GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF PLANNING

Office of the Director

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D.C. OFFICE OF ZONING
2002 APR -5 PM 1:04

MEMORANDUM

TO: D.C. Board of Zoning Adjustment

FROM: Andrew Altman
Director

DATE: April 3, 2002

SUBJECT: Waiver of Rules for Late Submittal of Report on Board of Zoning Adjustment Application No. 16857, 4500 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W.

The attached report concerning Board of Zoning Adjustment Application No. 16857, for variances and a special exception for adaptive reuse and a residential addition to the former Sears Building at 4500 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W. is being submitted less than seven days prior to the Board of Zoning Adjustment hearing on April 9. The Office of Planning respectfully requests that the Board waive its rule and accept the report into the record.

Attachment

AA/jf

BZA
Case No. 16857
Exhibit No. 30

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16857
EXHIBIT NO.30

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF PLANNING

Office of the Director

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MEMORANDUM

TO: D.C. Board of Zoning Adjustment

FROM: Andrew Altman
Director

DATE: April 2, 2002

SUBJECT: BZA Application No. 16857, 4500 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W.

APPLICATION

Application of HQ Acquisitions, LLC, pursuant to 11 DCMR § 3103.2 for a variance from the height requirements under Section 770, a variance from the residential recreation space requirements under Section 773, a variance from the parking aisle width requirements under Subsection 2117.5, and pursuant to 11 DCMR § 3104.1, a special exception from the off-street parking requirements under Subsections 2107.1 and 2101.1, for a mixed-use (residential & retail) development at premises 4500 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W. (Square 1730, Lot 15).

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning recommends approval of the three variances and one special exception requested. This includes a variance of five feet from the height requirement outlined in Section 770, a variance from the residential recreation space requirement outlined in Section 773, a variance from the parking aisle requirement for sixty-degree parking in some parking aisles in the two parking areas and a special exception to reduce the retail parking spaces to 150 spaces under Section 2107.1, since the project has a direct connection to the Tenleytown-AU Metrorail Station.

BACKGROUND

This application involves the redevelopment of the landmark Sears department store building at 4500 Wisconsin Avenue, located in the heart of the Tenleytown commercial area into a retail destination, with three specialty retailers and the addition of a four story residential building above the existing building with approximately 180 residential units.

The Sears department store building, designed in the Art Deco architectural style, opened in 1941 and was operated by Sears Roebuck and Company until the 1992 when the store was closed. The building was then used for a major Hechinger's store (Hechinger's had previously operated in a building on the east side of Wisconsin Avenue). Hechinger's made some changes to the building, especially in adding structures on top of the building and parking on the first level. However, Hechinger's went out-of-business in late 1999 and since then there have been efforts to find new retail and other uses compatible with the building design. The building is variously referred to as the Sears Building, the Sears/Hechinger Building or the Hechinger Building.

The building is important in an architectural sense as an Art Deco retail building and was designated an historic landmark in the D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites in 1995. It is also a major element in the urban landscape of the Tenleytown commercial area along Wisconsin Avenue. The site has excellent transportation access since the west entrance to the Tenleytown-AU Metrorail Station is arcaded into the front of the building and several bus lines are adjacent (on Wisconsin Avenue) or nearby (Nebraska Avenue). The east entrance to the Metrorail station is across Wisconsin Avenue at the northeast corner of Wisconsin Avenue and Albemarle Street.

SITE AND AREA DESCRIPTION

The Site and Adjacent Development

The building site is lot 15 in Square 1730, located on the west side of Wisconsin Avenue. The building's low height, its architectural design, and the location of parking ramps along several sides of the building give the building an open look. Square 1730 has an irregular shape, bounded by Wisconsin Avenue on the east, on the northeast by River Road, on the north for a short distance by Brandywine Street, on the west by 42nd Street and on the south by Albemarle Street, N.W. (see aerial photograph, Attachment 1).

