GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF PLANNING

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Zoning Adjustment

FROM: ~~Andrew~~ Altman
Director

DATE February 10, 2003

SUBJECT: BZA Application ~~16985~~ 17107
Bennett Career Institute – 700 Monroe Street, N.E.

- **Application of Bennett Career Institute**, pursuant to 11 DCMR § 3103.2, for a variance from the off-street parking requirements under subsection 2101.1, for a vocational/technical school and child development center in the C-1 District at premises 700 Monroe Street, N.E. (Square 3657, Lot 827).

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

OP **recommends approval** of the variance from the number of off-street parking spaces for the Institute. OP supports the applicant's provision of 20 off-site parking spaces at 680 Rhode Island Avenue with shuttle service to satisfy the parking requirements as prescribed by Section 2101.1 of the Zoning Regulations.

SITE AND AREA DESCRIPTION

BCI is located at 700 Monroe Street, in Square 3657 in the northeast quadrant of the District. The Square is bound by Michigan Avenue to the north, WMATA tracks to the east, Monroe Street to the south and 7th Street on the west. The square is multi-zoned. The subject lot is zoned C-1 (Per ZC Order No. 03-15), the lot to the north C-1, and the property to the east C-M-1. The site is improved with a four-story brick and concrete building built as a dormitory in 1957 by Catholic University.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant proposes to operate a technical/vocational school, known as the Bennett Career Institute on the subject property at 700 Monroe Street. The institute will include a child development center for staff, students and the surrounding community. The

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building was most recently occupied by the District of Columbia as a Social Service Center, as evidenced by a Certificate of Occupancy dated 1979. In the past, the predominant use was a dormitory. The proposed number of students for the career institute is 180 with 25 faculty and staff. The hours of operation will be from 8:30 am to 6:00 pm.

The site can provide 9 legal spaces on the existing lot and prescribed parking requirements of §2101.1 determined that the site should provide a total of 28 spaces. Therefore, a variance from the number of spaces is being requested to satisfy the combined parking requirements of the school and child development center.

ZONING REQUIREMENT and ANALYSIS

The C-1 Zone District permits the establishment of the trade school and the child development center as a matter-of-right and represents shopping and service areas that are generally low in scale, character and activity and that provide a limited range of retail goods and services as the predominant uses.

The combined parking spaces for the child development center and the trade school is determined based on the requirements of §2101.1 as follows:

- For a child development center (All Districts) – 1 for each 4 teachers and other employees
- For a trade school (All other districts except C-4, C-5/PAD) – For each building, 2 for each 3 teachers; plus either 1 for each 10 classroom seats or 1 for each 12 stadium seats or 1 for each 10 auditorium seats, whichever is greater, except as provided in §2106.

The amount of on-site spaces needed based on the above requirements include:

Use	Number of Staff	Number of Seats	Required Parking
Bennett Institute	8	202	6+20 = 26
Child Dev. Center	8	50	2

Based on the above, approximately twenty-eight (28) spaces are required to satisfy this provision. According to information provided by the applicant, the site can physically accommodate up to nine (9) spaces. OP believes the applicant's hardship to provide the total number of required spaces is justified as follows.

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

To maintain the standards required for drive aisles and parking space dimensions (9'x19'), no more than 9 spaces can be striped on site. The existing L- shape of the

building and its location on the site hinders the addition of more on-site spaces. There is no additional space on the property to accommodate the required number of parking spaces. This creates an exceptional situation with respect to the on-site parking, since the building cannot be moved or reconfigured to accommodate the required number of on-site parking spaces.

(b) By reason of the aforementioned unique and 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 lack of space creates a practical difficulty for the applicant to provide the extra 19 spaces needed. There is no other on-site alternative, and no underground parking is available. Open space to the rear of the property will be dedicated to the child development center's play area. OP believes the applicant faces an exceptional practical difficulty induced by physical constraints of the property.

(c) 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.

The 9 on-site parking spaces can accommodate parking for approximately 50% of staff for the combined child development center and the trade school. The applicant submits that the majority of attendees/students of their current program use public transportation, including Metro and Metrobus. BCI has provided supplemental off-site parking at a nearby location, including 20 leased spaces at the shopping center at 680 Rhode Island Avenue, N.E., where there is ample and under-utilized parking. BCI proposes to provide a shuttle bus service to transport attendees to and from this lot to the institute at Monroe Street.

In addition, while on-street parking will not be encouraged, there is available but limited on street parking in the immediate vicinity of the trade school. The location is well served by Metro's Red Line (Brookland/Catholic University) and a number of Metrobus routes.

OP has not received any official reports from city agencies pertaining to this request. OP's discussions with DDOT indicated no objections to the proposal if the applicant adopts measures to ensure that on-street parking is not increased, by encouraging attendees to use Metro and other means of public transportation. The applicant has indicated that most attendees do not own a car and BCI is proposing a shuttle bus to and from the Rhode Island Shopping Center's parking lot where they have provided the additional required parking spaces.

BCI originally applied for a use variance in 2003 when the property was zoned R-4. The BZA denied the use variance and encouraged the applicant to apply for a map amendment, which would be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan Generalized Land

Use Map. BCI filed a map amendment request and the Zoning Commissioner rezoned the property to C-1 on August 11, 2003 (Case 03-15). The uses proposed are consistent with the C-1 Zone and in combination with BCI's offer to provide off-site parking.

OP believes that granting the variance will not impair the intent of the Zone Regulations and Map.

COMMUNITY COMMENTS

OP has no information at this time concerning the ANC's recent recommendation. However, OP is aware of the community's support for trade school, as evidenced by submitted testimony on record in its previous BZA case #16985 from the ANC and other community groups and recent submissions by the applicant.

CONCLUSION

The Office of Planning concludes that the applicant has met the burden of proof, pursuant to 11 DCMR 3103.2, for a variance to permit 20 supplemental parking spaces to be provided at an off-site location. Based on the applicant's submission and observation of the site, OP believes that there is adequate parking for staff and **recommends approval** of variance relief from the parking requirements of §2101, since the location is well served by Metro and Metrobus and the majority of the institute's attendees use public transportation.