GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF PLANNING

Office of the Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Zoning Adjustment

FROM: JLS for Andrew Altman

DATE: September 23, 2003

SUBJECT: BZA Case 17052 - Special Exception Request

APPLICATION-IN-BRIEF

The application by The District of Columbia Office on Aging requests, pursuant to 11 DCMR Section 3104.1, a special exception to allow an elderly development center (R-1) as outlined in Section 205 of the Zoning Regulations.

The facility known as the Model Cities Senior Wellness Center is located at 1901 Evarts Street, N.E. The subject site is on Square 4124, and Lot 50, and is in the R-1-B District.

OFFICE OF PLANNING RECOMMENDATION-IN-BRIEF

The Office of Planning recommends the subject application be approved.

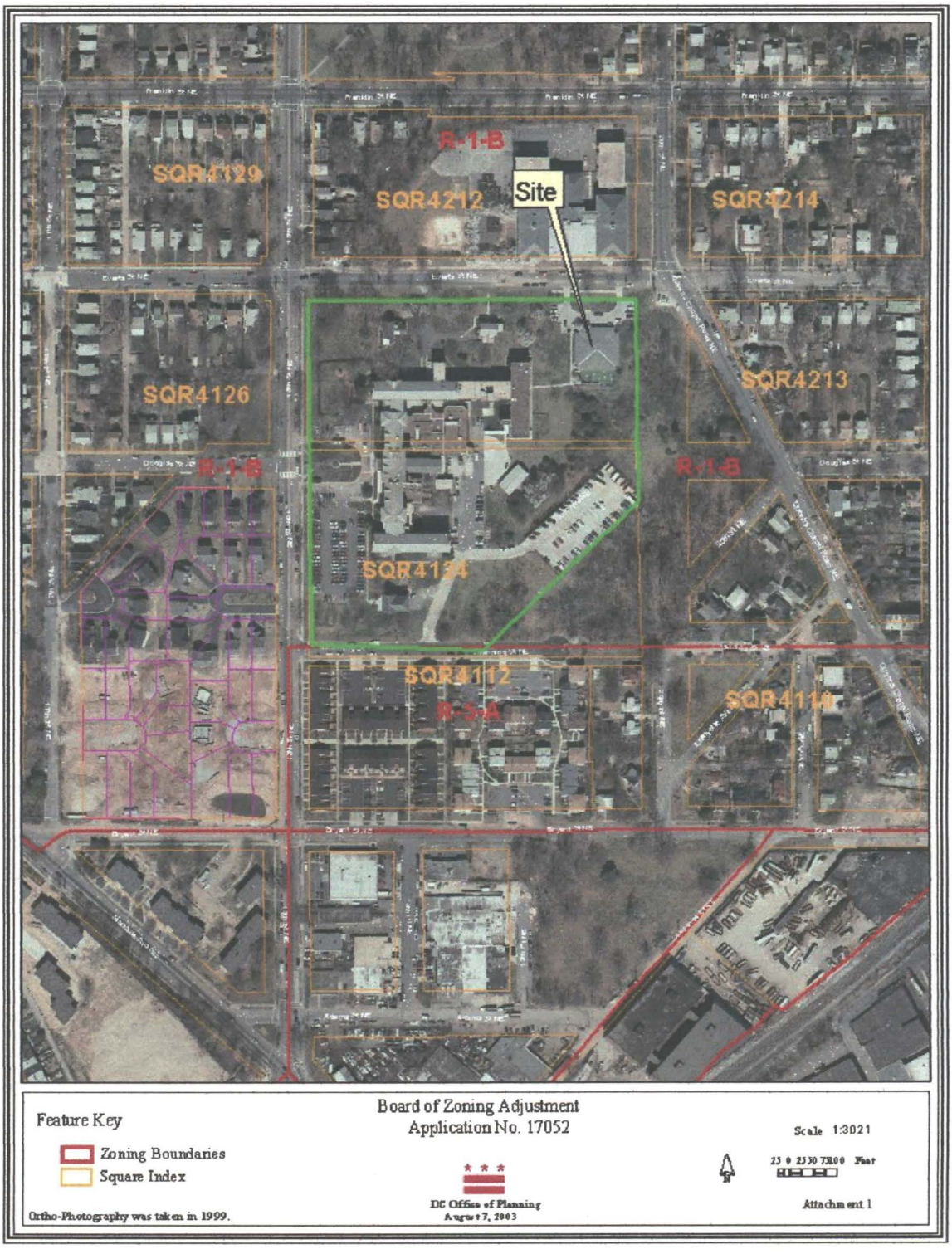
SITE AND AREA DESCRIPTION

The subject elderly development center is in the Langdon Neighborhood of Ward 5. Evarts Street generally bounds the site to the north, Channing Street to the south, 20th Street to the east and 18th Street to the west. The center is located near the northeast corner of Evarts & 20th Streets. The Langdon neighborhood is characterized predominantly with single-family detached homes. The subject facility shares its location with three (3) other elderly institutional facilities. Washington Center for the Aging, (a long-term care facility) which accommodates approximately 263 beds, is the larger of the other facilities. The House of Togetherness and Harmony House, (each with capacity for approximately seven residents) share the tract. Langdon Elementary School is across Evarts Street, directly north of the center.

