GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF PLANNING

Office of the Director

Memorandum

TO: Board of Zoning Adjustments

FROM: Andrew Altman, Director
Office of Planning

DATE: October 17, 2000

SUBJECT: BZA Application #16622 (Sasha Bruce Youthwork, Inc.)
1022 Maryland Avenue, NE

APPLICATION

The application by Sasha Bruce Youthwork, Inc. requests, pursuant to 11 DCMR 3104.1, a special exception from the provision of Section 332.1 to allow Youth Care Home and Community Residence Facility for up to 15 person, not including supervisors or staff, and subject to the standards of Section 303.

SITE AND AREA DESCRIPTION

The subject property is located at 1022 Maryland Avenue, N.E., Square 961, Lot 803. The site is currently developed with a large 3-story detached house that is occupied by the Sasha Bruce Youth Residential Care Home. The house is on the eastern portion of the property while the remainder of the lot on the west is open space for recreational use. The community surrounding the property is predominantly 2-and 3-story row houses. Exceptions to this are two, 4-story apartment buildings to the east of the site at the intersection of 11th and F Streets, a 3-story apartment building to the north along Maryland Avenue, and the Annie M. Gooding Elementary School to the southwest along F Street.

HISTORY

The applicant, Sasha Bruce Youthwork, Inc., is a non-profit community organization providing shelter, care, and crisis intervention for high-risk youth and families in Washington D.C. since 1974. The organization provides a range of services and operates a total of 13 non-residential and residential programs in the City. The Sasha Bruce House is the only short-term shelter for young people in Washington D.C. It offers homeless, abandoned, and runaway children an alternative to the streets and is open 24-hours per day. The children who come to the house are generally 14-years old and younger and stay for approximately 14 days. The house has bed

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space for 15 children, seven males and eight females in dormitory style bedrooms, in addition to living room, dining room, kitchen, laundry area, after care, counseling space, storage, offices, and recreational area. The children are supported by a group of 17 regular, rotating staff counselors and a cook/housekeeper.

PROPOSAL

Currently, Sasha Bruce Youthwork, Inc. has a permit to house up to ten youths at the Sasha Bruce House. Over the past few years, there has been an overwhelming demand for the services that Sasha Bruce provides, as many of these services that were formerly provided by governmental agencies and are no longer available. The facility has the capacity to accommodate 15 children although they now have only 10 children at a time. The request is therefore to increase the number of children that can be accommodated at the home from 10 to 15. Housing the additional 5 children will not require any expansion of the building or an increase in staff.

ZONING REQUIREMENTS AND ANALYSIS

The subject site is in the R-4 zone. Section 332.1 (a) of the Zoning Regulations allows a Youth Care and Community Residence Facility for up to 15 persons in the R-4 district if approved by the Board of Zoning Adjustment. It is subject to the following provisions as outlined in Section 303:

> **"303.2 There shall be no other property containing a community-based residential facility for seven (7) or more persons in the same square."**

There are no other community based residential facilities within Square 961.

> **"303.3 There shall be no other property containing a community-based residential facility for seven (7) or more persons within a radius of five hundred feet (500 ft.) from any portion of the subject property."**

There are no other community based residential facilities for over seven persons within 500 feet of the Sasha Bruce House.

> **"303.4 There shall be adequate, appropriately located, and screened off-street parking to provide for the needs of occupants, employees, and visitors to the facility."**

Parking for employees and visitors to the property is adequately provided for by three on-site parking spaces at the rear of the building and additional on-street parking in front of the house along Maryland Avenue and to the rear along F Street. There is not a great demand for parking since the staff works on a rotating basis. Given the small increase in the number of children, the staff requirement will not increase and therefore no additional parking spaces will be required, since the residents are children and do not drive.

"303.5 The proposed facility shall meet all applicable code and licensing requirements.

The Sasha Bruce Home currently has a valid Certificate of Occupancy for a "Youth Rehabilitation Home" for 10 residents. If this special exception for a "Youth Residential Care Home" is approved the Certificate of Occupancy will be changed to correctly reflect the operations of the home. The home is also licensed by the Department of Health.

"303.6 The facility shall not have an adverse impact on the neighborhood because of traffic, noise, operations, or the number of similar facilities in the area."

The Sasha Bruce House had been in operation at this location since 1976 and has not had a negative impact on the neighborhood due to the operations of the house, excessive traffic or noise from the facility. Occasional noise from the site is limited to the children playing outside. Some time ago, there was a complaint from neighbors concerning trash. To address this issue, the applicant has built an enclosed area for the storage of trash cans and has contracted privately for trash pick-ups three times per week. It is not envisioned that the existing situation will change with the increase in the number of children at the facility.

"303.7 The Board may approve more that one (1) community-based residential facility in a square or within five hundred feet (500 ft.) only when the Board finds that the cumulative effect of the facilities will not have an adverse impact on the neighborhood because of traffic, noise, or operations."

There are no other facilities within 500 feet of the existing facility and the Sasha Bruce Home will continue to be a good neighbor in the community.

COMMUNITY COMMENTS

On October 12, 2000, the applicant made a presentation to ANC 6A but members of the community were not notified and therefore did not comment on the application. A meeting has being scheduled for November 2, 2000 to consider community concerns. This community meeting dated is subsequent to the public hearing and therefore the single member commissioner for ANC 6A07 has stated that he will request that the record be kept open to facilitate comments from the community and the ANC. The Capitol Hill Restoration Society has also expressed concerns pertaining to the proposed use and its expansion and has stated that they will support the request for a Youth Residential Care Home but not a Youth Rehabilitation Home. To date, Councilmember Ambrose's office has not voiced any concerns pertaining to the expansion of the facility and a final recommendation is expected prior to the public hearing.

SUMMARY

As outlined above, the Sasha Bruce House has met the standards for approval and is in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Ordinance as outlined in the Section 330.

There are no other community based residential facilities in the square or within 500 feet of the subject site. In addition, the facility does not adversely affect the use of neighboring property in accordance with the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Map as it has operated at this location for approximately 24 years and has not introduced excessive traffic, noise, or other disturbances into the neighborhood. The request to increase the number of residents by 5 will not change these circumstances.

RECOMMENDATION

The Sasha Bruce House is providing a great service to the citizens of Washington D.C. and has been a good neighbor in this community for a long time. The small increase in the number of residents requested will allow the applicant to provide help to more children without having to enlarge the facility or staff requirement. Therefore, the impact of the operations will not change. The proposal will be in harmony with the Zoning Regulations and will not adversely impact the surrounding neighborhood. Therefore, the Office of Planning recommends that the Board of Zoning Adjustment **APPROVE** the special exception requested to increase the occupancy load at the Sasha Bruce House.

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