GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF PLANNING

Office of the Director

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Memorandum

TO: Board of Zoning Adjustment

FROM: Andrew Altman, Director
Office of Planning

DATE: February 20, 2001

SUBJECT: BZA Application #16675 (St. George's Episcopal Church)
160 U Street, N.W.

APPLICATION

The application by St. George's Episcopal Church requests, pursuant to 11 DCMR 3103.2, an area variance from the provision of Section 403.2 that requires 60% lot occupancy in the R-4 zone.

SITE AND AREA DESCRIPTION

The subject property is located at 158-160 U Street, N.W. (Square 3114, Lots 38 and 90) at the southeast corner of 2nd and U Streets (See Attachment 1). The site is developed with the one-story plus basement St. George's Episcopal Church on the corner of 2nd and U Streets and an adjacent 2-story row house used as a church annex. Adjacent to the church sanctuary is a plaza that connects the church to the row house. The church is located in the Bloomingdale neighborhood, a community of predominantly two-story row houses.

PROPOSAL

The applicant proposes to construct a two-story addition over the plaza area and renovate the church and row house. The proposed addition will increase the lot occupancy by 14% above that permitted in the R-4 zone (60%).

ZONING REQUIREMENTS

The subject site is zoned R-4 and a church is a permitted use in this zone.

BZA
Case No. 16675
Exhibit No. 32

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16675
EXHIBIT NO.32

ANALYSIS

The St. George's Episcopal Church has a history of approximately 66 years of service in this community and the existing church building was built over 30 years ago. The church has an active congregation of 175 members, many of whom live in the immediate area. The congregation includes a number of elderly members who need assistance. In addition to providing spiritual services to its members, the church provides other services to the community through its spiritual, educational, and social outreach programs. Some of these services include, an after school tutorial program, meals to community residents, providing space for community organizations to meet, and recreational programs for children.

The programs provided and the numbers of persons who need assistance have increased over the years. In order to continue providing these services to its members and to address the increasing needs of the community, the church is proposing an expansion over the plaza with a connection to the row house to form a single structure. Additional renovations and additions will include a new roof and new entrances and windows on the church and the row house. A façade similar to that of the existing church and the row house will be used on the new additions. Internally, some interior spaces will be redone to better meet the church's needs. The sanctuary area will not be expanded, as it is envisioned that there will only be a small increase in membership.

Currently, the subject property has a lot occupancy of 70% which is 10% over that permitted in the R-4 zone. The proposed two-story expansion will be over the existing plaza area and would not expand the lot occupancy. However, with the installation of an elevator and a staircase at the front of the building as well as a new fire stairway to the rear of the building, the lot occupancy will be increased to 74% (See Table 1). Therefore, the expansion of the lot occupancy is caused by the placement of these facilities outside of the actual building space.

Table 1

	Required	Existing	Proposed	Variance
Lot Area	**1,800 sq. ft. minimum**	**9,479 sq. ft**	**9,479 sq. ft.**	**N/A**
Lot Occupancy	**5,687.4 sq. ft. or 60%**	**6,634.6 sq. ft. or 70%**	**7,050.54 sq. ft. or 74%**	**1,381.74 sq. ft. or 14%**

The St. Georges Episcopal Church is directly east of the LeDroit Park historic district, which has two-story, brick, single-family attached row houses with early twentieth century architecture. The church and the area to its east, south, and north are also two story row houses with nineteen-century architecture. Most, if not all, are red brick that have been painted in different colors. The church and the row house are also brick, which have been painted, and therefore have a different look from the buildings in the historic district. The buildings have existed together and

have not impacted the integrity of the historic district. The applicant's representative has stated that the proposed architecture for the addition will be similar to the existing buildings and will not impact the historic district.

The applicant has submitted a perspective of the proposed expansion (See Attachment 2). The Office of Planning has discussed with the applicant's representative our desire to have a window (or faux window) on the front of the addition to break-up the blank wall presented on the front of the building and to provide a façade which is similar to the other buildings along the street. The applicant's representative has stated that this is an issue they are willing to address.

