N.W. (Lot 827 in Square 66) owned by Brian E. and Jennifer B. Giannattasio. The Phillips Collection has entered into a contract to purchase that property from the Giannattasios.

Because of the particular circumstances affecting the site, relief from strict application of the Zoning Regulations in 3 respects is necessary in order to achieve the Phillips plan: (a) a variance is needed from the maximum allowable lot coverage established by 11 D.C.M.R. (Zoning) §403.2; (b)

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a variance is needed from the maximum allowable floor area permitted in the underlying R-5-B Zone District by §402.4; and (c) a special exception pursuant to Sections 400.7 and 411.11 of the Regulations is needed in order to locate the new stair/elevator penthouse in the most functional position.

Upon conclusion of all the requisite administrative approvals, Lots 74, 819 and 827 will be consolidated into a single lot of record. An application for subdivision approval is pending before the Mayor's Agent for Historic Preservation. HPA No. 00-405. An application for a permit to raze portions of the structure at 1618-21st Street in order to expand galleries in the Goh Annex, to house the education center appropriately, and to more efficiently locate other existing museum facilities, is also pending.

The District of Columbia Historic Preservation Review Board approved the design concept on May 25, 2000.

Property Description and Neighborhood Setting

All of the land which is the subject of this application is zoned D/DC/R-5-B and is within the Dupont Circle Historic District. The balance of Lot 74 is zoned DC/SP-1.

The existing Phillips Collection buildings on Lot 74 consist of the Neo-Classical, 4-story, red masonry Phillips House with its additions, built in the early 20th century. The 4-story red masonry and buff stone Goh Annex, built in the mid 1980s, is connected to the Phillips House by an elevated bridge. The Carriage House, located off the rear alley (Hillyer Court) was built in the late 19th century. The bridge connecting the Goh Annex to the Phillips House spans a 15-foot alley easement that permits vehicular access through the block between Florida Avenue and 21st Street.

Service to the museum takes place at the rear of the Goh Annex. Parking is severely restricted and is available for staff only.

The R-5-B portion of Lot 74 comprises 11,768 square feet of land. Lot 819 measures 2,062 square feet. The existing above-grade floor area of the Goh Annex and the Carriage House total 26,095 square feet.

Lot 827 contains 6,125 square feet of land area. The existing structure at 1618-21st Street contains approximately 11,000 square feet of building area.

The neighborhood consists of embassies and institutions as well as residential and commercial uses. The Cosmos Club and its large surface parking lot adjoin the Phillips property to the west; a 4-story structure occupied by the Society of Missionaries at 1624-21st Street abuts Lot 827 on the north. The Indian Embassy adjoins the Phillips on the Q Street side. The remaining block, as well as the opposite side of 21st Street, consists primarily of apartment buildings and large row houses of three to five stories in height.

The Phillips Collection Expansion Project

The Phillips Collection project focuses on preserving the facade and portions of the exterior walls and roof of 1618-21st Street while enlarging the structure behind the facade and erecting a new, slightly larger structure behind the facade and connecting the whole internally to the Goh Annex. Key program elements of the project include:

- establishment of a new Education Center including classrooms, conference and seminar rooms, artist studios, an expanded library, with some supporting offices;
- re-configuration of the main museum entry area to significantly improve service for visitors;

- improved location of the museum shop and café;
- creation of an outdoor sculpture court/garden;
- expanded art exhibition space with clear internal circulation;
- construction of new on-site parking in an underground garage;
- a new facility for lectures and symposiums;
- additional secure, climate-controlled space for art storage and conservation;
- restoration of the Carriage House and the Hillyer Court area; and
- much-needed relief from overcrowded administrative staff space in the Phillips House.

The project consists of three main elements.

The Goh Annex Improvements. The Goh Annex building is the primary entrance for all visitors to the Phillips Collection. At present, the visitor experience on entering is cramped and often confusing. To alleviate this problem and to create a more architecturally prominent entrance, a new one story entrance addition of approximately 700 square feet will expand the ground floor outward 8 feet and align with the front property line across the full width of the building. The addition will be faced with rusticated stone on both sides of a central curving skylighted entry pavilion. New interior space for coats, tickets, membership, docents, and visitor orientation to the exhibitions will allow groups to quickly enter and proceed to the exhibits without waiting outside. A landscaped front courtyard will be lined with raised stone planters along the sidewalk edge. A ramp will connect the main entrance with the entrance to the new Education Center to be established in the 1618-21st Street building.

Renovation of the Carriage House. The 2-story brick Carriage House is currently used as a garage and unheated storage space. It will become the Education Center Library on both floors and will connect with the main building via two underground levels. Two new levels will be constructed below grade to provide additional parking and storage space. The exterior facades will be fully restored according to accepted Department of Interior standards.

Alterations and Additions to 1618-21st Street. The existing wood-framed structure is not in suitable condition for use as a museum. The Phillips plan will preserve and restore the facade and party walls according to accepted Department of Interior standards. The existing entrance from 21st Street will also be restored. The balance of the structure would be removed and replaced with new construction.

Two underground levels will provide new on-site parking and a lecture/seminar room, rest rooms, lobby and other support space. On-site parking capacity will increase from the current surface parking of 7 spaces to a total of 35 spaces (and possibly more with stacking and valet service). The presence of high ground water and a continuous rock stratum approximately 18 feet below the surface, as well as the complex construction process needed to hold up the building while excavating under it, will add materially to the cost of the project and preclude more intensive use of the site below grade.

A new 4-story masonry and glass addition in the rear will contain a first-floor museum café overlooking a walled courtyard with classrooms and exhibition space on the second and third floors. The new 4th floor space will adjoin the Goh Annex art curatorial and art storage areas and will provide much needed additional art storage space. The fourth floor will be built at the level of the existing roof and will be set back from the 21st Street facade by 30 feet. A one-story roof-top

mechanical penthouse will be built above the fourth floor and will be set back approximately 44 feet from the 21st Street facade.

The Phillips Collection improvement and expansion program will generate approximately 16,610 square feet of new floor area above grade. This total exceeds the maximum allowable FAR permitted in the underlying R-5-B Zone District by approximately 6,786 square feet.

The full scope of the program would also exceed the maximum allowable lot coverage by approximately 1,593 square feet.

Additionally, the need to locate the stair/elevator penthouse on the re-built portion of 1618-21st Street is not consistent with the standards set forth in Section 400.7 of the Regulations. It is not practicable to provide a one-to-one setback for the elevator/stair enclosure portion of the penthouse because of building code requirements to provide one stair access to the roof and for the elevator override height requirements. In addition, the 50-foot width of what is now Lot 827 requires that the below-grade parking configuration place the elevator/stair core along the north property line.

Conclusion

The unique and exceptional conditions which affect the subject property create practical difficulties for the Applicants which will not allow The Phillips Collection to achieve its renovation and expansion program as a matter of right. Approval of the requested variances from the applicable lot coverage and floor area limitations would not be substantially detrimental to the public good, and would not impair the intent, purpose or integrity of the Zoning Regulations and Map.

Approval of a special exception for the efficient location of the new stair/mechanical penthouse will not materially impair the intent and purpose of the Zoning Regulations nor adversely affect the light and air of adjacent buildings.

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