GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF PLANNING

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Office of the Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Zoning Adjustment

FROM: JLS for Andrew Altman

DATE: June 17, 2003, 2003

SUBJECT: BZA Case 17027
The Emergence Community Arts Collective - Special Exception Request

APPLICATION

The application by The Emergence Community Arts Collective (ECAC), pursuant to 11 DCMR 3104.1 seek a special exception pursuant to Section 334 for a Community Service Center in the R-4 District.

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning recommends **approval** of the subject application.

SITE AND AREA DESCRIPTION

The subject premises, 733 Euclid Street, N.W., is in the Pleasant Plains Neighborhood of Ward 1. Fairmont Street generally bounds the site to the north, Euclid Street is to the south, Georgia Avenue is to the east and Sherman Avenue is to the west. The subject structure is a rather large building in the middle of a block that is otherwise developed predominantly with row houses. It is a unique presence on the block because of the amount of land that surrounds the building. The subject structure has served as a community



Front view 733 Euclid St., N.W.

BZA
Case No. 17027
Exhibit No. 24

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 17027
EXHIBIT NO. 24

service center at this location since its construction in 1915. The 11,400 square feet lot is improved with a 6,550 square foot, three-story building with a basement. The first and second floors of the building are much larger than the basement and the third floor. There is also a front porch and a rear deck on the structure. The rear portion of the property is paved and is anticipated by the applicant, to provide parking spaces for up to 10 passenger vehicles. There is a 15-foot east west public alley to the rear of the property.



The subject property has a long history in the Pleasant Plains community as a community service center. The National Association for the Relief of Destitute Colored Women and Children owned the property since the late 1800s. This historic organization was chartered by an Act of Congress in 1863, as a relief organization formed to deal with the aftermath of the Civil War and Emancipation. The organization's charter was to "support such aged or indigent colored women and children as may properly come under the charge of such association; to provide suitable home, board, clothing, and instruction, and to bring then under Christian influence." The first structure was constructed on the land in 1915.

The subject property, operated for a period prior to 1975 as the Meriwether Home for Women and from 1975 to 1999 as the Key Day Care Center. The site has been abandoned since 1999 and the structure is in an advanced state of decline. It is blighted and boarded, and serves as a convenient location for squatters and others deviant activities. A damaged roof and missing windows have exposed the structure to the elements, and significant amount of rehabilitation is needed to restore the property. The property is also a magnet for un-wanted trash deposits.



Rear view 733 Euclid St., N.W.

- The Emergence Community Arts Collective was formed in November 2002 as a non- profit corporation located in Washington, D.C. Its mission is to provide educational, recreational and social services activities in a community based setting. The applicant will offer social activities, traditional arts classes, support groups and educational seminars in an effort to foster community spirit within the neighborhood.

Instructors, facilitators or counselors who will work on a volunteer or consulting basis will provide some of the services. ECAC will offer many of its activities free or at low cost depending on funding available through grants and donations. In order to facilitate inclusion of all members, regardless of ability to pay, the center will implement a volunteer exchange program where work at the center or in the community can be exchanged for participation in many of the center activities.

APPLICANT'S PROPOSAL

The applicant is requesting a special exception relief to permit the existing structure at 733 Euclid Street, N.W., to be used as a community service center. ECAC will then lease the

first, second and third floor. ECAC would like to put the first two floors of the building to use as a community service center. The center will focus on traditional arts, education and social interaction. The center will consist of three studios or classroom (one large and two small), two meeting rooms, two offices, a kitchen and showers. The third floor, (which is smaller than the first two floors) will be converted into a one-bedroom apartment, to be occupied by the General Manager of ECAC.

ZONING ANALYSIS

The subject premises is in the R-4 District. The R-4 District is designed to include those areas now developed primarily with row dwellings, but within which there have been a substantial number of conversions of dwellings into dwellings for two or more families. A community service center is permitted if it satisfied the requirements outlined in Section 334 of the Zoning Regulations.

334 Community Service Centers

334.1 A community service center to accommodate organizations created for the purpose of improving the social or economic well being of the residents of the neighborhood in which the center is proposed to be located which may include but not be limited to centers for job training, family counseling, consumer cooperatives, and such other facilities as are similar in nature and purpose, shall be permitted in an R-4 District if approved by the Board of Zoning adjustment in accordance with the conditions specified in §3104 of this title, subject to the provisions of this section.

The mission of the Emergence Community Arts Collective is to provide educational, recreational and social services activities in a community based setting. The applicant will offer social activities, traditional arts classes, support groups and educational seminars in an effort to foster a spirit of community within the neighborhood.