As stated before, it is not envisioned that the expansion will effect an increase in the membership of the church, as the sanctuary area is not being expanded. The expanded area will allow for services now provided in the church to be relocated. In conversations with staff at DCRA, they have stated that because there is no expansion in the sanctuary area, and the new space will provide services that are currently provided in the church no additional parking will be required. Presently, the church uses on-street parking and has an agreement with the Gage-Eckington Preparatory Enterprise School located at 2025 3rd Street, approximately 1-1/2 blocks away, to allow the church to use its parking lot.

Section 3101.2

The standard by which the BZA should approve a variance is set forth in Section 3103.2 of the Zoning Regulations. The following demonstrates how these standards are met:

> **The property is unique by reason of its exceptional narrowness, shallowness, shape, topography or other extraordinary or exceptional situation or condition;**

The subject property has a plaza area between the church and the row house on top of which the additional space will be built. Beneath this plaza is a multipurpose room with a connection to both the church and the row house. Currently, the church, the plaza area, and the row house combined have a lot occupancy of 70%, which is over the 60% lot occupancy permitted in the R-4 zone. This presents an exceptional situation to the applicant as the requirement could only be met by demolishing the building. The new elevator lobby and new fire stairway in the rear of the building will cause only an increase of 4% over the existing situation. This area is important to the new facility, as it will facilitate easy movement through the building, especially for the elderly.

> **By reason of the aforementioned unique or exceptional condition of the property, the strict application of the Zoning Regulations will result in peculiar and exceptional practical difficulties or to exceptional and undue hardship upon the owner of the property.**

The strict application of providing a lot occupancy of 60% will be an exceptional practical difficulty to the applicant as the existing buildings exceed this requirement. Retaining the

existing lot occupancy would limit the space available to provide adequate services to the church members as well as serve the community.

The variance will not cause substantial detriment to the public good and will not impair the intent, purpose and integrity of the zone plan as embodied in the Zoning Regulations and Map.

The variance requested will not cause "substantial detriment to the public good." To the contrary, the proposed addition will allow the church to provide additional space in which to provide services to its members and to the community. This church has coexisted with the community for over 32 years and has become a part of the neighborhood. The proposed variance to increase the lot occupancy will not diminish the intent, purpose, or integrity of the Zoning Regulations and Map as the church is a permitted use in the R-4 district and supports the aim of the regulations to stabilize the one-family community. In addition, the purpose of the lot occupancy in the R-4 districts appear generally to have been to provide light, air, and open space to residences, the primary use in this zone. Since the church is providing some green open space and does not have residents requiring light and air, granting this variance will not impair the integrity of the Zone Regulations and Map.

COMMUNITY COMMENTS

ANC-5B will review the application at their February 20, 2001 meeting. Citizens in single member district 5CO4 reviewed the application and according to their representative, they are recommending approval of the variance. The Bloomingdale Civic Association, Councilmember Orange, Sr., and Councilmember Jim Graham of Ward 1 have written letters in support of the church's proposal.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

The proposed expansion of the St. George's Episcopal Church will allow the church to better accommodate the programs and services which they provide to both its members and the community. Combining the two existing buildings into one along with renovations will improve the appearance of the church (see condition) as well as the appearance of the community. The proposed building will be of a scale and height that complements the surrounding residences.

