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September 27, 2005

2005 SEP 27 AM 11:52

VIA HAND DELIVERY

D.C. Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 – 4th Street, N. W.
Suite 210S
Washington, D.C. 20001

Re: Application of The Sultanate of Oman
BZA Application No. 17382
2535 Belmont Road, N.W.
(Square 2501, Lots 6, 8,15, 17-19, 805-808)

Honorable Members of the Board:

On behalf of the Applicant in the above-referenced case, enclosed please find an original and twenty (20) copies of the Applicant's prehearing submission in support of the application for expansion of a chancery. Thank you for your attention to this application.

Sincerely,

Christopher H. Collins

CHC/skp
Enclosures

cc: Maxine Brown-Roberts, Office of Planning (w/enclosure – by hand)

BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 17382
EXHIBIT NO. 29

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 17382
EXHIBIT NO. 29A1

BEFORE THE FOREIGN MISSIONS BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT
OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

APPLICATION OF THE SULTANATE OF OMAN

BZA APPLICATION NO. 17382
HEARING DATE: OCTOBER 11, 2005
ANC 2D

STATEMENT OF THE APPLICANT

I.
NATURE OF RELIEF SOUGHT

This statement is submitted on behalf of the Sultanate of Oman, the owner of the property located at 2535 Belmont Road, N.W. (Square 2501, Lots 6, 8, 15, 17-19, 805-808) (the "Site"), in support of the application to the Foreign Missions Board of Zoning Adjustment ("FMBZA"), pursuant to 11 DCMR, §1002.1, to permit the expansion of a chancery in the D/R-1-B and R-1-B Districts.

II.
EXCLUSIVE JURISDICTION OF THE BOARD

The Foreign Missions Board of Zoning Adjustment ("FMBZA" or the "Board") has exclusive jurisdiction to review the proposed project pursuant to 22 USC, §4306 of the Foreign Missions Act and 11 DCMR, Chapter 10. The Foreign Missions Act makes it clear that provisions of law other than the Act "shall apply to chanceries only to the extent that they are consistent with this section." 22 USC, §4306(j). Further, "[N]o act of any Federal agency shall be effective to confer or deny any benefit with respect to any foreign mission contrary to this Chapter." 22 USC, §4307. The final determination made by the FMBZA concerning the location, replacement or expansion of a chancery "shall not be subject to the administrative

proceedings of any other agency or official" except as provided by the Foreign Missions Act. 22 USC, §4306(c)(3).

III.
BACKGROUND

A. Description of the Subject Site.

1. Location and Site Description.

The Site is located in Sheridan Kalorama on the west side of Belmont Road approximately 150 feet north of the intersection with Massachusetts Avenue, and immediately behind the Islamic Center. The 46,667 square foot Site is one of the largest properties in the Sheridan Kalorama neighborhood. The Site is currently improved with a three-story brick building that was constructed as a private residence in 1927, but which has been used for chancery purposes for the last sixty years. There is also a small building, originally built as a squash court, but which has been used for storage, office and/or residential use during that same period of time. This building will be removed as part of this application. From 1945 to 1986, the Site was owned by the Government of France and occupied as a chancery. Since 1986, the Site has been owned by the Sultanate of Oman and is occupied as its Chancery.

2. Zoning.

The Zoning Map for the District of Columbia designates the Site in both the D/R-1-B and R-1-B Districts. The northeast portion, including Lots 18, 19 and 805, is zoned R-1-B and contains approximately 16,667 square feet of land area. The existing Chancery building is located in this area of the Site. The southwest

portion, which includes Lots 6, 8, 15, 17 and 806-808, containing 30,000 square feet of land area, is zoned D/R-1-B. Exhibits A and C show the location of the zoning line. A copy of the Zoning Map is attached as Exhibit B.

The proposed expansion is located primarily within the southwest portion of the site in the D/R-1-B District. A below-grade portion of the building extends approximately 9' 1" into the R-1-B Zone, where it abuts the cellar level of the existing chancery. Approximately 934 square feet of the lower level of the building addition is located within the R-1-B portion of the Site. The parking lot is currently located in the D/R-1-B District, and will remain in that location.

B. Proposed Chancery Expansion.

The existing Chancery use located in the R-1-B District pre-dates the adoption of the current Zoning Regulations, and is therefore a permitted use. The proposed Chancery expansion is permitted in the D/R-1-B District, subject to disapproval by the FMBZA after review based upon the six criteria enumerated in 22 USC, §4306(d) of the Foreign Missions Act and 11 DCMR, §1001, *et. seq*. The below-grade portion of the new construction that is in the R-1-B zone is within thirty-five feet of the D/R-1-B zone, and is therefore appropriate for consideration for chancery expansion pursuant to 11 DCMR, §2514.2. *See* Embassy of Lithuania, Order No. 17275.

At present, there are twenty-three diplomats and staff members working at the Chancery. This includes the staff of the Chancery, and the offices of the Information Attaché and the Military Attaché. The office of the Cultural Attaché

includes seven diplomats and staff members, and is currently located in Virginia. This office will be moved to the new Chancery, bringing the total to thirty diplomats and staff at the Chancery.

The new building is intended to house the offices of the Cultural Attaché, the Military Attaché, the Information Attaché and the Consular Section. The new building will allow adequate space for the Chancery to conduct its affairs, and will result in the addition of only seven more diplomats and staff members to the Site. There are now twenty-three people squeezed in and scattered throughout the Chancery building. Many are in spaces unsuitable for the efficient conduct of diplomacy. The addition of the new building and the consolidation of all of the Chancery operations at one location will provide ease of communication and interaction between the various offices, and will provide a secure environment without the need for renting office space at remote locations throughout the city.

There will be no change to the existing Chancery building which measures approximately 13,733 square feet of gross floor area. The new building will include approximately 11,745 square feet of gross floor area. Setting aside the covered parking area for seven cars, and the elevators, stairways, toilet facilities and kitchenettes, the total office area in the new Chancery Annex is as follows:

First Floor	2,700 square feet
Second Floor:	3,071 square feet
Third Floor:	2,885 square feet

The multipurpose room in the lower level contains about 3,300 square feet of total space. The walls of the room will be used for display of art work and photographs.

The room will be available for small gatherings and discussions. The multipurpose room is intended to give the Embassy an opportunity to have a press conference, or a staff meeting, or a small business or social function.

The proposed building, together with the existing building, will be well within the maximum permitted height and density regulations. The new building will measure 34 feet 3/4 inches, and three stories in height. The total FAR of both buildings will be 0.55. The total lot occupancy of the existing and new buildings combined will be 15%. The rear yard depth is 42 feet, and the side yard setback of the new construction is 55 feet from the south lot line. There will be thirty-four parking spaces on-site after completion of construction, with the ability to park ten vehicles in the courtyard in front of the existing Chancery. Studies indicate that approximately fifty-seven vehicles could be parked on the Site using valet parking, if that ever became necessary.

Most of the Embassy's business is conducted either by mail, telephone, or e-mail. Most diplomatic meetings occur off-site. Visits to the Chancery are primarily made by those visiting the Consular section to obtain visas. The number of individuals varies by the day and the week and the time of year. Currently, on a typical day, there are one or two visitors for visa purposes, between 9:30 and 12:00. The Embassy also receives occasional package deliveries (as do many of their neighbors). Occasionally, but not frequently, they receive visitors to the Embassy for meetings with the Ambassador and diplomatic staff. This averages up to three meetings per week.

The personnel of the Military Attaché interact principally with officials at the Pentagon, and that is where they meet. It is very rare that the Military Attaché officials receive visitors at the Chancery for meetings. The Cultural Attaché primarily deals with Omani students who are attending universities in both the United States and Canada. The Cultural Attaché operates more like an Educational Attaché. This interaction with the students occurs primarily by telephone and e-mail, because these students are scattered throughout North America. Similarly, the Information Attaché principally relies upon the telephone, mail and e-mail, as well as off-site meetings, for interaction with the media.

IV.
EXPANSION OF CHANCERY USE ON THE SITE IS CONSISTENT WITH THE FOREIGN MISSIONS ACT AND CHAPTER 10 OF THE ZONING REGULATIONS

Pursuant to §1002.1 of the Zoning Regulations, the expansion of the Chancery is permitted, subject to disapproval by the Board of Zoning Adjustment, pursuant to the six criteria established in 22 USC, §4306(d) of the Foreign Missions Act, and incorporated into 11 DCMR, Chapter 10. Because the proposed expansion of the Chancery meets the criteria, the application should not be disapproved.