The site, lot 15, also has an irregular shape, with frontages on Wisconsin Avenue, River Road and Albemarle Street. Lot 15, the project site, has a total area of 93,682 square feet. On the northwest, Lot 15 is bordered by Murdock Mill Road that cuts diagonally through the Square. This narrow road (25 feet wide) is the remnant of an old road but essentially appears as an alley. It now dead ends on the southwest, so it does not connect with 42nd Street. A short alley, also 25 feet wide, extends south from Murdock Mill Road to Albemarle Street, and borders the site on the west. This alley provides access to the loading berths on the west side of the building.

The remaining portions of Square 1730 have an interesting pattern of development. West of the building, across the alley, is the relatively new Isabella Breckinridge Center (Iona Senior Services). To the northwest of the building, across the segment of Murdock Mill Road, N.W., is the Eldbrook United Methodist Church that faces on River Road. Southwest of the church is the old Methodist Cemetery. The northwest corner of the square is occupied by a series of low buildings that house professional offices.

The Building

The existing building has two levels and a roof deck level. The below grade level (B1) is a parking level with two existing ramps (down and up) from River Road. There is a core area adjacent to Wisconsin Avenue with elevators, escalators and stairs. Hechinger's used part of the lower level for lumber sales and the rest of the space for parking.

The first floor (Ground Level) was the main retail area for both Sears and Hechinger's. Loading docks were, and still are, located at the rear of this space with access off the alley. As previously noted, the west entrance to the Tenleytown/AU Metrorail Station is arcaded into the building on the Wisconsin Avenue frontage.

The Roof Level (Second Level) was designed for parking and both Sears and Hechinger's used it for parking in somewhat different arrangements. Both Sears and Hechinger's had garden centers on the roof. Hechinger's built some additional structures for retail use on the roof. Parking ramps (up and down) parallel with Murdock Mill Road provided access to and from the roof level parking. There is also a parking ramp up the roof from Albemarle Street and another ramp that led down from the roof and came down to grade near the intersection of River Road and Wisconsin Avenue.

The Adjacent Area

Other important civic and community buildings are nearby, including St. Columba's Episcopal Church on the northwest corner of Albemarle and 42nd streets, the Janney Elementary School on the south side of Albemarle Street, just south of the building, and Tenley-Friendship Branch Public Library on the southwest corner of Wisconsin Avenue and Albemarle Street, also just south of the building. St. Ann's Roman Catholic Church, and its related school buildings, is one block south on the west side of Wisconsin Avenue at Tenley Circle. The Tenley Campus of American University is one block further south on Nebraska Avenue. Across Wisconsin Avenue and one block east is Wilson High School. Fort Reno Reservoir and park are west of Wisconsin Avenue and north of Chesapeake Street.

The building is at the center of the Tenleytown commercial corridor, a corridor of commercial buildings that generally extends from Grant Road on the south to Chesapeake Street on the north. This corridor has considerable commercial vitality with a number of restaurants, a Fresh Fields grocery store, other retail establishments, a major parking garage associated with Fresh Fields and other retail and service establishments. However, there have been some signs of retail weakness in the commercial corridor. The project site is zoned C-3-A. Other portions of the commercial corridor are zoned C-2-A. As noted in more detail in a later section the Tenleytown commercial cluster is designated a multi-neighborhood commercial center in the District of Columbia Comprehensive Plan. The center of the commercial corridor, which includes the Sears/Hechinger Building, is designated a special treatment area in the Comprehensive Plan.

The topographic location of the Sears/Hechinger Building is also worth noting. The center of Tenleytown is one of the highest points in the city. The high point on Wisconsin Avenue, elevation approximately 405 feet, is just to the north of the site between River Road and Brandywine Street. The land generally falls off to the north, west and south, and somewhat less sharply to the east. The building therefore occupies a highly visible site, due to the topography and the slight bend of Wisconsin Avenue at River Road. One result of this topographic location is that the four floors of apartment units to be added on top of the building will have great views.

Summary

In summary, the now vacant Sears/Hechinger building is at the center of Tenleytown in terms of geographic location, commercial activity, civic and community buildings and transportation access. The skillful adaptive reuse for significant retail use, and the addition of a significant residential population, as proposed by the applicant, can be a significant step in adding additional vitality to the center of Tenleytown.

