GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF PLANNING

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Office of the Director

DIST

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Board of Zoning Adjustment

FROM: Andrew Altman
Director

BZA
Case No. 16630
Exhibit No. 27

DATE: October 19, 2000

SUBJECT: BZA Application No. 16630 Special Exception – Construction of a Senior Wellness Facility at premise address 3500 Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue, S.E.

DESCRIPTION

Pursuant to Title 11 DCMR Section 3104.1, the applicant, the D.C Office on Aging, is seeking a Special Exception to permit the construction of a single-story senior citizens wellness center, at premise address 3500 Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue, S.E. The proposed site of the center is a triangular- shaped parcel in square 6091, bounded by Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue to the north, Savannah Street, S.E./ 2nd Street to the east, a public alley on the west and Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue, on the north.

The subject property is zoned R-4, which is designed to accommodate moderate density residential uses. A senior citizens wellness center would be permitted in R-4 Districts, if the facility met the provisions of Section 205 of the Zoning Regulations, and if the use is approved by the BZA.

BACKGROUND

The applicant, the D.C. Office on Aging (OOA), proposes to build a senior citizens wellness center at 3500 Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue, S.E., in Ward 8. The subject site is at on the south side of M.L.K. Jr. Avenue, at the corner of Savannah Street. The property is zoned R-4, a moderate density residential category. There is a growing demand for a center for seniors in Ward 8, the only ward without such a center. There are

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over 5,000 senior citizens currently residing in the ward. OOA received capital authority to construct the wellness center in 1998. The center is to be built on parcel 243/47,which is in square 6091, a 3.2-acre parcel, just northwest of Ballou High School. It is owned by the District government. Public ownership of the land will reduce the overall cost of the project. The proposed senior wellness center is anticipated to be a "state-of-the-art" facility, which will contain approximately 11,000 square feet of space.

According to OOA, chronic disease consumes a great deal of senior citizens time, toward the end of life. While there may be little hope of cures through traditional medical remedies, the onset of such diseases may be postponed through modifications of risk factors. The focus of the proposed center will be the health and wellness of seniors, in a setting specifically designed for seniors. It will promote and reinforce the premise that older citizens have the capacity for learning and improving self- care to promote their own health, if seniors are provided access to information and taught supporting skills.

The location of the proposed facility in a section of the city defined be the Department of Health as "medically underserved" would increase the access to needed health services for Ward 8 senior citizens. According to an OOA study "Health Needs Assessment Survey of Senior Citizens Living in Washington, D.C." Ward 8 seniors had a higher incidence than other seniors in the city, of arthritis, diabetes, heart disease and hypertension. The wellness center will provide a facility for Ward 8 seniors, where health conditions, behavior and health habits can be monitored.

The proposed senior wellness center is anticipated to provide services that will promote good health habits, enhance social, mental and spiritual and physical well being and help to prevent unnecessary and costly medical problems associated with the aging process. Specifically, seniors will gain access to health regimens, activities and programs tailored to their needs.

It is expected that over one hundred Ward 8 seniors will utilize the programs and services that will be provided at the center. Program offerings will include nutrition counseling, health screening, strength-building exercises, line dancing, health seminars, Internet access for health and other useful information, etc. The programs and services of the center will be offered primarily on weekdays.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Comprehensive Plan Generalized Land Use Map portrays the site of the proposed elderly development center as being in the moderate density residential land use category. Row houses and garden apartments are the predominant uses in this land use category.

Chapter 3 of the Comprehensive Plan, Housing Element provides support for housing initiatives such as the proposed elderly development center.

302.1 It is the goal of the District to have adequate affordable housing for all District residents in communities that have access to services and facilities to meet their needs.

1002.2 The policies established in support of the human services delivery system objectives are:

> **(h) Coordinate existing services and policies and provide new services in health, housing transportation, and recreation, including the establishment of multi-purpose senior center in areas that have large elderly populations and the provision of transportation to and from the center, to make it possible for the elderly to remain independent in their own homes.**

PROPOSED PROJECT

The D.C, Office on Aging is seeking a special exception under the provisions of Section 205.1 to allow a senior wellness center, designed for more than sixteen individuals (the maximum number of slots permitted in a R-4 zone) in an R-4 zone. When completed, the center will be 11,000 square feet, one story facility, designed to address the concept of wellness for the elderly of the District through the development and expansion of preventive heath care programs and services. The center will contain the following useable components when completed:

- 1,690 sq. ft. Multipurpose Room
- 1,642 sq. ft. Health Fitness Room
- 128 sq. ft. Computer Room
- 244 sq. ft. Health Education Room
- 244 sq. ft. Reading/Meditation Room
- 522 sq. ft. Billard/Game Room

The building will comply with the BOCA Code, (1990), DCMR Title 11 and DCMR Title 12, Building Classification, Use Group A-3. The proposed structure will be far smaller (11,000 sq. ft.) than a structure that could be built in a R-4 zone, given the size of the square (3.2 acres). The allowable building area could have been up to 25,200 square feet. There will be 20 on- site parking spaces provided for staff and visitors, and an additional 2 on-site parking spaces will provided for the handicapped, as required be D.C. Code.