BZA
Case No. 17052
Exhibit No. 26

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 17052
EXHIBIT NO. 26

Commercial services for the community are generally provided along the Rhode Island Commercial Corridor, between 4th Street and South Dakota Avenue. The recently opened Brentwood Plaza Shopping Center is the anchor of the commercial corridor. It includes a large Home Depot, a 53,000 square foot Giant food Store and large retail footprint, (approximately 113,000 square feet) which are anticipated to attract "Big Box Retailer."



BACKGROUND

The D.C. Office on Aging (OOA) is designated by the Mayor to plan, develop and implement programs and services for District residents 60 years of age and older. The agency's philosophy is to sustain meaningful roles for older citizens in their communities and to promote healthy lifestyles and positive aspects of aging.

The Model Cities Senior Wellness Center is an existing senior wellness center, which has been in operation in a residential zone since its construction in1989. The subject elderly center does not have a special exception because none was required for District properties when the center was built. A special exception is now necessary because as of1990, District properties became subject to the Zoning Regulations. Because the center is expanding, it must now meet the requirements of Section 205 of the Zoning Regulations, to obtain a building permit.

APPLICANT'S PROPOSAL

The one-story masonry building is currently improved with offices, classroom areas, wellness and fitness rooms for indoor recreation, and a multi-purpose room that can accommodate large gatherings. The center primarily operates on weekdays between 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. The proposed expansion will not alter the center's hours of operations. The center provides social, educational and recreational programs, which promote good health habits to seniors that live in Ward 5. Programs at the center include counseling, health screening, strength building, aerobics and exercises, dancing, seminars and computer training.

The applicant proposes to add a 2,700 square foot addition to two portions of the subject wellness center. Although the facility is in excellent condition, it needs to be expanded in order to better accommodate existing clientele as well as provide space for other seniors who desire to take advantage of various center programs.

The applicant proposes to expand the building in two directions:

1. **North-End Expansion**

   The north-end, or Evarts Street frontage of the building addition will consist of adding a vestibule to help energy conservation, provide space for a receptionist and add lobby seating for seniors waiting for transportation. The new front configuration will also include a covered entry door and walkway, to protect visitors from the



Area of north-end expansion.

elements at the designated vehicular drop-off and pick-up area.

The director's office will be expanded to include a conference area, in order to provide an area for staff and other meetings. Currently, the director and staff use the library and other areas designated for program functions as meeting space. The current classroom area is also used for staff conferences and as library space, since no other room in the facility can accommodate these functions separately.

The parking areas, (which are located to the northwest and the northeast of the northern front of the building) will be reconfigured to accommodate 17 on-site parking spaces, two of which will be handicapped accessible. There are currently 10 on-site parking spaces available at the site, one of which is handicapped accessible.

South-End Expansion

The project will include increasing the size of the existing fitness room to better accommodate seniors who participate in exercise and aerobics programs and provide space for other seniors wishing to join the program. The current size and

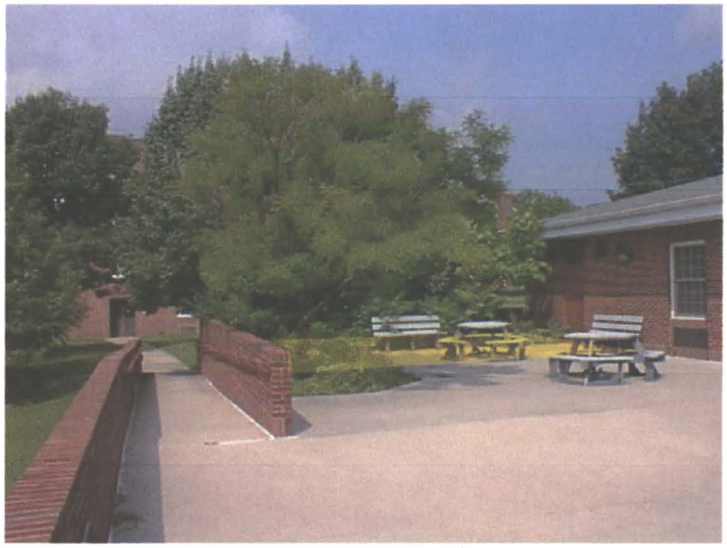


South end expansion, location of new fitness room.

configuration of the existing fitness room limits the number of seniors that can participate at any given time. The room size and configuration also prevents some of the exercise equipment from being used without disrupting ongoing programs. The new enlarged fitness room will accommodate larger classes and separate exercise equipment areas from class space. Expansion at the south-end of the facility will also enclose most of what is currently a rear terrace, in order to create a large fitness room. The west portion of the existing terrace, will remain a terrace, but much smaller than the current terrace. A second terrace will be built on the east side of the facility, below the existing multi-purpose room and opposite the existing pantry.