A. The International Obligation of the United States.

The United States has an international obligation to facilitate the provision of adequate and secure facilities for foreign missions in the Nation's Capital. 22 USC, §4306(d)(1); 11 DCMR, §1001.2. The United States has had formal diplomatic relations with the Sultanate of Oman since 1820. The Department of State has determined that favorable action by the FMBZA would fulfill the

international obligation of the United States to facilitate the acquisition of adequate and secure premises by the Sultanate of Oman for its diplomatic mission in Washington. *See* Exhibit F.

B. Historic Preservation.

To ensure the compatibility of the proposed Chancery expansion with local historic landmarks and districts, substantial compliance with District of Columbia and Federal regulations governing historic preservation is required with respect to new construction and to demolition or alteration of historic landmarks. 22 USC, §4306(d)(2); 11 DCMR, §1001.3 and §1001.4. The property is located in the Sheridan Kalorama Historic District, but is not an individual historic landmark. There will be no change to the existing Chancery building. The new addition is designed in accordance with the District's Historic Preservation Design Guidelines in order to be compatible with the character of both the existing building and with the historic district. A small accessory storage building that was originally built as a squash court will be removed as part of the new construction. This storage building is not readily visible from the public way, and is in an advanced state of disrepair. The Embassy's historic preservation consultant has fully documented the history of construction and use of this building. *See* Exhibit J. The Office of Zoning has referred the application to the State Historic Preservation Office for a review and report.

C. **Adequacy of Off-Street Parking and Public Transportation.**

The FMBZA must consider the adequacy of off-street or other parking and the extent to which the area is served by public transportation to reduce parking requirements, subject to any special security requirements that the Secretary of State may find necessary, after consultation with the Federal agencies authorized to perform protective services. 22 USC, §4306(d)(3); 11 DCMR, §1001.5.

In the D/R-1-B District, the parking requirement in the Zoning Regulations is one space for each 800 square feet of gross floor area devoted to chancery use, or as determined by the Board. The new Chancery building will contain approximately 11,745 square feet of chancery space, and the existing building contains 13,733 square feet of chancery space. Thirty-two total parking spaces would therefore be required. The proposed parking area will provide thirty-four parking spaces, with the ability to park ten more vehicles in the front courtyard, bringing the total to forty-four spaces, which exceeds the requirement by twelve spaces (37%). In addition, because the majority of visitors to the Embassy will continue to arrive via taxi or chauffeured vehicle, the allotted parking will be more than sufficient.

The property is served by the Massachusetts Avenue Metrobus lines (bus lines N2, N3, N4, and N6 which run in both directions on Massachusetts Avenue. During weekday morning and evening peak hours, these bus lines run every 5-15 minutes.

The Office of Zoning has referred the application to the Department of Transportation for a review and report. The Applicant has commissioned a transportation study for the proposed project, which has been submitted to DDOT. *See* Exhibit K.

The State Department has determined that there exist no special security requirements relating to parking requirements. *See* Exhibit F.

D. Security Issues.

The U.S. Department of State, in consultation with the Federal agencies responsible for protective services, has an obligation to ensure that the proposed chancery can be adequately protected. 22 USC, §4306(d)(4); 11 DCMR, §1001.6. The State Department has determined that the subject Site and area are capable of being adequately protected. *See* Exhibit F.

E. The Municipal Interest.

The FMBZA must consider the municipal interest, as determined by the Mayor, in deciding whether to approve an application for a chancery use. 22 USC, §4306(d)(5); 11 DCMR, §1001.6. The proposed expansion of the Chancery is consistent with the municipal interest, as it is consistent with both the Comprehensive Plan and Zone Plan. The location of Oman's Chancery at this Site is consistent with the character of the surrounding area and is in the vicinity of numerous other chanceries and diplomatic uses.

The addition provides the Sultanate of Oman with appropriate office space and a more functional, efficient Chancery building, allowing the consolidation of all

of its operations in one location. The building has been owned by the Sultanate of Oman since 1986, and prior to that it was the French Chancery since 1945. The addition of the new building will have no negative impact on the surrounding neighborhood.

The new proposed building, together with the existing building, will be well within the maximum permitted height and density regulations. The D/R-1-B and R-1-B zones allow a height of 40 feet and three stories, a maximum lot occupancy of 40%, a minimum 25 foot rear yard, and an 8 foot side yard. The new building will measure 34 feet 3/4 inches and three stories in height. The total lot occupancy of the existing and new buildings combined will be 15%, and the total combined FAR will be 0.55. The rear yard depth is 42 feet, and the side yard setback of the new construction is 55 feet from the south lot line. The Chancery will have more parking than required by the Regulations.

The new Chancery building will abut the existing Chancery building below the main floor level. There will be an above-grade connection, at the lower level, between the existing building and the new addition at the rear. The property will be consolidated into a single record lot prior to issuance of a building permit.

The Site has been in single ownership since at lest 1927, and has been used for chancery purposes since 1946. However, when the diplomatic overlay was placed in the area in 1982, the chancery building was not included in the D overlay, but the open space was included. Section 107.3 of the Zoning Regulations states that zone district boundaries are intended to generally coincide with lot lines.

The vast majority of the floor area of the new addition will be within the D/R-1-B zone. The Site is split-zoned, and a small portion of the new construction, below the main floor level, will be on the R-1-B portion of the Site, where the current Chancery building is located. Section 4306(b)(2)(B) of the Foreign Missions Act allows a chancery to locate "in any other area, determined on the basis of existing uses... including but not limited to any area zoned mixed use diplomatic...." Accordingly, the Board has authority to allow this small portion of the new construction in the R-1-B zone, adjacent to the existing Chancery, which is entirely in the R-1-B zone. This small below-grade portion of the new construction, consisting primarily of toilets and pantry space, will have no adverse impact on the public and will not substantially impair the interest, purpose or integrity of the Zone Plan. However, to the extent that a deviation from the regulations is required, the applicant requests an extension of the use regulations of the D overlay zone approximately 9 feet 1 inch into the R-1-B zone, to construct a small portion of the addition in the R-1-B zone, below the main floor level, and adjacent to the existing Chancery building, which is entirely in the R-1-B zone. This extension of the D/R-1-B use less than 35 feet into the R-1-B zone is consistent with the special exception provision in 11 DCMR, §2514.2.

Based on the foregoing, the proposed expansion meets the municipal interest criteria of the Foreign Missions Act and the Zoning Regulations and Map.

The Office of Zoning has referred this application to the Office of Planning for a review and report. The Ambassador hosted a meeting of the neighbors within 200

feet at the Chancery in August of this year. A summary of that meeting and responses to issues raised was sent to the neighbors earlier this month. *See* Exhibit M. The Applicant has also met with the Sheridan Kalorama Historical Association and ANC 2D to discuss the project and to answer any questions.

F. The Federal Interest.

Finally, the FMBZA must consider the Federal interest of the city, as determined by the Secretary of State, in determining whether to approve an application for a chancery use. 22 USC, §4306(d)(6); 11 DCMR, §1001.7. The Foreign Missions Act specifically identifies areas zoned for diplomatic use as appropriate locations for chanceries. 22 USC, §4306(b)(2).

Moreover, the Federal Foreign Missions and International Organization Element of the Comprehensive Plan states that it is the goal of the federal government to:

> "Plan a secure and welcoming environment for the location of diplomatic and international activities in Washington, D.C. in a manner that is appropriate to the status and dignity of these activities, while enhancing Washington's role as one of the great capitals of the world."

"Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: Foreign Missions and International Organizations Element," National Capital Planning Commission (2004) (the "Plan"), at 59. The map accompanying the Plan indicates the subject Site is appropriate for chancery use under §206(b)(2) of the Foreign Missions Act.

The Plan encourages foreign missions to locate their chanceries in historic districts and encourages that the concentration of chanceries along Massachusetts Avenue be retained as a unique area for diplomatic facilities.

The State Department has determined that a favorable decision on this application would serve the federal interest. *See* Exhibit F.

V.
EXHIBITS IN SUPPORT OF APPLICATION

Exhibit A: Portion of the Baist Map showing the Site highlighted in yellow.