APPLICANT'S PROPOSAL

The Proposed Building

The applicant, HQ Acquisitions, LLC, proposes adaptive reuse of the existing department store building for three specialty retailers and the addition of a four-story residential structure above the existing building with approximately 180 apartment units.

The B1 Level would be primarily used for retail parking for the project, with 150 parking spaces with access and egress using the two ramps from River Road. Part of the B1 level is to be used for a new retail space (Retail Space C) of somewhat irregular shape with approximately 11,600 square feet of retail space. The applicant has indicated that this space could potentially accommodate a hardware store. There is also a small amount of space on this level potentially related to Retail Space A on the main level. The vertical circulation core remains, with elevators, escalators and stairs providing access from the retail parking spaces to the ground floor level.

The Ground Level space is proposed to be primarily divided into two large retail spaces for specialty retailers (Retail Space A of approximately 44,000 square feet and Retail Space B of approximately 23,000 square feet) totaling approximately 67, 0000 square feet of retail space. In addition, an area of approximately 6,300 square feet at the southwest corner of the building, with access from Albemarle Street, will be the residential lobby and associated spaces (manager's office, club room, fitness room, etc.). The entrance area from Wisconsin Avenue, next to the Metrorail entrance, has been redesigned to provide access to the two retail spaces. Three new loading berths have been added off the alley on the west side of the building.

The Second Level (existing roof level) is to be used for 170 parking spaces entirely for the residential units. Auto access up to this level is by the ramp off Albemarle Street. Automobile egress from this level is from an existing ramp that drops down to Murdock Mill Road almost at its intersection with River Road at the northwest corner of the building. Two other existing parking ramps, one dropping down to Wisconsin Avenue and another at the northwest side of the building, are not used for vehicular access but may be used in part for recreational space. The parking area on this level is open, though most of the spaces will be under the new four story residential element of the project.

The New Residential Building Element (Level 3-6) will be constructed above the second level parking area. It will be four stories high and will include a total of approximately 180 residential units. To meet historic preservation concerns relating to the original building, the new residential element is set back from the walls of the original department store building. The four-story residential building element has a central courtyard that is 73 feet wide and 104 feet in length.

Variances and Special Exception Requested

- The current zoning, C-3-A, allows a height of 65 feet. The applicant is requesting a variance of five feet, to allow a height of 70 feet.

- The applicant is requesting a variance for residential recreation space, from 29,400 S.F. required to 9,300 S.F., with 8,000 S.F. outdoors.

- The applicant plans to provide some sixty-degree angle parking space. The Zoning Regulations require an aisle width of 17 feet for sixty-degree parking. The applicant is requesting a variance to provide 14 feet, six inches aisle widths for the one-way aisles.

- The building previously provided 211 parking spaces for the retail space. The applicant is requesting a special exception to reduce this to 150 spaces for retail parking, based on section 2107.1 of the Zoning Regulations, since the project has a direct connection to the Tenleytown-AU Metrorail Station.

ANALYSIS

Standards for a Variance

Section 3103.2 of the Zoning Regulations provides three standards for a variance:

- The property is unique by reason of its exceptional narrowness, shallowness, shape, topography or other extraordinary or exceptional situation or condition.

- 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 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.

Analysis of Variances Requested

Height Variance: The applicant is undertaking a complex project that involves preservation of the existing building and construction of the residential addition above it, while retaining the existing roof level for needed residential parking. Since the new residential building element will be built above the existing building, there must be additional structural elements used. Significant setbacks have been required in the preservation review. Some flexibility is needed in providing slightly higher floor to ceiling heights for the residential floors. OP believes that the property is unique in terms of shape and in having special preservation requirements. To provide residential units, a highly desirable step, the developer faces practical difficulties without some height relief. The relief requested, five feet, is limited. In view of the special nature of the building site, the surrounding buildings and historic preservation concerns, OP believes that the height variance of an additional five feet will not cause substantial detriment to the public good and will not impair the purpose and integrity of the zone plan. OP recommends that the height variance of five feet be granted.

