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 17053 - 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 a Child/Elderly Development Center (R-1) as outlined in Section 205 of the Zoning Regulations.

The facility known as the Washington Senior Wellness Center is located at 3001 Alabama Avenue, S.E. The subject site is on US Reservation Number 672, Parcel number 214/185, and it is in the R-5-A 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 Hillcrest Neighborhood of Ward 7. Alabama Avenue generally bounds the site to the north, Erie Street to the south, 32nd Street to the east and 30th Street to the west. The Hillcrest neighborhood is characterized predominantly with single-family detached houses. Single-family dwellings are to the north, east and mostly to the south of the subject elderly development center, east of 31st. There is a pocket of moderate density row dwellings and garden apartments west of 31st, in a triangle area bounded by Erie Street, 31st Street and Naylor Road. Most of Parcel 214/185 consists of undeveloped parkland. However, the property is developed with four (4) different uses; the center is situated at the northwest corner, near the intersection of Alabama Avenue & 30th Street, the Mary Winston Elementary School is at the south end of the parcel, near the intersection of 31st & Erie Streets, the recreation/play fields for the school is located just north of the school and there are public tennis courts on the parcel,

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on the east side of the elderly center and south of single-family detached homes, which are on the south side of Alabama Avenue, at 31st Place

The nearest commercial services to the subject center are directly across 30th Street from the center, at the Good Hope Marketplace Shopping Center, and at the Skyland Shopping Center, which is just northwest of the center, across Alabama Avenue.

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 Washington Senior Wellness Center is an existing facility in operation since 1993, but does not have a special exception because none was required for District properties when the center was built. The special exception is now necessary because as of 1990 District properties are subject to the Zoning Regulations. The special exception is needed because of its expansion.

OOA constructed the Washington Senior Wellness Center in 1993. The one-story brick building is currently improved with offices, classroom areas, wellness and fitness rooms for indoor recreation, and a large multi-purpose room that can accommodate large gatherings. The center primarily operates on weekdays between 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. The center provides social, educational and recreational programs, which promote good health habits to seniors that live in Ward 7. Programs at the center include counseling, health screening, strength building, aerobics and exercises, dancing, seminars and computer training.


3001 Alabama Avenue, SE
R-1-B
SQR5641N
C-3-A
R-5-A
SQR5643
SQR5700
Akron Pl SE
Bangor St SE
Camden St SE
31st Pl SE
33rd St SE
Newton Road SE
Feature Key
Zoning Boundaries
Square Index
Ortho-Photography was taken in 1999.
Board of Zoning Adjustment
Application No. 17053
DC Office of Planning
August 18, 2003
Scale 1:5375
100 0 100 200 300 Feet

APPLICANT'S PROPOSAL

The applicant proposes to add a total of 2,737 square foot addition to two areas of the existing center. The facility is in excellent condition. The expansion is requested in order for the center to better accommodate area seniors and the various center programs. The north and east portions of the building were eliminated as locations for the proposed additions, because the north-end of the property is close to Alabama Avenue, and there is a retaining wall on the east side of the building, which limits expansion in that area. The property also slopes sharply on the east side.

1. **West Expansion**

   The western portion of the building addition will consist of a vestibule, a receptionist area, and a lobby with seating for seniors waiting for transportation. The front addition will also include a cover over the entry door and walkway to protect visitors from the elements at the designated vehicular drop-off and pick-up area.

   The director's office will also be expanded to include a conference area, to provide a suitable meeting space for staff and other meetings. Currently, the director and staff use the library and other areas of the building, designated for program functions as meeting space.



Area of Building Slated for new Vestibule, Reception Area Lobby Seating Area Covered Walkway and Expansion of Director's Office

2. **South Expansion**

   The southern portion of the project will include enlarging the existing fitness room to better accommodate seniors who participate in exercise and aerobics programs and provide space for additional participants. The current size and configuration of the existing fitness room limits the number of persons that can use the facility at any given time. Currently, the size and configuration of the room prevents some of the exercise equipment from being used without



South-end of Building where Fitness Room will be added.

disrupting other competing programs. The enlarged fitness room will accommodate larger classes and provide a separate equipment areas.

Currently, a parking lot abuts the south end of the building, and extends to the southern boundary of the property. The lot accommodates 8 passenger vehicles. The proposed expansion slated for the south-end of the building will cause the parking lot to be relocated. A reconfigured parking lot will be located entirely at the southern-end of the property, opposite the new fitness room.

There are currently 2 parking spaces near the entrance of the center, which are handicapped accessible. These spaces will remain in the same location, and continue serving the same function.

ZONING ANALYSIS

Pursuant to 11 DCMR §3104.1 the applicant is requesting a special exception, under Section 205 to allow an elderly development center in the R-5-A District.
The R-5 Districts are general Residence Districts designed to permit flexibility of design by permitting in a single district, all types of urban residential development. The R-5 Districts shall also permit the construction of those institutions and semi-public buildings that would be compatible with adjoining residential uses and that are excluded from the more restrictive Residence Districts. An elderly development center is permitted in R-5 Districts by special exception, if the facility meets the provisions of Section 205 of the Zoning Regulations, and is approved by the BZA.

205 CHILD/ELDERLY DEVELOPMENT CENTER (R-1)

201.1 Use as a child/elderly development center shall be permitted as a special exception in an R-1 District if approved by the Board of Zoning Adjustment under § 3104, subject to the provisions of this chapter.