Exhibit B: Portion of Zoning Map showing the Site highlighted in yellow.

Exhibit C: Zoning Detail Map.

Exhibit D: Building Plans.

Exhibit E: Zoning Certification

Exhibit F: Letter of Support from Department of State.

Exhibit G: Outline of Testimony of First Secretary Abdullah al Suleimani, Sultanate of Oman.

Exhibit H: Outline of Testimony of Tarek Elaroussi, AIA, Forum International, Inc.

Exhibit I: Outline of Testimony of Emily Eig, EHT Traceries, Inc.

Exhibit J: Report of EHT Traceries.

Exhibit K: Outline of Testimony of Osborne George, O.R. George and Associates.

Exhibit L: Report of O.R. George and Associates.

Exhibit M: Letter to Mr. A. Mario Castillo from Holland & Knight LLP on behalf of Ambassador Mohamed Ali Al-Khusaiby.

VI.
WITNESSES

A. First Secretary Abdullah al Suleimani, Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman

B. Tarek Elaroussi, AIA, Forum International, Inc.

C. Emily Eig, EHT Traceries, Inc.

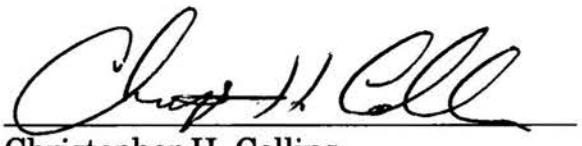
D. Osborne George, O.R. George and Associates

VII.
CONCLUSION

For the above stated reasons, the Applicant respectfully requests approval of the proposed chancery expansion at 2535 Belmont Road, N.W., Washington, D.C.

