PROJECT:
Washington Seniors Wellness Center Addition
3001 Alabama Avenue SE
Washington, DC

REQUEST
Pursuant to 11 DCMR Section 3104.1, the Government of the District of Columbia Office on Aging requests a special exception under Section 352 to allow the construction of an addition to the Washington Seniors Wellness Center, as defined in the zoning ordinance as an elderly development center.

BACKGROUND
The DC Office on Aging is the governmental agency designated by the Mayor of the District of Columbia to plan, develop, and implement programs and services for 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 Agency constructed the current Washington Seniors Wellness Center on federal land, US Reservation #672. The prior transfer of jurisdiction of the property was made from the National Park Service for "recreation and related purposes." The center was constructed in the northwest corner of the property with the remaining land used mainly as a park. Mary Winston Elementary School was constructed on the south corner of the property. Although the actual US property is not zoned, the District of Columbia zoning map indicates a R-5-A zoning classification for the area surrounding the property.

The center provides social, educational, and recreational programs to promote the health habits of the neighborhood and Ward 7 senior population. Programs include counseling, health screening, strength-building, aerobics and exercises, dancing, seminars, and computer education. The one-story masonry building contains offices, educational classroom areas, as well as a fitness room for recreation, and a large multi-purpose room to accommodate larger gatherings. Activities primarily take place during daylight hours.

Busy Alabama Avenue runs along the north of the property, and 30th Street SE, a residential side street, runs along the west. The surrounding neighborhood consists of single family residences to the east and north. A new commercial shopping center exists to the west across 30th Street. Wooded parkland surrounds the rest of the site to the south.

PURPOSE
Although the building is in excellent condition, the programs offered at the center are no longer easily accommodated in the current facilities. This project adds space to the building to allow the current programs to better function.

PROPOSAL
The Office on Aging proposes to expand the building in two directions on the north and west. A steeply sloping site and retaining wall limit any addition to the building at the south and east sides. A level parking area to the west will be modified to allow a new addition, resulting in a parking area accommodating the same number of onsite parking spaces as exists now.

The current fitness room size limits the class sizes for aerobics and exercise programs, even though more seniors wish to participate. The room size and configuration also prevents the exercise equipment from being used without disrupting an ongoing exercise program. A new larger fitness room is planned to the west, and an expanded entry lobby and office is proposed to the north. The new fitness room will allow larger classes and will separate exercise machines from the class area.

The addition to the north at the building front entry adds a vestibule to help energy conservation, and adds space for a receptionist and lobby seating for seniors waiting for rides. The new front entrance also proposes a cover over the entry doors and entry walk to protect visitors from the weather at a

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vehicle drop-off. The director's office is also expanded to provide a conference area for staff meetings. The director and staff currently use the library and other areas designated for instructional use.

Part of the multi-purpose room is used as a classroom since no other room can accommodate the numbers of participants the classes now attract. No area exists for computer instruction. A larger, divisible multi-purpose classroom is proposed in the present fitness room to support larger classes and computer instruction.

COMMUNITY IMPACT

- Codes and Licensing:
  The center will continue to meet all applicable code and licensing requirements by the District of Columbia.

- Uses:
  The center will continue to provide activities that promote the health and wellness of the senior population. No new uses are proposed.

- Operation:
  The staggered arrival and departure times of the different activities and programs will be continued. The facility operating hours will remain primarily from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm.

- Traffic:
  The addition and renovation is proposed to accommodate the current programs, rather than an expansion. Traffic to and from the center is not expected to increase, therefore, expansion of the onsite parking is not planned. The center employs 10 full and part time employees. One onsite parking space for every four employees is required by the zoning regulations. The current 10 spaces provided satisfies this requirement.

  Many seniors arrive by private bus or van from local homes, community centers, and institutions, or by Metrobus with routes running on Alabama Avenue at the front of the building. Even so, the current number of onsite spaces does not accommodate all users and staff at peak times. Increasing the onsite parking to the south or east would require extensive fill because of the steep drop off, and would require the removal of large oak trees to the south. No additional parking is planned, since ample street parking currently exists along 30th Street, and visitors parking here do not currently impact street parking for the adjacent residential neighborhood.

- Compatibility with Surrounding Uses
  The center is compatible in scale and height with the surrounding two story homes and the single story shopping center to the west. The proposed addition continues the residential character of the existing building by matching its brick, asphalt roof shingles, and sloping hip roof forms. Its hours of operation, low amount of noise generated by its activities, and distance to closest residences do not disturb the surrounding residential neighborhood.

PROJECT DATA

Existing building area =	7,076	sq ft
Proposed addition =	2,166	
Total proposed building size =	9,242	sq ft
Current full time employees =	6	
Current part time employees =	4	
Total current/projected employment =	10	
Existing parking capacity =	10	spaces (2 accessible)
Proposed parking capacity =	10	spaces (2 accessible)

Estimated construction cost = $400,000

Funded by:
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