Residential Recreation Space Variance: Section 773.3 of the Zoning Regulations requires that 15 percent of the gross residential floor area ~~to~~ be provided as residential recreation space and Section 773.8 requires that no less than 50 percent of the total residential space shall be outdoors. This would require 29,400 square feet of recreational space for this project, with not less than 14,700 square feet outdoors. The applicant seeks a variance to reduce the residential recreation space requirement to 9,300 square feet, with 8,000 square feet of that amount outside. The outdoor space recreation space in the project is in the central courtyard and in the courtyard on the west side of the residential building, which is accessible to all residents of the residential units. The indoor space is in the residential common areas on the first floor, including the fitness room and clubroom.

It should be noted that the applicant proposes to use parts of the two unused parking ramps leading down for the second level for limited recreation use (walking and exercise). However, these areas are narrow (16 feet) and are therefore not counted as recreation space.

The applicant argues that the setbacks for the residential element of the project that are required by historic preservation review do not allow for additional recreation space to be provided. OP believes that the way the second level is being used for residential parking, with a smaller residential building element above it, constrained by preservation related setbacks, creates a unique condition. There is a practical difficulty in creating additional

recreation space. Additional recreational space on the ground level would require reducing retail space in Retail Space A, which is not desirable. Additional recreation space above the second level would be difficult, expensive and interfere with historic preservation objectives. There are practical difficulties with providing additional recreation space. OP does not believe that reducing the recreation space will cause substantial detriment to the public good or impair the purpose and integrity of the zone plan. One advantage of this site is that there is substantial outdoor open space nearby in Fort Reno Park, east of Wisconsin Avenue. OP recommends approval of a variance for reduction of recreation space.

Reduced Width of Some Parking Aisles: OP believes that the applicant was wise to separate the two parking areas, placing the retail parking on the B1 Level (150 spaces) and the residential parking (170 spaces). In each of these areas, the applicant has sought to maximize the number of parking spaces. The parking areas on both levels have been designed with some parking spaces having 60 degree angle parking while other parking spaces are 90 degree (straight-in) parking. This is a result of the constrained space and irregular shape of both parking areas and the location of columns.

Section 2117.5 of the Zoning Regulations requires that parking aisles with 60 degree parking be not less than 17 feet in width. The applicant seeks a variance to allow some of the parking aisles on both levels with 60 degree parking to have a width of 14 feet, six inches. These are one-way aisles. The aisles with 90 degree parking would still have 20 foot wide parking aisles. The applicant argues that although this width is less than required by the Zoning Regulations, the 14 feet, six inches width for 60 degree parking aisles meets minimum national standards and allows the number of parking spaces for both retail and residential users to be maximized.

OP recognizes that the existing shape and size of both parking areas, resulting from the shape of the property, and the need to accommodate the column locations, limits how the space can be laid out. Meeting the existing standard would cause a hardship by further reducing the number of parking spaces on both parking levels. OP believes the variance can be granted without causing substantial detriment to the public good or impairing the purpose and integrity of the zone plan. OP recommends approval of this variance for reduced aisle width for 60 degree parking.

Standard for Special Exception Requested

Section 3104.1 of the Zoning Regulations authorize the Board of Zoning Adjustment to grant special exceptions when, in the judgment of the Board, these special exceptions will be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps and will not tend to affect adversely the use of neighboring property, subject to the special conditions in the Zoning Regulations. Section 2107.1 authorizes the Board to reduce or eliminate the amount of required parking spaces for nonresidential buildings or structures located outside the Central Employment Area, provided the building has a direct connection to a Metrorail station. Section 2107.2 outlines guidelines for the Board

to consider in reducing parking in a building directly connected to a Metrorail station, including other parking in the neighborhood and the availability of public transportation service. This building is outside the Central Employment Area and has a direct connection to the Tenleytown-AU Metrorail Station.