Respectfully submitted,

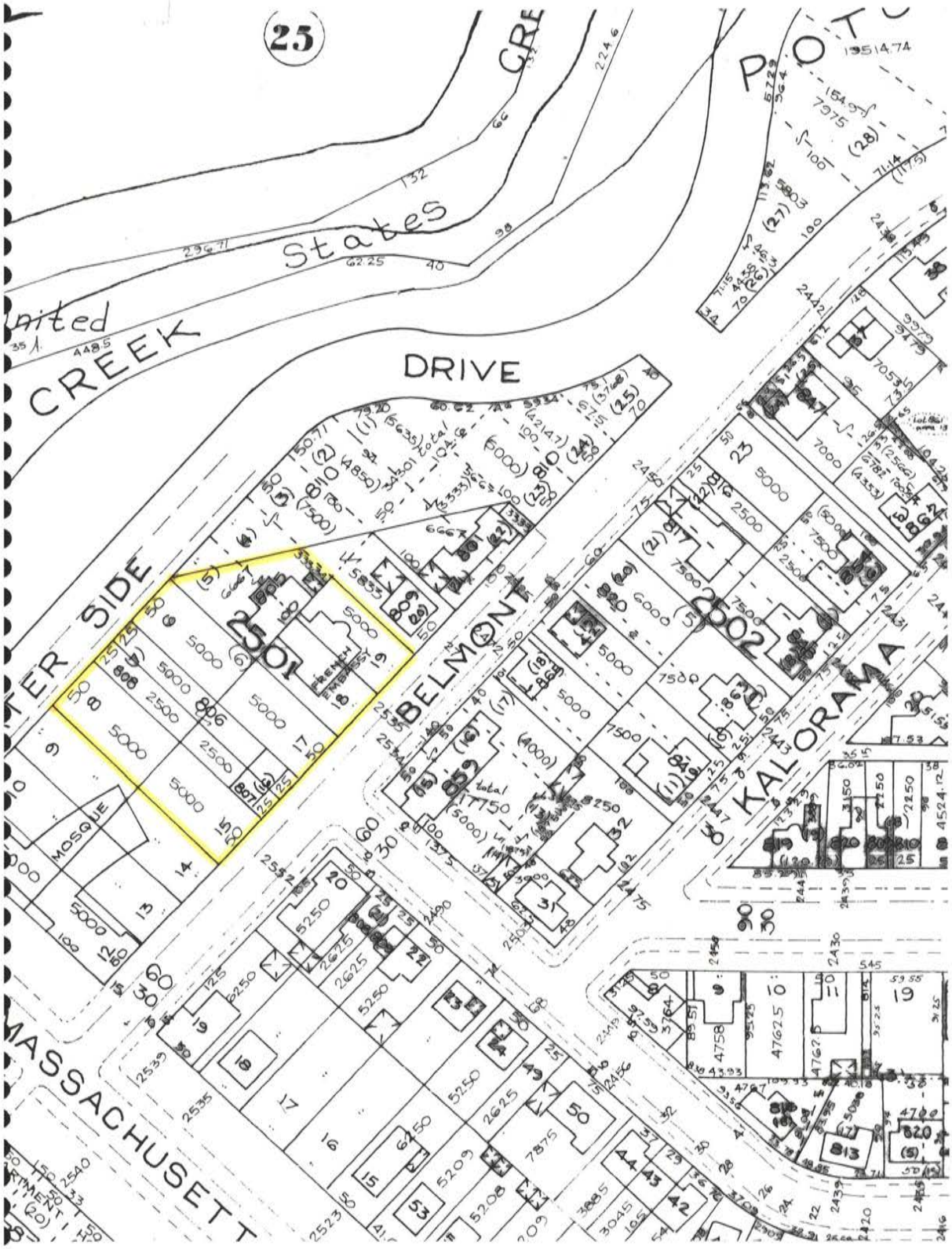
HOLLAND & KNIGHT LLP

By: 
Christopher H. Collins

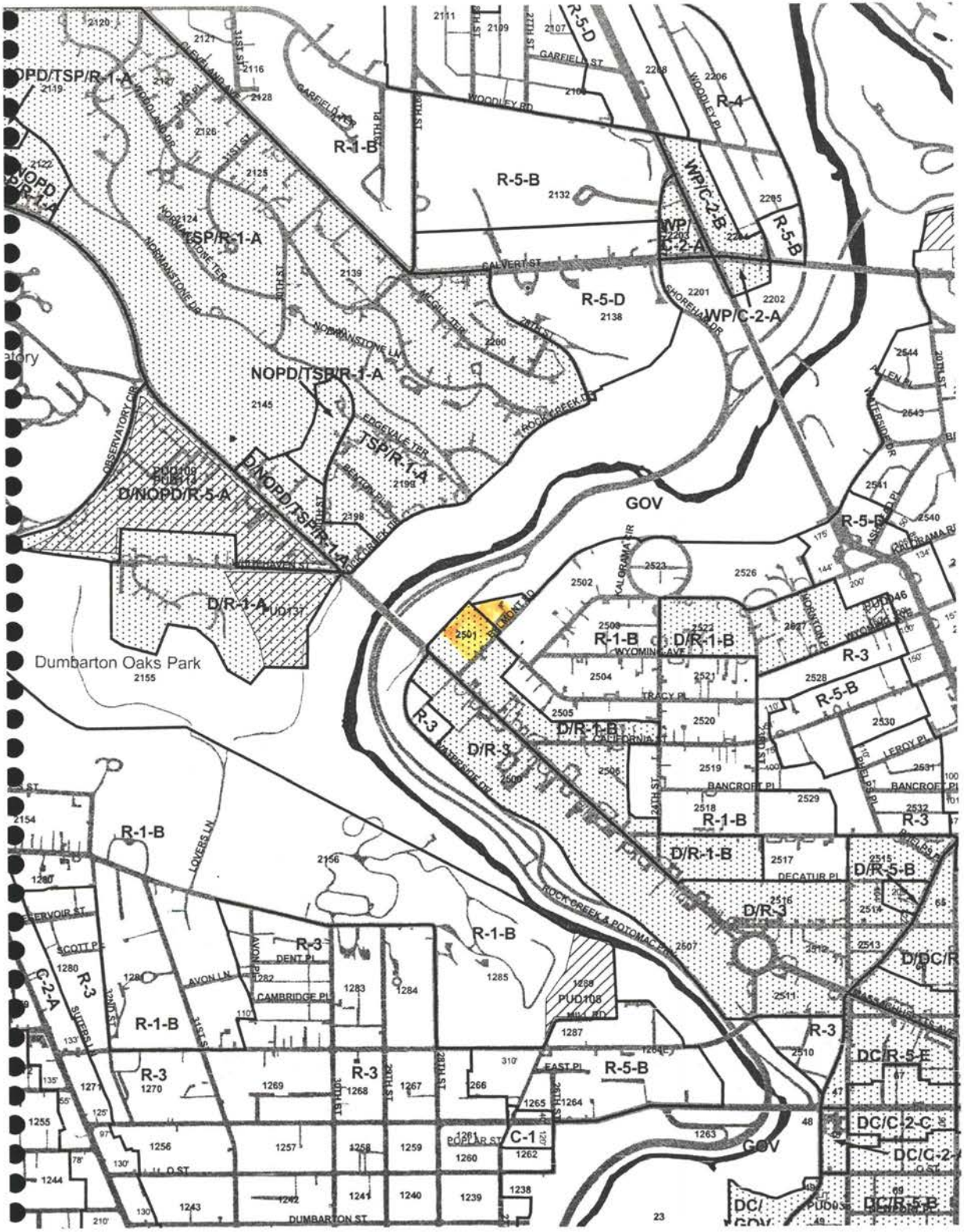

Thomas J. Carroll

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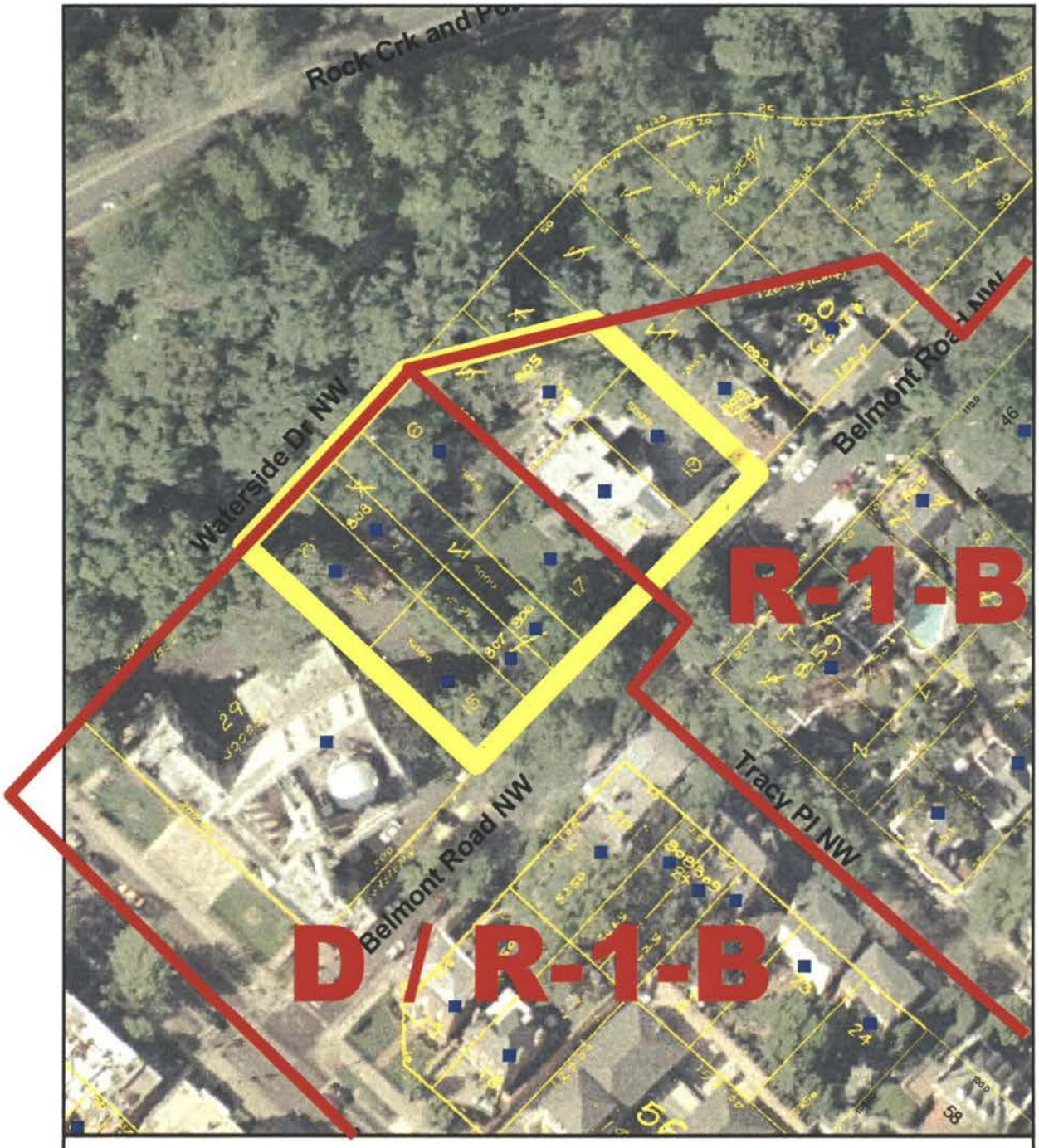

25
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DRIVE
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KALORAMA
MASSACHUSETT
501
502
852
813
820
MOSQUE
FRENCH EMBASSY

B


NOPD/TSP/R-1-A
TSP/R-1-A
NOPD/TSP/R-1-A
D/NOPD/R-5-A
D/NOPD/TSP/R-1-A
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PUD131
PUD108
PUD112
R-1-B
R-5-B
R-5-D
R-4
WP/C-2-A
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R-5-D
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GOV
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R-5-B
C-1
GOV
C-2-A
R-3
DC/R-5-E
DC/C-2-C
DC/C-2-
DC/R-5-B
Dumbarton Oaks Park
2155
GARFIELD ST
WOODLEY RD
CALVERT ST
WYOMING AVE
TRACY PL
CALIFORNIA ST
BANCROFT PL
DECATUR PL
LEROY PL
EAST PL
CAMBRIDGE PL
DENT PL
AVON PL
AVON LN
SCOTT PL
RESERVOIR ST
POPLAR ST
DUMBARTON ST
R ST
Q ST
O ST
31ST ST
32ND ST
30TH ST
28TH ST
27TH ST
26TH ST
25TH ST
24TH ST
23RD ST
22ND ST
21ST ST
20TH ST
19TH ST
18TH ST
17TH ST
16TH ST
15TH ST
WOODLEY PL
SHOREHAM DR
KALORAMA CIR
KALORAMA RD
WATERSIDE DR
ALLEN PL
CLEVELAND AVE
PROSPECT ST
NORMANSTONE TER
NORMANSTONE DR
NORMANSTONE LN
MCGILL TER
EDGEVALE TER
BENTON PL
ROCK CREEK DR
WATERGATE TER
WATERGATE PL
OBSERVATORY CIR
LOVERS LN
ROCK CREEK & POTOMAC PKWY
23