ZONING ANALYSIS

Pursuant to 11 DCMR §3104.1 the applicant is requesting special exception relief, under subsection 205 to allow an Elderly Development Center, in the R-1-B District.



Area of west terrace to remain.

The R-1-B District is designed to protect the quite residential areas now developed with one-family detached dwellings and adjoining vacant areas likely to be developed for those purposes. An elderly development center is permitted in R-1 Districts by special exception, if the facility meets the provisions of Section 205 of the Zoning Regulations, and is approved by the BZA.

Section 205 permits Elderly Development centers in the residential zones subject to the following standards:

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

The subject center will continue to meet all applicable District of Columbia code and licensing requirements when the expansion is completed.

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 elderly persons.

The expansion of the subject senior wellness center is not likely to create objectionable traffic conditions or unsafe conditions for picking up and dropping off center participants. The 1900 block of Evarts Street, N.E., is not considered a major traffic arterial, and there is a green buffer of at least 15 feet between designated parking areas of the center and the sidewalk on the south side of Evarts Street. Further, the new addition (north-end) will include a covered pick-up/drop-off area and a cover over

the entryway, in order to provide protection for seniors from inclement weather conditions.

The largest portions of the proposed expansion (the fitness room) will be added to the south end of the center, which is the most remote section of the building, as it relates to potential conflicts with vehicular traffic. There is an outside terrace, which is used by center participants for passive recreation and relaxation. The existing terrace will be reduced significantly in size, in order to make way for the fitness room. Another small terrace will be added to the secluded east side of the building and will not create objectionable traffic conditions or unsafe conditions for picking up and dropping off elderly persons, because it will not be accessible from public streets.

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

The center already exceeds the number of on-site parking spaces required by the Zoning Regulations, and will add more spaces as part of the expansion. Section 2101.1 of the Zoning requires elderly development centers to provide 1 parking space for each 4 teachers and other employees. The subject center has 8 full and part-time employees and therefore is required to provide 2 on-site parking spaces. No additional staff is anticipated as a result of the building expansion. Currently the center provides 10 on-site parking spaces, one of which is handicapped accessible. Because OOA is dedicated to ensuring that the center is accessible to even more seniors who wish to drive, the parking lot will be reconfigured and 7 additional parking spaces will be added, making the total number of parking spaces at the center 17. The parking lot on the northeast side of the center will be enlarged and will accommodate 11 parking spaces. Two of the spaces will be accessible to the handicapped. The existing 6 parking spaces on the northwest front of the site will remain in tact.

The affects of the wellness center on neighboring property have been positive, as is evidence by the number of residents that use the center. Approximately 290 seniors use the center weekly. The heaviest use is on Monday, Wednesday and Friday when an average of 55 seniors attend the fitness program. Approximately 15 seniors walk to the center on a daily basis and another 14 are provided pick-up and drop-off service by the center. The remaining seniors use public transportation or private vehicles.

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.

The new expansions proposed for the subject elderly development, including any outdoor space, will be located and designed so that there will be no objectionable impact on nearby properties due to noise or activity, or other objectionable conditions. Elderly development centers, by their very nature are generally internally oriented, usually quite and non-objectionable. The subject center will have two rear terraces. The terrace on the south-end of the building will be secluded on the west side of the proposed fitness room and behind an approximately 4 feet high brick wall. The new terrace will be located at the east end of the existing building, in an area that is buffered from nearby properties by a wall, heavy vegetation and mature trees.

The property beyond the wall (south) slopes gradually, and is mostly covered with thick vegetation and mature trees, that mostly buffer the facility from view of neighboring properties. Program participants will use the terraces for passive recreation and relaxation.

The Generalized Land Use Map depicts the tract of land that contains the subject center in the Local Public Facilities category. Elderly development centers are consistent uses in the local public facilities category. The subject center does share its grounds with three (3) other elderly facilities. All of the activities at each of the adjoining facilities take place on the inside. OOA is not aware of any objections from neighboring property owner, regarding noise or other negative impacts from the center, during the history of the subject center.

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.