The applicant indicates that the required retail parking is 211 spaces, based on the number of spaces previously existing and the historic designation of the building. Section 2100.5 of the Zoning Regulations provides that no additional parking spaces shall be required for an historic landmark. Now, in order to accommodate the residential parking spaces on the roof and to provide additional retail space (Retail Space C) on the B1 Level, the applicant can only provide 150 parking spaces on the B1 level. The applicant is therefore seeking to reduce the amount of retail parking provided by seeking a special exception in accordance with Section 2107.1 of the Zoning Regulations. The applicant seeks to reduce required retail parking from 211 spaces to 150 spaces, a reduction of 61 parking spaces.

The applicant has indicated that access to the retail parking will be controlled in order to ensure that this parking is for the retail use in the building and is not used for long-term Metrorail riders. In addition, additional parking spaces are available in the parking garage across the street under a prior agreement. The applicant believes that shoppers in the Tenleytown corridor will tend to park once and that this project will benefit from the additional parking across Wisconsin Avenue.

Analysis of Special Exception

The Office of Planning places a priority on achieving a significant retail development on the old Sears/Hechinger site. The development proposed by the applicant, together with the proposed residential development, has the potential to stimulate the retail vitality of the Tenleytown commercial corridor while maintaining the historic integrity of the landmark Sears department store. The combination of utilizing all of the second level parking area for residential parking, and providing a third retail space (Retail Space C) on the B1 Level, means that retail parking on the B1 level is constrained. It is not possible to achieve 211 spaces for retail customers on this level.

OP believes that this parking reduction, which is tied to the direct Metrorail station connection and related to achieving additional retail space, preserving the original building and adding residential uses, is in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and will not tend to affect adversely the use of neighboring property. Having an entrance to the Tenleytown-AU Metrorail Station literally at the front door of the project is a benefit to both the retail space and the residential development.

The Office of Planning recommends that the Board of Zoning Adjustment approve the requested special exception request to reduce the amount of retail parking spaces to 150 spaces.

However, OP recommends that the parking program for the retail space in this project be carefully managed and related to parking in the adjacent commercial area. The applicant should outline and follow a parking control plan, as has been proposed, to ensure that parking spaces designed for use by retail customers on the B1 level of the project are in fact used by retail customers and not by commuters. Provision should be made to utilize additional parking spaces in the garage on the east side of Wisconsin Avenue as warranted and to work toward a coordinated parking program for the Tenleytown commercial area.

Relationship to Comprehensive Plan and Other Plans

The Land Use Chapter of the District of Columbia Comprehensive Plan designates a "Tenleytown Metorail Station Special Treatment Area." in Section 1129. The area is shown on Map 2, "District of Columbia Generalized Land Use Policies Map." Section 1129.1 outlines the area and Section 1129.2 outlines policies for the area, including stimulation of a well-planned economic activity center that maximizes Metrorail access and providing for the development of substantial new housing. A copy of Section 1129.2 from the Comprehensive Plan is attached. The Sears/Hechinger site is part of the Tenleytown Metrorail Station Special Treatment area. Tenleytown is also indicated as a multi-neighborhood commercial center on Map 2. In the opinion of OP, the development proposed by the applicant will make a substantial contribution to the Tenleytown area, including the special treatment area, and help realize policies outlined in Section 1129.2.

The District Government, working with WMATA and community and business groups, is placing renewed emphasis on transit-oriented development (TOD). The Mayor's Task Force on TOD says that: *Transit-oriented development is a land use strategy to accommodate new growth, strengthen neighborhoods and expand choices and opportunities by capitalizing bus and rail assets to stimulate and support vibrant, diverse and accessible neighborhood centers within an easy walk of transit.* The development proposed in this application is a strong example of using transit-oriented development to spur increased retail and community vitality in Tenleytown.

Elimination of the Existing Covenant

The applicant, HQ Acquisition, LLC, is requesting the Zoning Commission to authorize the rescission of a covenant relating to the property at 4500 Wisconsin Avenue. The Zoning Commission is expected to address this matter at their next meeting, scheduled for April 19. The applicant is making this request known to the BZA as part of the hearing process on this application, though the BZA will not address the covenant issue.

In summary, the covenant was executed in 1940 between the original developer, Sears, Roebuck and Company and the District of Columbia Board of Commissioners (the governing body of the city at that time). The covenant was related to the action of the Zoning Commission in rezoning the property from "Residential A Restricted" to "First

Commercial," zoning categories that existed at that time. The covenant provided for approval of the plans by the Zoning Commission.