C

Aerial View of Site of Chancery of Oman - Belmont Road - Washington, DC

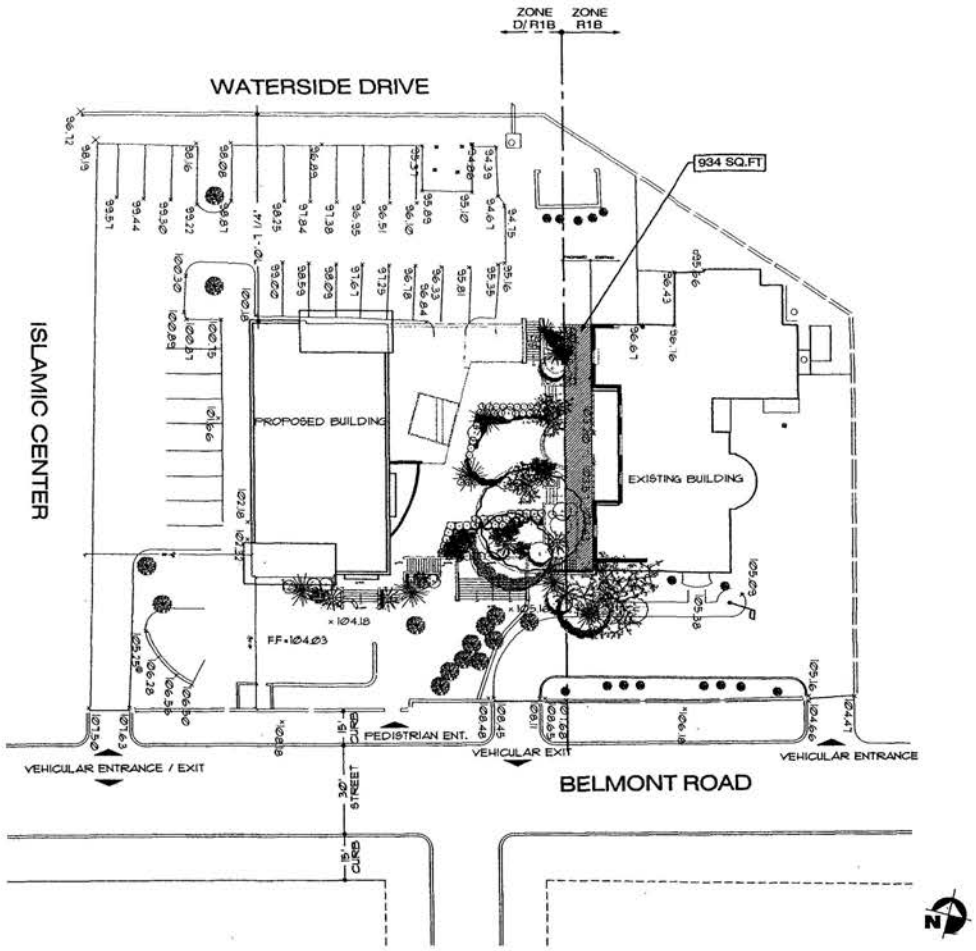


Property Maps and data maintained by:
Government of the District of Columbia
Office of Tax and Revenue
941 North Capitol Street, NE
Washington, D.C. 20002

Prepared on: September 22, 2005

0 50 100 150 Feet

D



SITE PLAN

SCALE : 1:20

Instructions

Any request for self- certification that is not completed in accordance with the following instructions shall not be accepted.

1. All self-certification applications shall be made on Form 135. All certification forms must be completely filled out (front and back) and be typewritten or printed legibly. All information shall be furnished by the applicant. If additional space is necessary, use separate sheets of paper to complete this form.

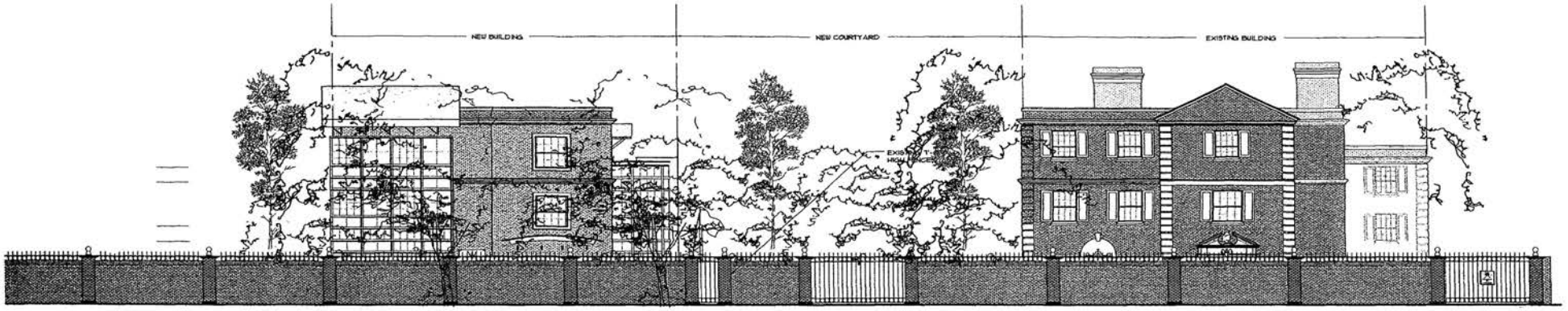
2. Complete one self-certification form for each application filed. Present this form with the Form 120 Application to the Office of Zoning, 441 4th Street, N.W, Suite 210, Washington, D.C. 20001

ITEM	EXISTING CONDITIONS	MINIMUM REQUIRED	MAXIMUM REQUIRED	PROVIDED BY PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION	VARIANCE Deviation/Percent
Lot Area (sq. ft.)	40667 s.f	5000 s.f.	n/a	40667s.f.	0%
Lot Width (ft to the tenth)	250 ft.	50 f.t.	n/a	250 ft.	0%
Lot Occupancy (building area/lot	6.7%	n/a	40%	15%	0%
Floor Area Ratio (floor area/lot area	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0%
Gross Floor Area	13733 sf.			13733 sf. 11745 sf. 25478 sf.	0%
Parking Spaces (number)	30	32	n/a	44	0%
Loading Berths (number and size)	0	0	n/a	0	0%
Front Yard (ft. to the tenth)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0%
Rear Yard (ft. to the tenth)	42 ft	25 ft.	n/a	42 ft.	0%
Side Yard (ft. to the tenth)	18'-165'	8ft.	n/a	18' – 55'	0%
Court Open (width by depth)	n/a	n/a	n/a	67x78	0%
Court, Closed (width by depth)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0%
Height (ft. to the tenth)	35'-0"	n/a	40 ft.	34' 3 1/4"	0%

FORUM INTERNATIONAL INC.

EMBASSY SULTANATE OF OMAN

2535 BELMONT ROAD , WASHINGTON D.C



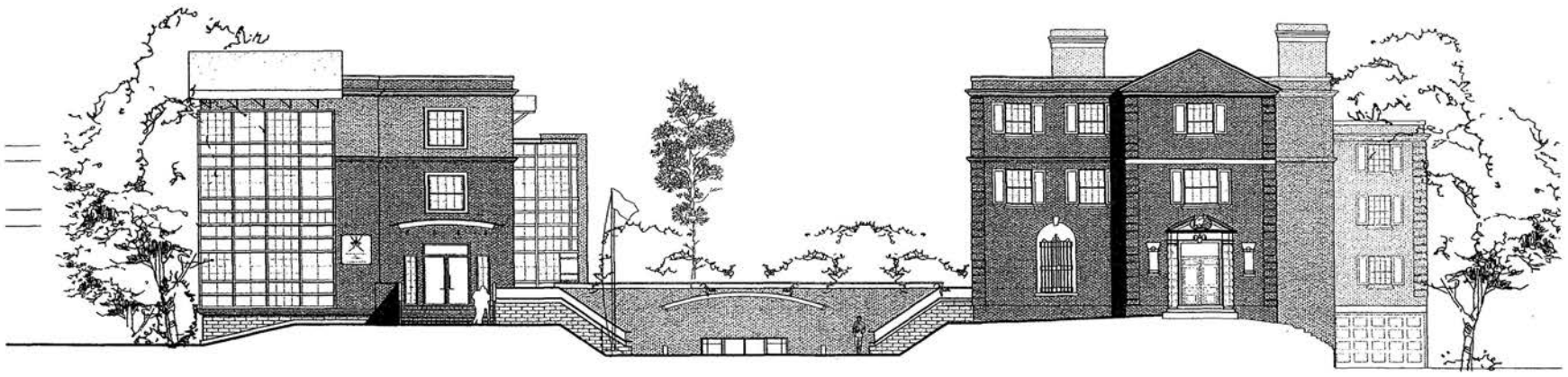
FRONT ELEVATION

SCALE : 1/16"=1'-0"

FORUM
INTERNATIONAL INC.