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.



Internal circulation system.

The expansion of the Washington Senior Wellness Center is not likely to create objectionable traffic conditions or unsafe conditions for picking up and dropping off center participants. The entire facility is isolated from the traffic flow on nearby public streets, by expansive green buffers and deep public space.

There is approximately 55 feet between the designated pickup and drop Off area for the center and the property line with 30th Street, and another 15 feet from the property line to the east sidewalk of 30th Street. This distance serves to separate the center's vehicular traffic from traffic on both Alabama Avenue and 30th Street. The containment of vehicles on the site, and away from public streets, tends to eliminate objectionable traffic conditions and create a safe on-site area for picking up and dropping off elderly persons.

The entrance to the center is off 30th Street, S.E., which is primarily a residential street and not considered a major traffic arterial. Most of the vehicular traffic bound for the center can be accommodated within the center grounds, without disrupting the flow of traffic on adjacent 30th street or Alabama Avenue.

The Good Hope Marketplace Shopping Center is directly west of the elderly center, across 30th Street, but its main entrances are on Alabama Avenue and few vehicles enter the shopping center from 30th Street. Therefore, there is minimal conflict between traffic going to the elderly center and that going to the shopping center.

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. Section 2101.1 of the Zoning Regulations 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 requires 2 parking spaces. Currently, there are 10 on-site parking spaces, two of which are handicapped accessible.

The center will continue to provide 8 parking spaces, as the expansion in the building will not include



Relocation area for parking lot.

any expansion in staff size. Therefore, no additional parking spaces are necessary.

According to the applicant, approximately 55 Ward Seven seniors use the center each weekday. Around 8 use Metro Senior Citizens transportation to access the center, 2 three walk to the center and the remaining (roughly 44) seniors arrive at the center by private transportation.

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

The new expansions proposed for the subject elderly development center, will not include any outdoor play space. Primarily all of the activities at the subject center take place on the inside. The subject center is situated on the property in a manner that allows expansive buffers between the center and most of its neighbors. There is a green buffer and mature trees to the east of the center, which reduces the possibility of objectionable impact on adjacent or nearby properties from the center, regarding noise or other objectionable conditions.



West view from center to shopping center.

The upper-portion of the west side of the center is across 30th Street, from the Good Hope Marketplace Shopping Center. However, the subject center is far enough from the shopping center not to impact it, by producing objectionable noise or other objectionable conditions. The northwest portion of the center boundary is across 30th Street, a substantial distance from the Good Hope Market Place Shopping Center. The southern portion of the site is mostly covered with heavy vegetation and mature trees, which serves as a buffer between the center and the residential units on the lower portion of 30th Street, and Winston Elementary School, at the south end of the parcel. The distances between the two uses are substantial enough to minimize objectionable impact from either use, as the property slopes sharply from the center to the school.

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 applicant has taken special care to insure that the elderly center in general, and the two areas of new addition, are designed to be compatible with and not adversely impact other nearby properties. The facility is screened from residential properties on the east by heavy vegetation and trees. It slopes sharply from north (top) to south, which limits the view of the facility from the south end of the parcel. The facility is vaguely visible from Winston Elementary School, which is located at the southern-end of the tract, at 32nd & Erie Streets. Existing slopes and mature trees at the southern end of the site serves to screen much of the project from view of neighboring properties. Both of the portions of the property slated for the new additions will be re-landscaped, when the additions are completed.



East view, retaining wall and green buffer.



Overview of houses, north side of Alabama Avenue.

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.

The subject elderly development center is not within 1,000 feet of another elderly development center.

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. An elderly development center is a use deemed compatible with the stated purposes of the property. 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 is approved by the BZA. As shown above, the proposal meets the requirements of Section 205.

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 owners of neighboring properties in the Hillcrest community have accepted the Washington Senior Wellness Center as a valuable community asset, since its construction in 1993. The affects of the wellness center in the community have been positive, as is evidenced by the number of residents that use the center. Approximately 55 Ward Seven seniors use the center each weekday.

RELATIONSHIP OF THE APPLICATION TO THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Comprehensive Plan Generalized Land Use Map depicts the subject area as being in the Parks Recreation and Open Space Land Use Category. District government parks and recreation centers, cemeteries and the National Capitol Open Space System are the predominant uses in this land use category. The wellness center is consistent with this Comprehensive Plan land use recommendation.

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.*

1825 Ward 7 Human Services

1825.2 Services for senior citizens are of great importance to ward residents. The senior Citizens Wellness Center, under the auspices of the Office on Aging, provides a wide range of services and programs to senior citizens. These programs focus primary on keeping senior citizen's health by providing seminars and exercise classes.

1826 Ward 7 Actions in Support of Human Services

1827 The policies in support of human services are as follows:

(h) Design and coordinate services in health care, housing, transportation and recreation to make it possible for senior citizens and persons with disabilities to remain independent:

(1) A system designed for senior citizens and handicapped individuals is needed to enable them to receive and obtain services within centralized areas such as a multi-purpose service center or recreation center.

COMMUNITY COMMENTS

The application was presented to Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) 7B, at its regularly scheduled monthly meeting, held on August 21, 2003. The ANC voted unanimously to support the application.

OP SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

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 Sections 3104.1, and 205.

The Washington Senior Wellness Center has existed for over ten years and has not cause any traffic or other adverse impact on the surrounding 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.