The purpose of the covenant has since been replaced by today's zoning regulations and by the review of plans for a landmark building by the Historic Preservation Review Board. The applicant believes the covenant is no longer necessary and has asked the Zoning Commission for permission to rescind it. In a letter of March 1, 2002, Toye Bello, Acting Zoning Administrator, has indicated no objection to the rescission of the covenant, provided that this request be made public at the Board of Adjustment hearing. The Office of Planning also does not object to the rescission of the covenant and will inform the Zoning Commission of this position.

ANC AND COMMUNITY GROUPS

The project site is within the boundaries of ANC-3E. On Thursday, March 14, 2002, at the regular ANC meeting, ANC-3E voted 5-0 to recommend approval of the one special exception and three variances requested. This resolution of support by ANC-3F was transmitted to the Office of Zoning under a March 22, 2002 cover letter

The boundary of ANC-3F is nearby, less than two blocks from the project site and the boundary will be even closer when the new ANC lines become effective in the near future. On Thursday, March 14, 2002, at the regular ANC meeting, ANC-3F voted 5-1-0 to support the project. The ANC-3F did not object to the added height of 5 feet above the present height allowed but wanted to condition such height on future approval of any antennas and related proposals. The ANC suggested that the applicant explore using unused parking ramps for recreations space. They suggested that the variance for the width of the parking lanes be conditioned on approval from the Fire Marshall. They also recommended additional traffic studies to consider and address possible traffic problems.

The Tenleytown Neighbors Association, a neighborhood organization with over 200 members, has adopted a resolution supporting the project. The resolution was approved at the regular monthly meeting of the Association on March 7, 2002 (letter of March 8, 2002, Exhibit 24). The Office of Planning also notes that for more than a year the applicant has been meeting and working with an informal "Hechinger Task Force" that included representatives from ANC 3-E and 3-F and other community groups. This process has helped lead to a project that has strong community support.

OTHER AGENCY COMMENTS

Historic Preservation Review

The existing building is a landmark building (Sears Department Store), designated in 1995. The building is especially important because of its size and location and because there are relatively few art deco buildings in Washington. The proposed development has received extensive historic preservation review, with an initial presentation to the Historic

Preservation Board on October 25, 2001. There has also been extensive consultation with the Historic Preservation staff. The last review by the Board was on February 7, 2002.

At the October 25, 2001 review, the Board encouraged the applicant to proceed with the design concept, to refine the massing of the residential addition and to develop façade concepts. The developer's architect, Shalom Baranes Associates, have made a number of revisions in response to the board's direction. The Historic Preservation staff found the revised conceptual plans to be fully responsive and consistent with the board's previous direction. On February 7, the Board approved the revised conceptual plans and encouraged the applicant to proceed with design development in consultation with the staff. The Board will review the exterior finish systems and storefront design in further detail in the future. A copy of the staff report and recommendation is attached.