EMBASSY SULTANATE OF OMAN

2535 BELMONT ROAD , WASHINGTON D.C



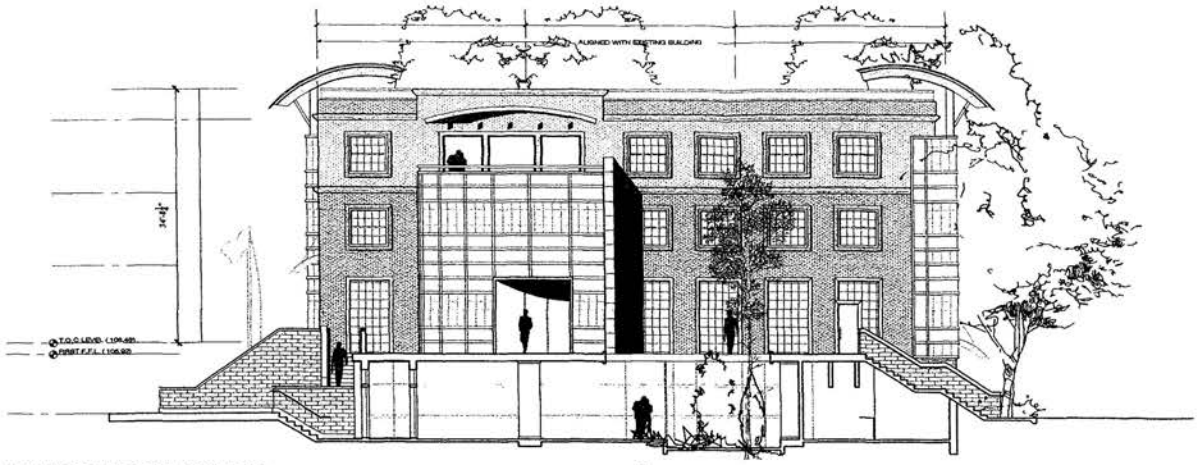
FRONT ELEVATION

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FORUM
INTERNATIONAL INC.

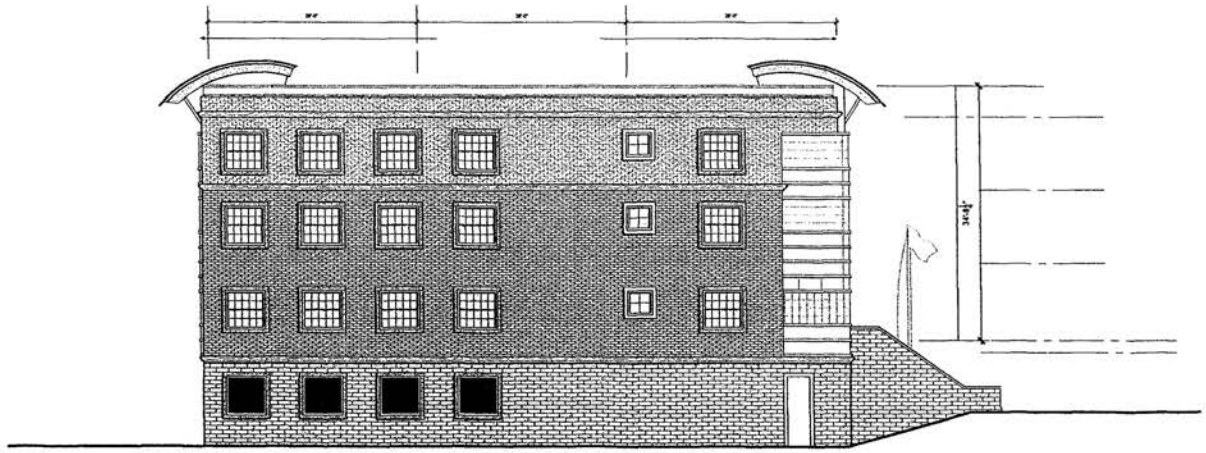
EMBASSY SULTANATE OF OMAN

2535 BELMONT ROAD , WASHINGTON D.C



SIDE ELEVATION FROM COURT

SCALE : 1/16"=1'-0"



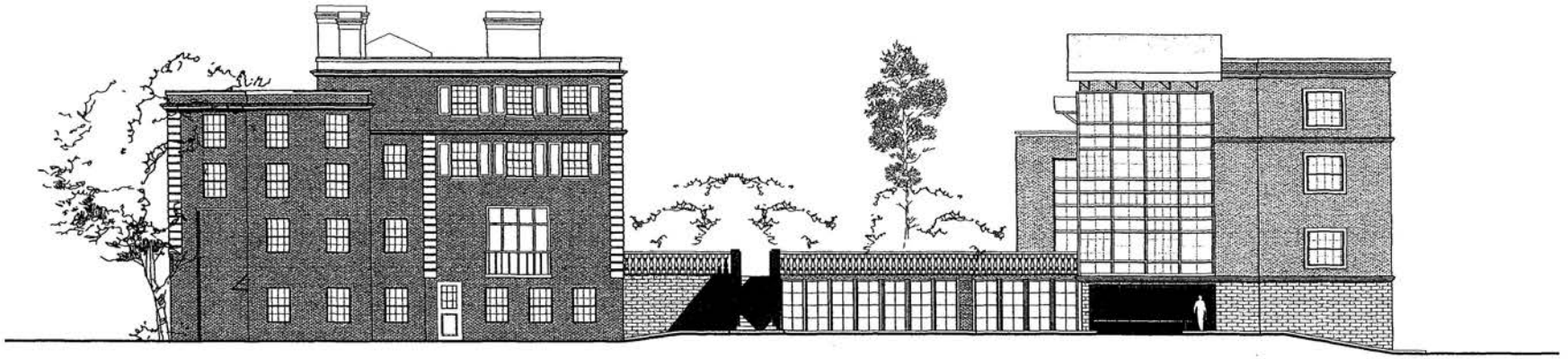
SIDE ELEVATION

SCALE : 1/16"=1'-0"

FORUM
INTERNATIONAL INC.

EMBASSY SULTANATE OF OMAN

2535 BELMONT ROAD , WASHINGTON D.C



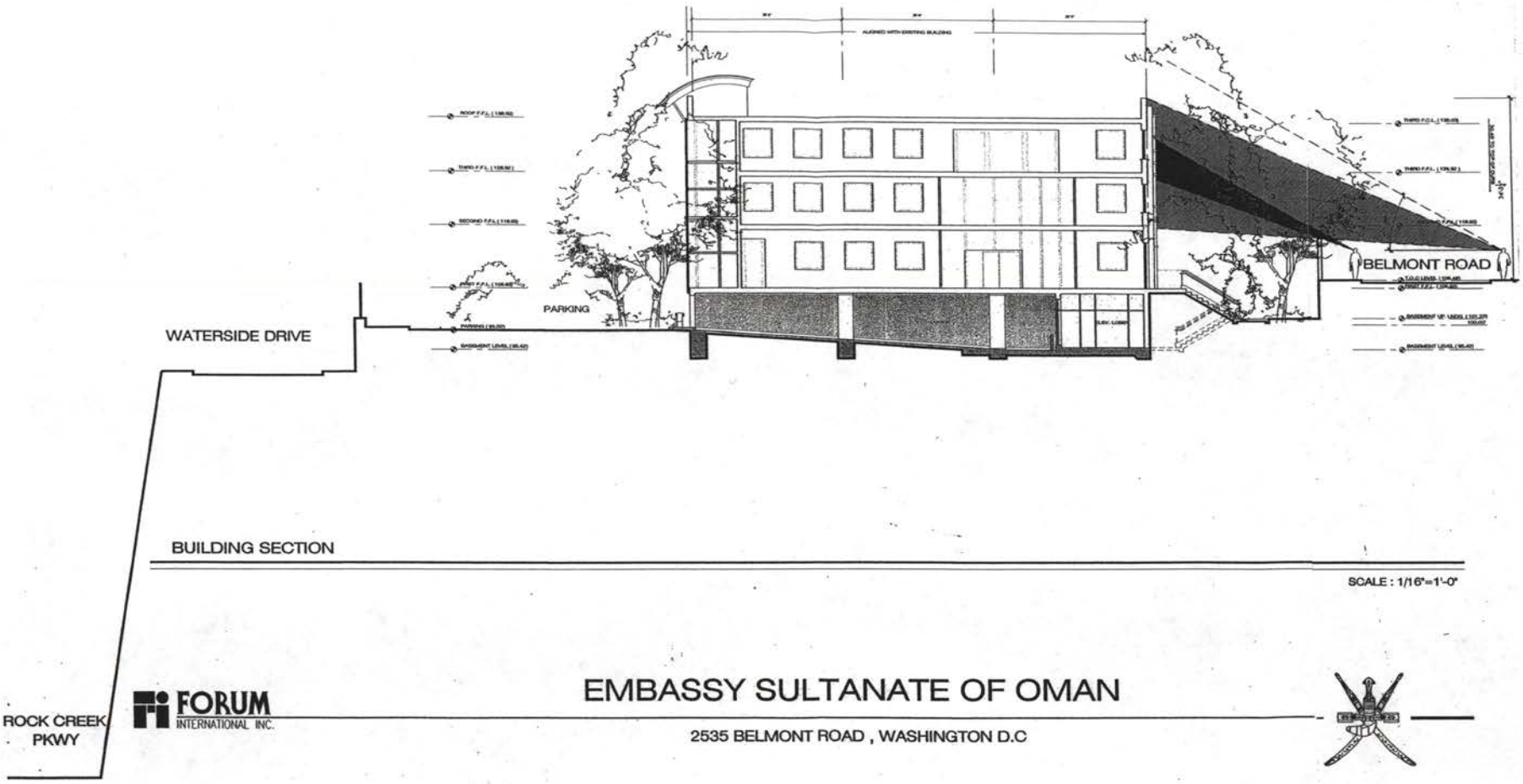
REAR ELEVATION

SCALE : 1/16"=1'-0"

FORUM
INTERNATIONAL INC.