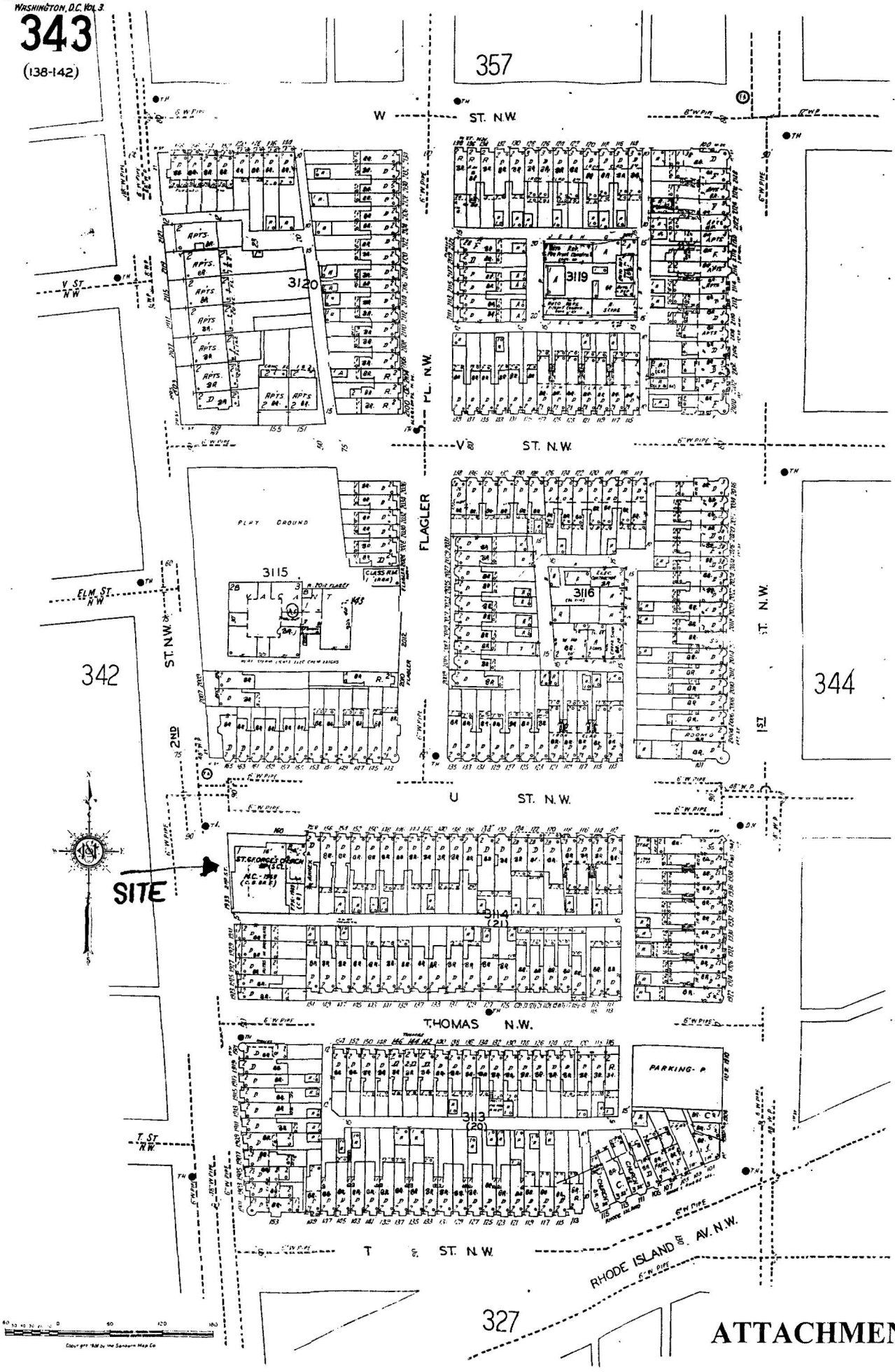
The proposed increase in lot occupancy meets the provisions of Section 3103.2 of the Zoning Ordinance for granting a variance. The "exceptional situation" of the site is demonstrated through the fact that the lot occupancy is currently above that recommended for the R-4 district and further it presents a practical difficulty if the applicant were to meet this requirement. Approval of this variance request will not cause any "substantial detriment to the public good" and "will not substantially impair the intent, purpose, and integrity of the zone plan as embodied in the Zoning Regulations or Map", as it will fulfill the intent of stabilizing the residential community. The Office of Planning therefore recommends that the Board of Zoning Adjustment

APPROVE the variance requested with the condition that the façade of the building be revised to show window(s) on the front façade of the addition.