D.C. Division of Transportation

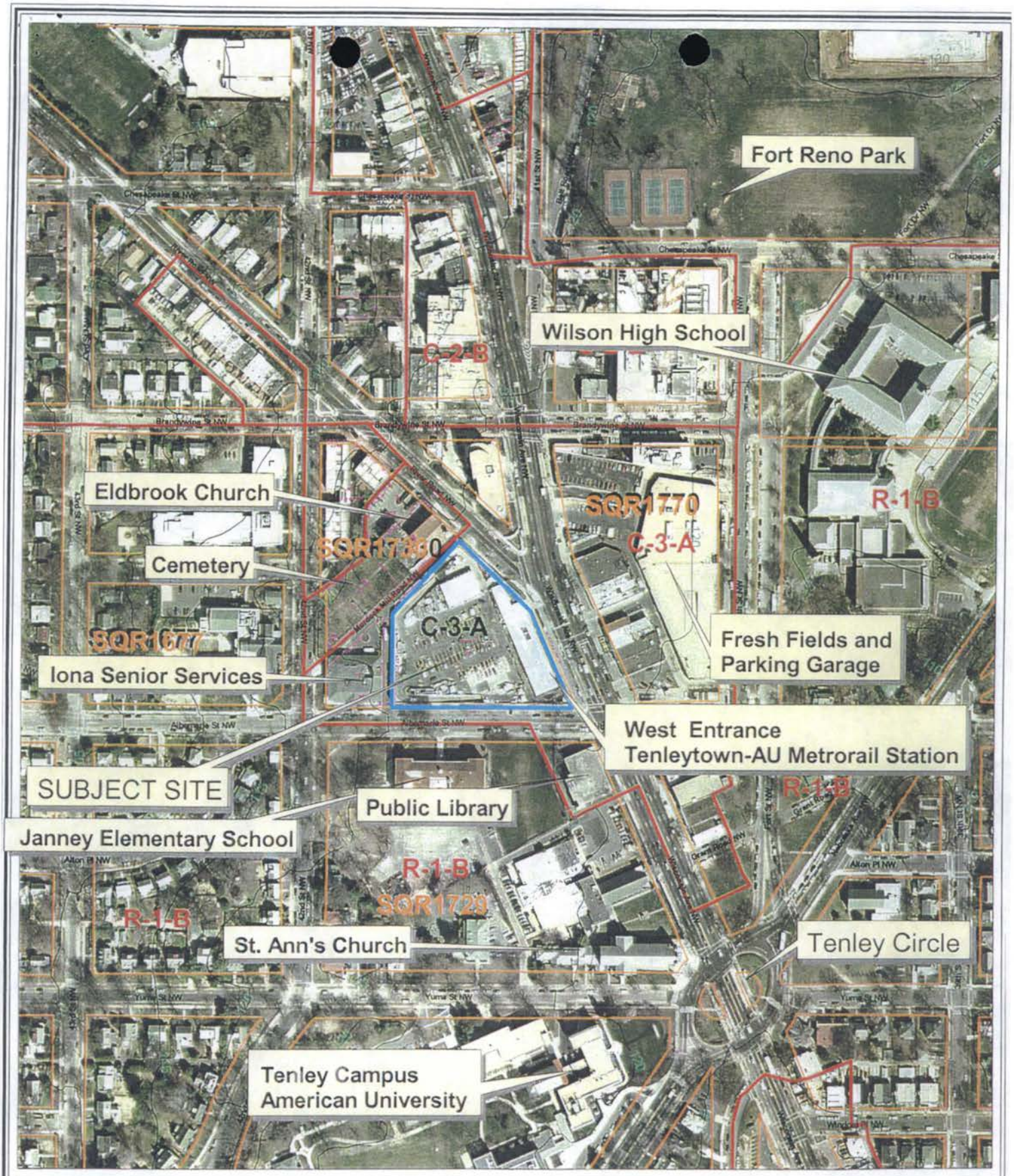
The Zoning Office referred the application to the D.C. Division of Transportation (DDOT) for review. DDOT recommends approval of the variance for the width of parking aisles and the reduction of retail parking spaces as a special exception.

RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning recommends that the Board of Zoning Adjustment approve the three variances and the one special exception that have been requested and that allow this project to move forward as designed. This includes a variance of five feet from the height requirement outlined in Section 770, a variance from the residential recreation space requirement outlined in Section 773, a variance from the parking aisle requirement for sixty-degree parking in some parking aisles in the two parking areas and a special exception to reduce the retail parking spaces to 150 spaces under Section 2107.1, since the project has a direct connection to the Tenleytown-AU Metrorail Station. OP suggests some additional steps to be taken in relation to the reduction of retail parking spaces and recommends a condition that the applicant prepare a parking management plan dealing with retail parking in the building, arrangements to use parking in the garage across Wisconsin Avenue and assistance with developing a coordinated parking program for the Tenleytown commercial area.

Attachments

AA/jf



Feature Key

Zoning Boundaries
Square Index

Board of Zoning Adjustment
Application No. 16857

DC Office of Planning
April 2, 2002

Scale 1:3330

100 0 100 Feet

Attachment 1

(b) Upgrade and expand existing commercial establishments;

(c) Encourage small business development; and

(d) Promote community-based development, including child care, educational, and counseling facilities.