EMBASSY SULTANATE OF OMAN

2535 BELMONT ROAD , WASHINGTON D.C



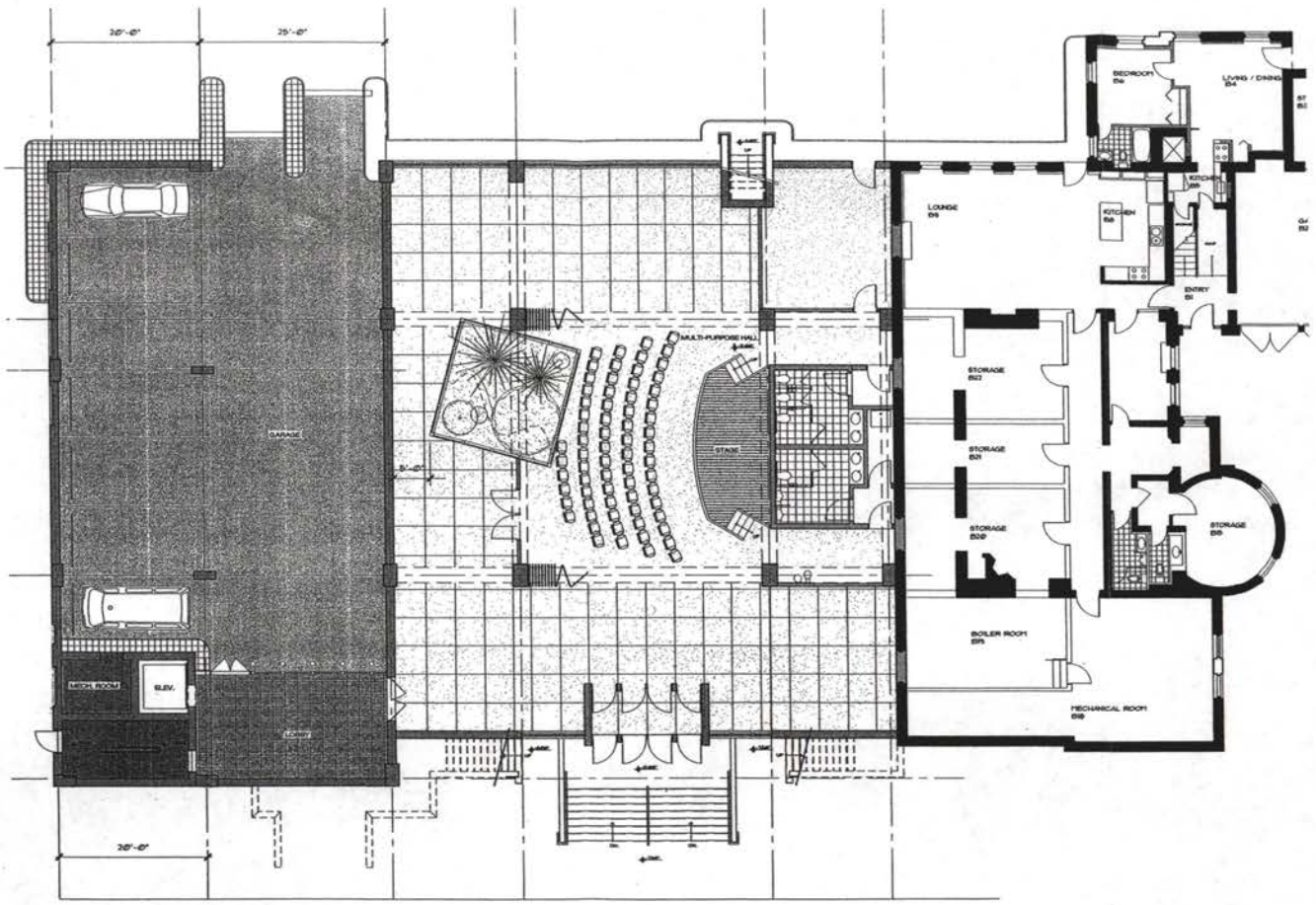
BUILDING SECTION

SCALE : 1/16"=1'-0"

FORUM
INTERNATIONAL INC.

EMBASSY SULTANATE OF OMAN

2535 BELMONT ROAD , WASHINGTON D.C



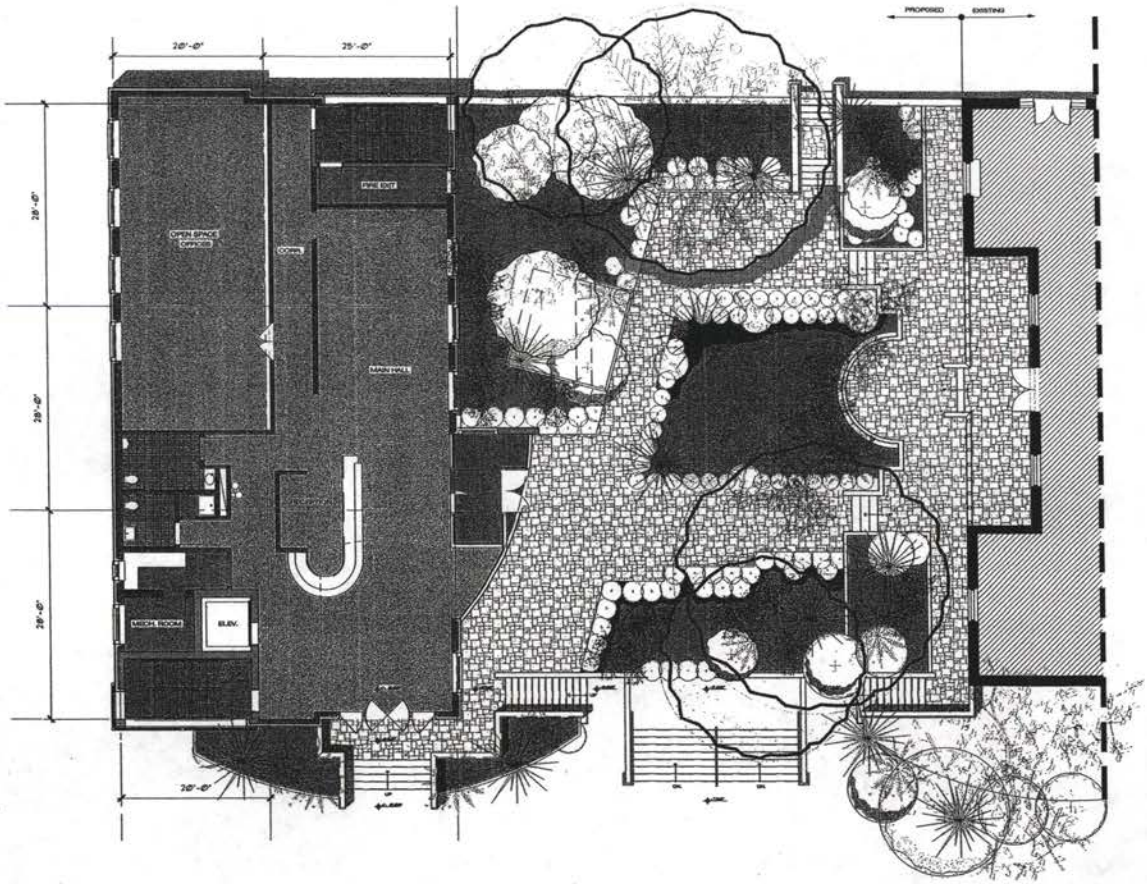
BASEMENT FLOOR PLAN

SCALE : 1/16" = 1'-0"

FORUM INTERNATIONAL INC.