ISSUE ANALYSIS

It is the Office of Planning's position that the applicant has satisfactorily provided support for a special exception from the requirements of Section 205.1 of the Zoning Regulations. The application demonstrated that the project can be accomplished in harmony with the general purpose of the Zoning Regulations and will not tend to

adversely affect adjacent properties. The applicant has also demonstrated that the proposed senior citizens wellness center can meet the requirements of Section 205 of the regulations. Specially:

- **205.1Use as a Child/Elderly development center shall be permitted in R-1 Districts if approved by the Board of Zoning Adjustment in accordance with the conditions specified in Section 3108 of Chapter 31 of this title, subject to the provisions of this section.**

  - ✓ The concept of a senior citizens wellness center is a new unique phenomenon in the District. The Zoning Regulations group elderly centers with child development centers. Because children and the elderly are at opposite ends of the age spectrum, zoning regulations should treat the needs of each group distinctly.

205.2 The center shall be capable of meeting all applicable code and licensing requirements

- ✓ The building will comply with the BOCA Code, (1990), DCMR Title 11 and DCMR Title 12, Building Classification, Use Group A-3. The proposed structure will be far smaller (11,000 sq. ft.) than a structure that could be built in a R-4 zone, given the size of the square (3.2 acres). The allowable building area could have been up to 25,200 square feet. There will be 20 on- site parking spaces provided for staff and visitors, and an additional 2 on-site parking spaces will provided for the handicapped, as required be D.C. Code.

- **205.3 The center shall be located and designed to create no objectionable traffic conditions and no unsafe conditions for picking up and dropping off children or elderly persons**.

  - ✓ Because seniors will arrive at the center, depending on the type of activity they wish to participate in, and the time programs are offered, arrivals/departure times will be staggered. Additionally, Ward 8 historically has had the most public transit dependent population in the city. Thus, it is expected that most seniors will use public transportation, to and from the center.

- **205.4 The center shall provide sufficient off-street parking spaces to meet the reasonable needs of teachers, other employees, and visitors.**

  - ✓ There will be 20 on- site parking spaces provided for staff and visitors, and an additional 2 on-site parking spaces will provided for the handicapped, as required be D.C. Code.

- **205.5 The center, including any outdoor play space provided, shall be located and designed so that there will be no objectionable impact or nearby properties due to noise or activity, or other objectionable conditions.**

    - ✓ A majority of the activities slated for the center will be designed as indoor activities and will not have an adverse noise impact on adjacent or nearby properties. Because walking is considered a regular component of an exercise routine, an attractive walking trail will be built around the center. There will be no other outside activity associated with the facility, other than use of the grounds as passive recreation areas.

- **205.6 The Board may require special treatment in the way of design, screening of buildings, planting and parking areas, signs, or other requirements as it shall deem necessary to protect adjacent and nearby properties.**

    - ✓ The application and accompanying site plan, prepared by Baker Cooper & Associates, P.C Architects, tends to offer a design that expresses sensitivity to subject property, including landscaping, and buffering. The physical look of the facility will not be out of character with buildings in the surrounding area.

- **205.7 Any off-site play area shall be located so as not to result in the endangerment to the individuals in attendance at the center in traveling between the plat area and the center itself.**

    - ✓ . Because walking is considered a regular component of an exercise routine, an attractive walking trail will be built around the center. There will be no other outside activity associated with the facility, other than use of the grounds as passive recreation areas.

- **205.8 The Board may approve more than one (1) child/elderly development center in a square or within one thousand feet (1,000 ft,) of another child/elderly development center only when the Board finds that the cumulative effort of these facilities will not have adverse impact on the neighborhood due to traffic, noise, operations, or other similar factors.**

    - ✓ The proposed center will be within 1,000 feet of another center. The National Child Care Center (a center for children with special needs) is on the 3400 block of M.L.K., Jr. Avenue. Because the children at the adjacent center require contentious supervision, and reside in a controlled environment, there will not be little opportunity for conflict between the two groups, nor will it

adversely impact the neighborhood due to noise, traffic, or operations.

- **205.9 Before taking final action on an application for use as a child development and/or elderly day care center, the Board shall submit the application to the D, C. Department of Public Works and Health, the Office on Aging and the Office of Planning, for review and written reports**

  - ✓ OP has submitted the application to both agencies.

COMMUNITY COMMENTS

The Office on Aging has held several presentations on the conceptual design, as well as additional presentations of the final design of the wellness center for the Ward 8 Mini-Commission, senior citizens, ANC 8C, the Senior Citizens Counseling and Delivery Service (the lead senior citizen agency in Ward 8), Ward 8 Council member Sandy Allen, and other interested community organizations. Baker Cooper & Associates, the architect of record, accompanied OOA and made technical presentations regarding the design and other aspects of the proposed building. A representative from the Office of Property Management, the owner of the property, was also present at the community meetings. The project was enthusiastically supported. On October 4, 2000, with a quorum present, ANC 8C voted to support the project.

Given the strong support expressed at the community meetings, OOA anticipate that the center will develop lasting community partnerships.

COUCULSION/RECOMMENDATION

It is OP's conclusion that the applicant, The D.C. Office on Aging has met the burden of proof, pursuant to 11 DCMR 3104.1, Section 205.1 for a special exception, to build a single-story senior citizens wellness center at 3500 Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue, S.E. The center, when constructed, will fill a critical need in Ward 8, the only ward in the city without a facility specifically designed to provide for the health and recreational needs of the elderly. The project can be accomplished without adversely impacting the surrounding community and will be a positive new amenity to Ward 8. For the above reasons, OP recommends that the special exception be granted.