GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF PLANNING

Office of the Director

MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 25, 2004

TO: District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment

FROM: Andrew Altman, Director

SUBJECT: Board of Zoning Adjustment Case No. 17165
1600-18 Bladensburg Road, N.E.

Summary

The applicant seeks a variance from the floor area ratio (FAR) provisions of §2101.1 and §2201.1 for relief from the requirement for parking spaces and loading docks. The applicant seeks to build a public storage facility on approximately 26,708 square feet of the 37,618 square foot lot with nine parking spaces and one 35' loading dock. The Office of Planning **recommends approval** of these variances.

Site and Area Description

The subject property is located at 1600-18 Bladensburg Road N.E., Square 4273, Lots 3 & 4. The property is on the west side of Bladensburg Road between the National Arboretum to the east and Mount Olivet Cemetery to the west. The site is triangular in shape with approximately 333' of street frontage. Currently, the site is used for sale and storage of used cars. The subject property and the properties to the north on Bladensburg Road are zoned C-M-1 and consist of mainly automobile-based uses. Mount Olivet Cemetery is zoned R-4 and the National Arboretum is zoned GOV.

Project Description

The applicant is proposing a three-story, 80,121 square foot public storage facility. The building will have 556 storage units and be 40' in height. The site plan drawing on the following page shows the proposed layout of the site including the proposed parking and loading areas.

BZA
Case No. 17165
Exhibit No. 27

Board of Zoning Adjustment
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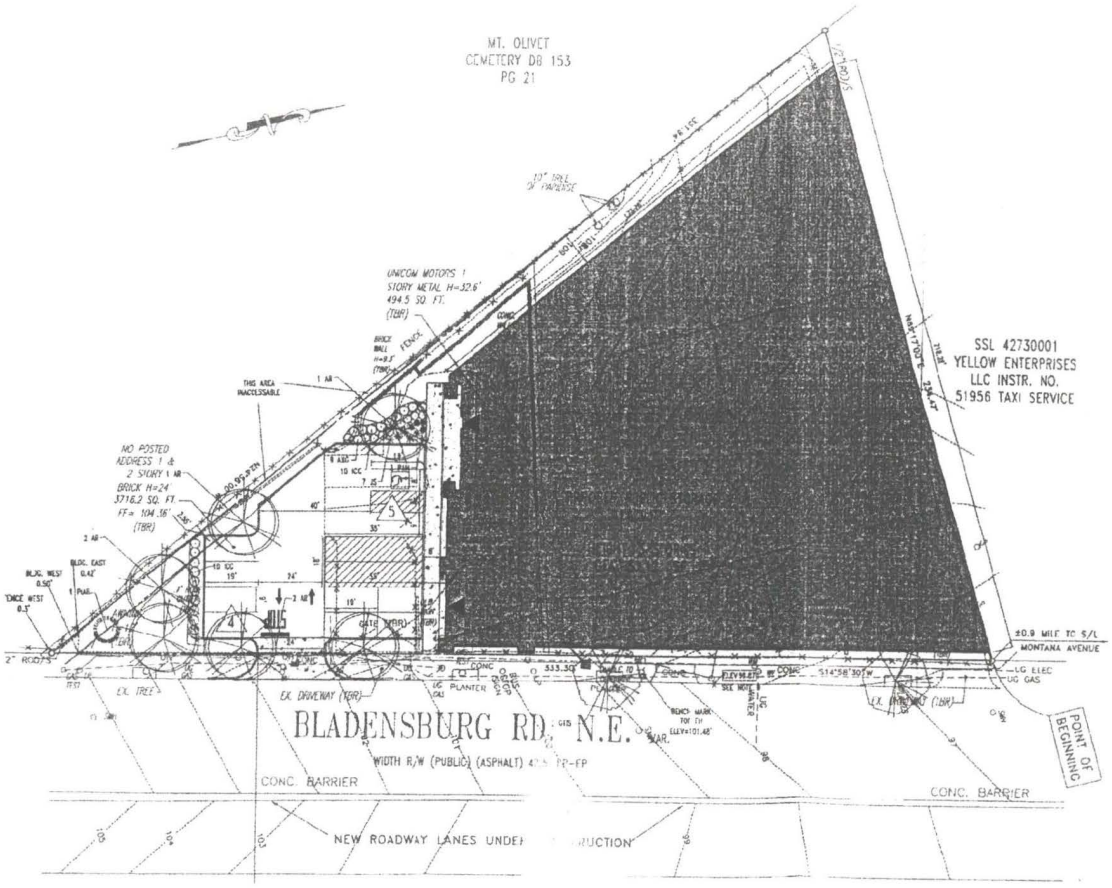


Figure 1: Site Plan

Zoning Requirements

The applicant is requesting a variance from the loading and parking requirements of a warehouse use. The parking requirements for this type of use are 1 space per 3000 square feet. The loading requirements call for one 30' and one 55' loading berth for a warehouse use of this size. The application meets the all the requirements of the C-M-1 district including FAR and rear yard.

