GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF PLANNING

Office of the Director

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 22, 2005

TO: District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment

FROM: Ellen McCarthy, Interim Director
Office of Planning]

SUBJECT: Board of Zoning Adjustment Case No. 17295
2405 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, SE
Square 5789 Lot 808

SUMMARY

The applicant, the Good Samaritan Foundation, seeks approval, pursuant to 11 DCMR § 3103.2, of variances to allow renovation and use of an existing structure as a community center in the C-2-A District at 2405 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, SE (Square 5789, Lot 808). Variance relief is requested from the maximum non-residential FAR requirement of §402.4, and the parking requirement of §210.

Recommendation:

The Office of Planning recommends **approval** of this application based on the following findings:

- The exceptional condition of the existing structure creates a peculiar and exceptional practical difficulty to the owner in redevelopment of the lot.
- The proposed construction will be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps.
- The proposed construction will not tend to affect adversely the use of neighboring property.

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Project Description

The subject site is developed with a 2-story building that was constructed in 1947 as the Carver Theater. In subsequent years, the Smithsonian has used the building as the African American Museum. Since 1984, the building has been vacant and over the years the structure has deteriorated into a state of disrepair.

The proposal is to renovate and upgrade the building to accommodate a community center. Originally, the building was built to specifically accommodate a theatre with a

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ceiling. To better accommodate the community center major renovations are proposed such as the insertion of a second floor and skylights on the roof to bring natural light into the building.

The interior renovation will provide new heating and air conditioning systems, electrical systems, plumbing systems and appliances. All fire and life safety systems will be modernized to meet all building and fire codes. New spaces will be created for instruction, studying, meetings, and offices for program management and outfitted with a state-of-the-art computer system.

External renovations will include new exterior doors, the restoration of the marquee of the former theater to recognize the buildings prior use, and the exterior masonry will be repainted. The existing mechanical equipment on the roof will be replaced and enclosed by a reconfigured, conforming structure.

Zoning

The property is in the C-2-A District in which community centers are permitted as a matter-of-right. The following table demonstrated how the application meets the requirements of that district.

Area Req.	Existing	Required/ Allowed	Proposed	Variance
Height	31 ft.	50 ft.	35.5 ft	None
Min. Lot Area	6,500 SF	None	6,500 SF	None
FAR	1.3	1.5	1.67	0.17 (11%)
Lot Occupancy	89%	100%	89%	None
Rear yard	0	15 ft.	0	None
Side yard	None	None	None	None
Parking	0	30 spaces	0	30 spaces

As shown on the table above, the proposed development exceeds the allowed FAR and on-site parking spaces are not provided.

FAR

The increase in FAR is a result of extending the mezzanine to create a useable second story in the building. When the building was constructed as a theatre, it had a high roof to accommodate the needs of that use. The community center does not need a high roof but does need the additional space that can be created. Although the building will now have two floors, the overall height of the building on the exterior will remain the same.

Parking

The existing building occupies approximately 89% of the lot. The unoccupied portions of the site include the area in front of the building that is within a 15-foot building restriction line and two small areas to the rear of the property that are not large enough to accommodate parking spaces.

The property is a block away from the Anacostia Metro Station and a number of metro bus routes travel along Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue. The applicant has stated that the project will generate very little vehicular activity as the programs offered are geared towards students and community residents, a large majority of which will either walk or take public transportation to the site.

Currently, the applicant has six staff members of which only two drive to work. The applicant anticipates that the majority of its staff will continue to use public transportation and therefore the need for parking will be minimal. The applicant has stated that they are in negotiations with the principal of Savoy Elementary School that is adjacent to the subject property to allow staff members to use two of the school's parking spaces. OP has recommended that in conversations with the Savoy school a request be made to allow parking at the school whenever there is a function since the functions will probably be held outside of school hours.