The activities of the center will be focused around specific goals to accomplish the stated mission:

1. *Increase social interaction and networking, particularly intergenerational gathering within the community.*
2. *Offer traditional forms of arts, crafts, dance or music that will facilitate the body/mind/spirit connection, and provide opportunity for education* about the *history and philosophy of the culture from which it came.*
3. *Facilitate inclusion of all individuals who desire membership regardless of race, religion, economic situation, age or handicaps.*
4. *Offer support to community members that will allow them to move through pain, anger and conflict into empowerment community contributors.*
5. *Encourage resource sharing among community members.*
6. *Foster civic responsibility and a shared vision among community members.*
7. *Raise the environmental consciousness of members.*

8. *Document the organization's activities such that it can become a model for other community building organizations.*

   The applicant believes that with consciousness and focus, they can reestablish a culture of community in its members and the surrounding neighborhood.

334.2 A community center shall be located so that it is not likely to be objectionable to neighboring properties because of noise or other objectionable conditions.

No activity proposed for the center is expected to be objectionable because of noise or other objectionable conditions. The subject structure is set back a minimum of 20 from the dwellings on either side. Further, there is at least 31 feet between the rear of the subject structure and the east west public alley, which provides an even greater buffer between the subject structure and dwellings on the south side of Fairmont Street. The center will operate on weekdays from 6:30 am to 9:00 pm, and on weekends from 12:00 noon to 9:00 pm. The parking spaces for visitors and staff would be located to the rear of the building. The parking lot is accessible via an east west 15-foot public alley.



Westside view 733 Euclid St., N.W.



Eastside view 733 Euclid St., N.W.

All activities at the center will take place inside. Any classes held outside would take place at the Banneker field across the street from the center.

The applicant plans to install insulation and close off some of the windows on the sides of the building, in an attempt to further limit the impact of noise on adjacent property owners. Most of the activities at the center, especially those involving music, will end by 9pm. The manager of the center will live in the third floor apartment and will be available to monitor activities at the center and respond the any concerns from neighboring property owners.

The applicant does not expect center users to compete with area residents for parking spaces in the community. The large paved rear yard (according to the applicant) can accommodate up to 10 parking spaces. Further, Georgia Avenue, which is less than one block east of the center, is a major bus line, although most of the participants in center activities are anticipated to live in the Pleasant Plains Neighborhood.



Rear view proposed parking area 733 Euclid St., N.W.

334.3 No structural changes shall be made except those required by other municipal laws or regulations.

No structural changes will be made to the exterior of the subject building, unless other municipal laws or regulations require them. Interior changes will be minimal and will only be made to make the building compliant with the Building Code as a community service center.

334.4 The use shall be reasonable necessary or convenient to the neighborhood in which it is proposed to be located.

ECAC intends to serve the immediate neighborhood of Pleasant Plains and the surrounding areas. Banneker High School and Howard University. The subject site is situated a half block from both educational institutions. These institutions bring a variety of students in all age groups to the neighborhood to which ECAC programs can be tailored.

The applicant will offer social activities, traditional arts classes, support groups and educational seminars in an effort to foster a spirit of community within the neighborhood. Further, the center will host activities specially targeted to the students at nearby Bannekar High School and Howard University as well as the residents of the surrounding communities.

334.5 A community service center shall not be for profit, and no part of its net income inures to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual.

The ECAC is a non-profit organization. As such, no part of its net income inures to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual.

DOES THE APPLICATION MEET THE SPECIAL EXCEPTION TEST

Will the special exceptions be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Map?

Yes. *A community service center is deemed compatible to residential use if it meets certain requirements. As demonstrated above, the proposal meet those requirements and therefore meets the intent and purpose of the Zoning Regulations. The requested special exception, if approved by the Board, will be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Map. The applicant is requesting Board approval to re-establish a community service center use on the subject site. The site has a long and successful history in the Pleasant Plains community as a community service center.*

Will the granting of the special exception tend to affect adversely the use of neighboring property in accordance with the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Map?

No. *The granting of the special exception will not adversely affect the use of neighboring property in accordance with the Zoning Regulations. The use of the subject property as a community service facility has historically not affected adversely the use of neighboring property since the site was developed for community service functions in 1915, The site has a long and successful history in the Pleasant Plains community of accommodating a community center.*

COMMUNITY COMMENTS

At its regularly scheduled meeting held on May 1, 2003 Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) 1B voted unanimously to support the application of Emergence Inc. for special exception.

OP RECOMMENDATION

After having reviewed BZA application 17027 requesting a special exception to permit a Community Service Center in a R-4 District, the Office of Planning recommends that the **Board approve** the application. The Office of Planning finds that the application has satisfactorily addressed the requirements of §334, and has met the burden of proof under §3104 of the Zoning Regulations. OP concludes that approval of the application would be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and would not tend to affect adversely the use of neighboring property in accordance with the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Map.