Section	Item	Allowed/Required	Requested	Deviation
841.1	FAR	3.0	2.13	N/A
404.1	Rear Yard	12 feet	12 feet	N/A
2101.1	Parking	27 spaces	9 spaces	18 spaces
405.9	Loading	2 berths	1 35' berth	1 55' berth



Figure 2: Aerial View

Analysis

The provisions of §3103.2 require the applicant to show a unique physical aspect or other extraordinary or exceptional situation or condition of a specific piece of property that creates an undue hardship or practical difficulty. In addition, there should be no harm to the public or to the zone plan.

Extraordinary or Exceptional Situation

The exceptional situation in this application arises from the size and shape of the property. The property is triangular in shape and the result is inefficiency in the use of land that would not result in a rectangular property of the same size. The southernmost 55' of street frontage is unusable do to the sharp angle of the property line. In addition, the use of the neighboring property as a cemetery precludes the acquisition of more property to provide additional parking.

Practical Difficulty

The unique shape of the property described above leaves no room on the site for strict application of the zoning regulations, resulting in a practical difficulty for the applicant. Providing the full parking requirement would require as much as half of the site and would severely restrict the use of the site by the applicant. The unique design requirements of this building, including the need for access aisles, would be difficult, if not impossible, to meet if the full 27 parking spaces were required.

In addition, the applicant claims that basing the requirements for this project on the standards for warehouses represents a practical difficulty. While the warehouse standards are applicable as the closest category in the zoning code, the applicant claims that this does not represent the true parking and loading requirements of individual storage unit buildings. Evidence to support this claim has been provided in both the traffic study and the prehearing statement. Accepting the validity of this evidence means that building the full amount of parking and loading required by the ordinance would result in a practical difficulty for the applicant.

Substantial Detriment

In addition to the above tests, §3103.2 further requires that the relief requested will not be a substantial detriment to the public good or substantially impair the intent, purpose and integrity of the zone plan.

There appears to be no detriment to the public good from this proposal. Replacing the existing use with a viable commercial structure is an example of the improvements called for in Chapter 16 of the Comprehensive Plan. In addition, there are no uses in the immediate vicinity that would be affected by potential parking overflow, should such an instance occur.

As to the integrity of the zone plan, the arguments made in reference to the practical difficulty apply here also. The zoning regulations do not address this category of business and therefore might not accurately represent the parking and loading needs of the proposed project. Consideration by the Board of this particular case should not negatively affect the integrity of the zone plan parking and loading requirements for future warehouse uses.

Based on the above analysis, OP concludes that there is a unique situation on this lot that results in a practical difficulty in meeting the strict requirements of §§2101.1 and 2201.1 of the zoning code. Furthermore, the granting of variances from these sections will not result in substantial detriment to the neighborhood nor impair the purpose, intent, or integrity of the zoning code.

ANC Recommendation

No report has been received from ANC 5B regarding this application. However, the applicant has attended two ANC meetings regarding the variances and states that all feedback was positive to the proposal.

OP is aware of no further comments on the application or opposition to this project from the neighborhood.

Agency Reports

The application and traffic study were forwarded to DDOT for review on May 19, 2004. As of this date no report has been received from DDOT. OP expects that a report will be filed prior to the public hearing and would recommend deferral of the application if no report is received by that date.

Recommendation

The Office of Planning concludes that the applicant has met the burden of proof, pursuant to 11 DCMR 3103.2 of the Zoning Regulations, for the granting of variances to permit the construction of a public storage facility with nine parking spaces and one 35' loading dock.

The Office of Planning **recommends approval** of the variances by the Board of Zoning Adjustment to allow relief from the parking and loading requirements on the property at 1600-18 Bladensburg Road N.E.

AA/tp