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

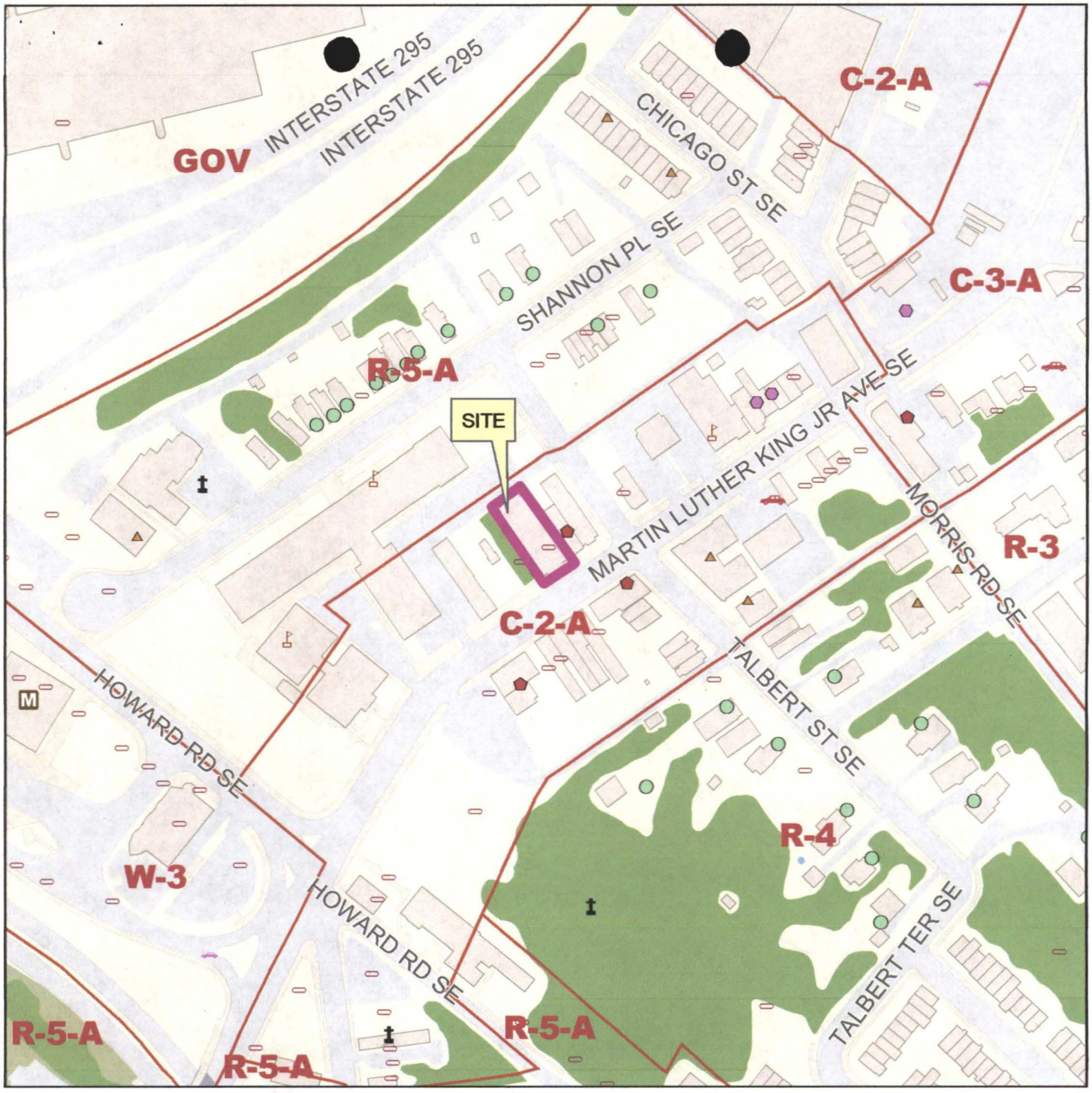
The Office of Planning finds that the existing structure and the configuration of the interior space of this structure create an exceptional condition of the property. The structure was built in 1947 and pre-dates the current zoning regulations. There is an existing two-story space that consumes a large portion of the volume of the existing structure and the existing lot occupancy combine to create an exceptional situation. The lack of ability to bring the existing structure into conformance with the zoning regulations is an exceptional condition of this property.

Practical Difficulty

The exceptional conditions of the property and resulting non-conformities create practical difficulties in the redevelopment and renovation of this property.

Floor Area Ratio

If the existing two-story space was to be renovated and left unaltered it would leave a very awkward, unusable space for the proposed use and would take away the opportunity for a reasonable reuse of the building. The strict application of the floor area ratio



Zoning and Land Use Map
BZA Application #17295
2405 MLK, Jr. Avenue, SE

N

Feet

0 100 200 300



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Office of Planning ~ March 8, 2005

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Land Use Legend

- Single-Family Detached
- Resid. Garage
- Multi-family
- Tourist Home
- Store
- Office
- Vehicle Service Station
- Vehicle Sales
- Parking - Special Purpose
- Fast Food Restaurant
- Religious
- Educational
- Vacant

Attachment 1



Comprehensive Plan Map
BZA Application #17295
2405 MLK Jr. Avenue, SE

N

Feet

0 500 1,000

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Office of Planning ~ March 9, 2005

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Generalized Land Use Key

- Residential Low Density
- Residential Moderate Density
- Residential Medium Density
- Residential High Density
- Water
- Commercial Low Density
- Commercial Moderate Density
- Commercial Medium Density
- Commercial Med.-high Density
- Commercial High Density
- Federal
- Institutional
- Local Public
- Parks, Recreation and Open Space
- Production and Technical Employment

Attachment 2



Ortho Photo
BZA Application #17295
2405 MLK, Jr. Avenue, SE

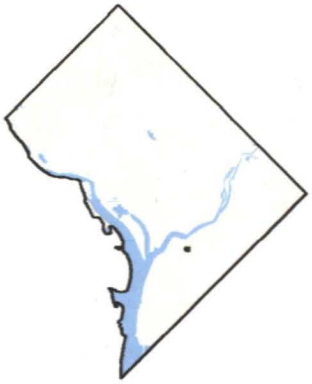
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Attachment 3



Aerial Oblique Photos
BZA Application #17295
2405 MLK Jr. Avenue, SE

☆ Subject Site

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Attachment 4