When the subject elderly development center was constructed, special treatments in the way of design, screening, planting, the location of parking areas, signs, and landscaping were performed to protect adjacent and nearby properties. The subject elderly development center shares its grounds with three other elderly facilities. The entire eastern boundary and most of the southern boundary are covered with thick vegetation and mature trees, which serves to screen the much of these portions of the site from view of neighboring properties. The north front of the site will be the most visible portion of the site, especially the parking areas, and they will benefit from extensive landscaping. The majority of the expansion project will be to the southern end of the center, which is the portion of the structure that is not visible from most of neighboring properties, because

of a thick green cover on that portion of the site and the southern slope of the property.

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 play area and the center itself.

There are no off-site play areas associated with the subject elderly development center and none are proposed.

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.

There is more than one elderly development center in Square 4124 within 1,000 feet of another elderly development center. However, the cumulative efforts of these facilities will not have adverse impact on the neighborhood due to traffic, noise, operations, or other similar factors. Elderly development centers, by their very nature are generally internally oriented, usually quite and non-objectionable. Each of the facilities on the subject square has a long history at their current locations, without causing adverse impact on the Landon neighborhood due to traffic, noise, operations or similar factors.

The Generalized Land Use Map depicts the tract of land that contains the subject center in the Local Public Facilities category. Elderly development centers are consistent uses in the Local Public Facilities category. Square 4124 is owned by the District Government and is dedicated for elderly care purposes. In addition to the subject wellness center, there are three additional elderly facilities that share the tract. Washington Center for the Aging (a long-term skills care facility) is the larger of the other facilities, with capacity for163 beds. The House of Togetherness is a Community Residential Facility licensed for up to 7residents and Harmony House, is a group home with capacity for five residents.

DOES THE APPLICATION MEET THE SPECIAL EXCEPTION TEST?

Will the special exception be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps?

Yes. The requested special exception will be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps. The property was transferred to the District Government by the Interior

Department for educational, cultural or recreational purposes, and has been used for those purposes since the transfer. Further, the property is in the R-5-A District, in which an elderly development center is permitted by special exception, if the facility meets the provisions of Section 205 of the Zoning Regulations, and if approved by the BZA. As shown above, the proposal meets the requirements of Section 205.

An elderly development center is a use deemed compatible with the R-1 District and consistent with the Comprehensive Plan Generalized Land Use Map designation in the Local Public Facilities Category. The District of Columbia Government owns Square 4124 and dedicates the entire campus to elderly uses. In addition to the subject wellness center, there are three other elderly care facilities on the campus. The four elderly facilities on the campus have long positive histories at their current locations.

Will the special exceptions tend to affect adversely the use of neighboring property in accordance with the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps?

No. *The special exception if granted by the Board, will not tend to affect adversely the use of neighboring property in accordance with the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps. The Model Cities Wellness Center, at 1901 Evarts Street, N.E. has been an excepted use by the owners of neighboring properties, and as a valuable community access since it was constructed in 1989. According to the applicant, approximately 290 seniors use the center weekly. The affects of the wellness center on neighboring property have been positive, as is evidence by the number of residents that use the center.*

RELATIONSHIP OF THE APPLICATION TO THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Comprehensive Plan Generalized Land Use Map depicts the subject site in the Local Public Facilities Land Use Category. Land and facilities occupied by the District government, excluding parks, recreation center, and open space are the predominant uses in this category.

1002 Human Services Delivery System

1002.1 It is the human services delivery system's objective to maintain and improve the human services delivery system in the District, which has been established to facilitate the maintenance and improvement of health and well being.

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

(h) *Coordinate existing services in health, housing, transportation, and recreation, including the establishment of multi-purpose senior centers 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.*

1626 Ward 5 Objectives For Human Services

1626.1 The objectives for human services are as follows:

(d) *Promote programs of health, social services and support levels for older adults to enable them to maintain themselves with a sense of security, dignity, respect and independence.*

COMMENT COMMENTS

The application was presented to Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) 5B, at its regularly scheduled monthly meeting, on September 4, 2003. The ANC could not take a vote, because there was not a quorum of commissioners in attendance. The Single Member District Commissioner, who was present at the meeting, did support the application.

OP RECOMMENDATION

After reviewing the application submitted by the D.C. Office on Aging, requesting a special exception to modify an elderly development center, in a R-5-A District, the Office of Planning recommends that the Board approve the application. OP finds that the applicant has satisfactorily met all the tests specified in Section 3104.1, and 205 and concluded the application 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 in accordance with the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps.

The Model Cities Wellness Center has existed for over fourteen years without adversely impacting the surrounding community, as a result of traffic or other conditions that could negatively impact the community. The proposed expansion will allow for additional services and improve the center for both staff and seniors who use the facility. The expansion will not cause a great increase in the number of seniors who use the facility and therefore traffic is not accepted to increase.