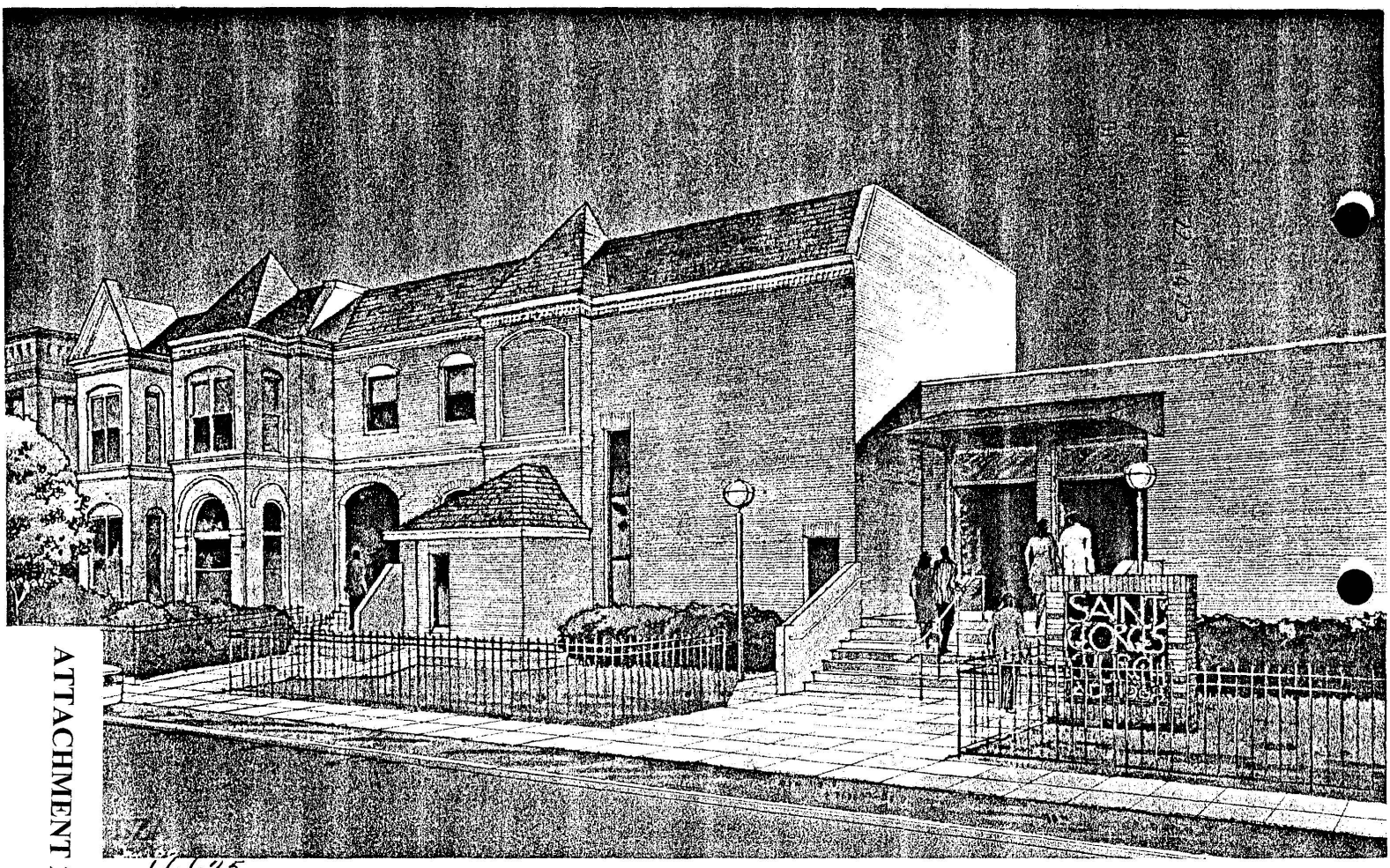
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ATT: Attachment 1 – Site Location

Attachment 2 – Perspective of Proposed Expansion



ATTACHMENT 1



ATTACHMENT 2

16675

O. 14

PERSPECTIVE OF PROPOSED EXPANSION OF ST. GEORGES EPISCOPAL CHURCH