1129 TENLEYTOWN METRORAIL STATION SPECIAL TREATMENT AREA

1129.1 The Tenleytown metrorail tation special treatment area, bounded by Albemarle Street, N.W., the first alley off Albemarle Street west of Wisconsin Avenue, N.W., Murdock Mill Road, N.W., River Road, N.W., Wisconsin, N.W., Brandywine Street, N.W., and 40th Street, N.W., is designated a special treatment area.

1129.2 The policies established for the Tenleytown metrorail station special treatment area are as follows:

(a) Stimulate a well-planned economic activity center that utilizes the public transit infrastructure and maximizes metrorail access:

(b) Enable merchants to upgrade existing businesses, attract new customers and new business establishments, and give residents needed services;

(c) Provide for the development of substantial new housing;

(d) Protect and preserve existing low density residences in the vicinity, and the surrounding institutions and local public facilities, from the adverse effects, including traffic, of development; and

(e) Maintain heights and densities at appropriate levels, with architectural design that is sensitive to the area's topography relative to the District.

1130 UPTOWN ARTS SPECIAL TREATMENT AREA

1130.1 The Uptown Arts special treatment area, extending along 14th Street, N.W., from M Street, N.W. to Florida Avenue, N.W. and along U Street, N.W. from 7th Street, N.W. to 16th Street, N.W. is designated a special treatment area.

1130.2 The policies established for the Uptown Arts special treatment area are as follows:

(a) Promote the historic character of the area, and develop design criteria toward the achievement of that character;

HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

Landmark/District:	**Sears Department Store**	(x) Agenda
Address:	**4500 Wisconsin Avenue, NW**	( ) Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	**February 7, 2002**	(x) Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	**01-613**	(x) New Construction
Date Received:	**12/20/01**	(x) Conceptual Design
Staff Reviewer:	**David Maloney**	( ) Subdivision

Project developer Madison Retail and architect Shalom Baranes Associates return to the Board with revised plans for a retail and residential adaptive reuse of the old Sears Department Store in Tenleytown. At the last meeting, the Board encouraged the applicant to proceed with development of the design concept, to refine the massing of the addition, and to develop façade concepts.

Revised Conceptual Plans
The architects have made the following revisions in response to the Board's previous review:

- The residential addition has been recessed from the Albemarle Street façade in order to allow the existing roof pavilion to remain, and the massing of the addition has been adjusted to relate to the pavilion;
- The curved main façade has been simplified by removing the projecting bay, and introducing terraces and other modulations as rhythmic accents;
- Conceptual façade designs have been developed, using textured metal panels and possibly cementitious stucco as surfacing materials, and large plate glass windows.

The architects have also proposed to increase the building height by 5 feet to 70 feet overall, in order to gain flexibility in the structural and mechanical systems, and to allow a slight increase in the interior ceiling height of the residential units.

Project Evaluation
The revised conceptual plans are fully responsive and consistent with the Board's previous direction. The Albemarle Street pavilion is successfully incorporated into the design, and the slight adjustments in massing help clarify and reinforce the simple geometric concept. The various terraces and porches also help to modulate the facades without making them fussy or distracting. The additional height is compatible with the concept—it would be only slightly perceptible, and would not disrupt (or in fact, might even improve) the proportional relationship between the landmark base and the residential addition.

The use of metal panels is a superb idea, giving the additional floors both an apparent lightness and an avant-garde appeal that is sympathetic to the historic landmark. Great attention needs to be paid to the texture, reflectiveness, detailing and color of these panels and the associated window framing systems and glazing. Since this is not a typical finishing system in Washington, the staff recommends that the applicants prepare full-scale site mockups of the skin systems for review by the Board and staff at the appropriate time. Storefront alterations and details also warrant further review when they are developed.

The staff recommends that the Board approve the revised conceptual plans and encourage the applicant to proceed with design development in consultation with the staff. The staff also recommends that the Board review the exterior finish systems and storefront designs in further detail at the appropriate time.