EMBASSY SULTANATE OF OMAN

2535 BELMONT ROAD , WASHINGTON D.C



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

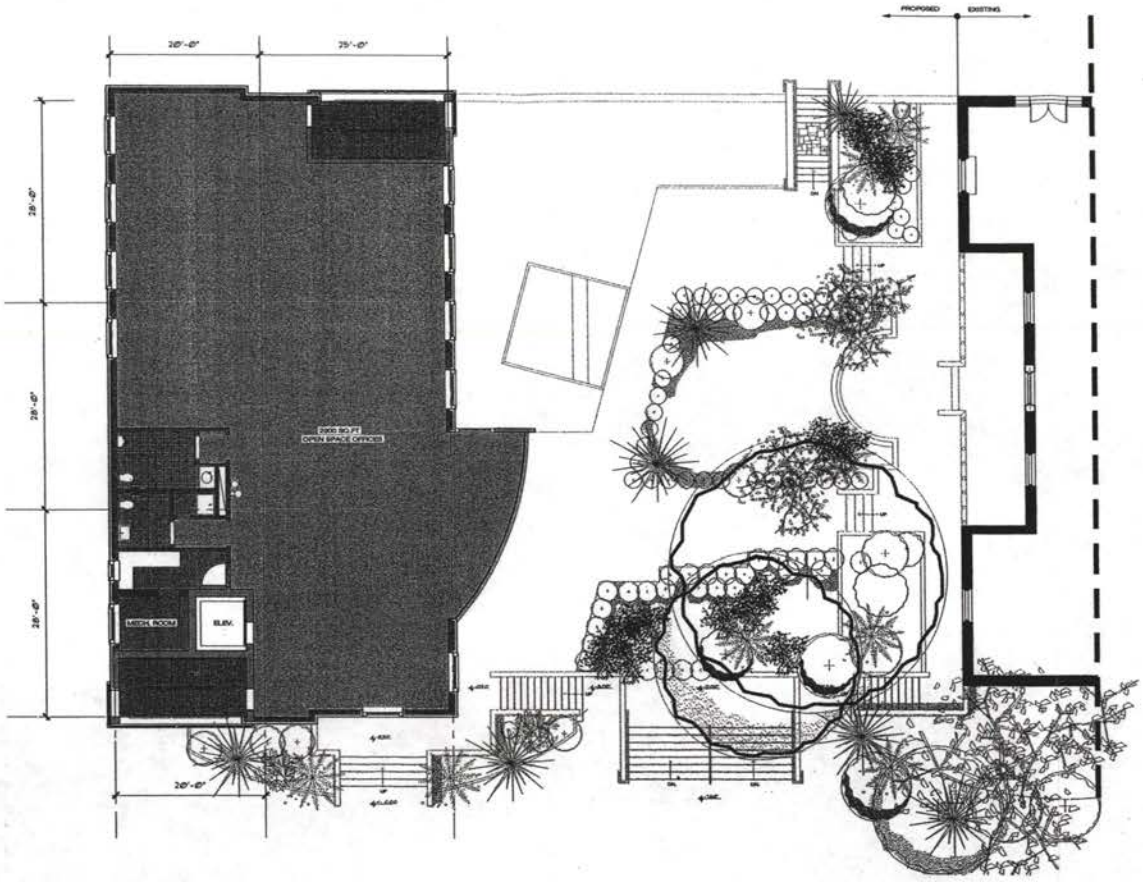
SCALE : 1/16" = 1'-0"

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FORUM INTERNATIONAL INC.

EMBASSY SULTANATE OF OMAN

2535 BELMONT ROAD , WASHINGTON D.C



SECOND FLOOR PLAN

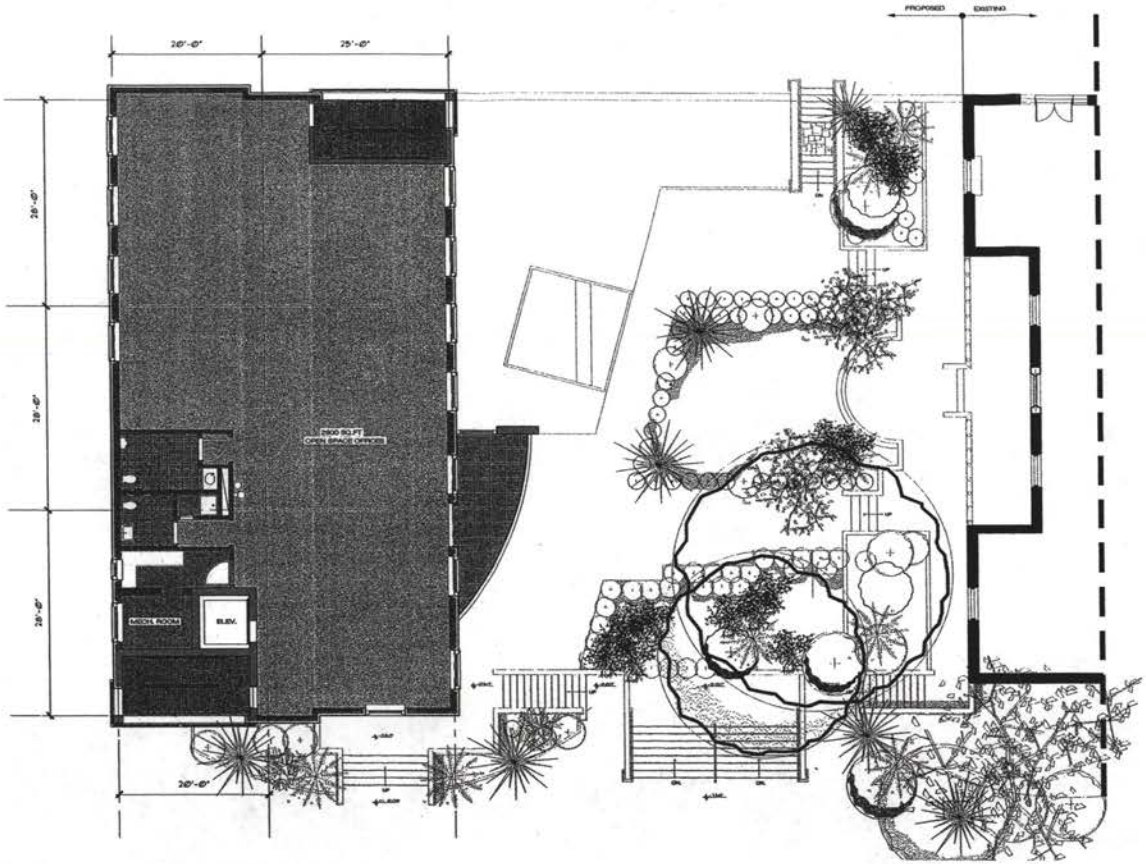
SCALE : 1/16" = 1'-0"

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FORUM
INTERNATIONAL INC.

EMBASSY SULTANATE OF OMAN

2535 BELMONT ROAD , WASHINGTON D.C



THIRD FLOOR PLAN

SCALE : 1/16" = 1'-0"

FORUM INTERNATIONAL INC.

EMBASSY SULTANATE OF OMAN

2535 BELMONT ROAD , WASHINGTON D.C

E

Government of the District of Columbia

OFFICE OF ZONING

441 4TH STREET, N.W.
SUITE 210
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20001
(202) 727-6311

January 14, 2003

I certify and attest that the official records of the Zoning Commission for the District of Columbia indicate that Lots 6,7,8,15,16,17 in Square 2501 are zoned D/R-1-B, Lots 18, 19, and 805 in Square 2501 are zoned R-1-B as shown on the attached plat.

JERRILY R. KRESS, FAIA
Director
Office of Zoning

District of Columbia, ss:

Signed and sworn to before me this 17th day of January 2003.

BETTY J. WILLIAMS
Notary Public, D.C.

My Commission expires on February 14, 2006

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA GOVERNMENT
OFFICE OF THE SURVEYOR

Washington, D.C., 12-16, 2002

Plat for Building Permit of SQ-2501 LOTS 6,7,8,15,16,17,18,19,805

Scale: 1 inch = 30 feet Recorded in Book A&T 6 Page 8 1427

Receipt No. 2199

Furnished to: HOLLAND & KNIGHT

Surveyor, D.C.

By: DH

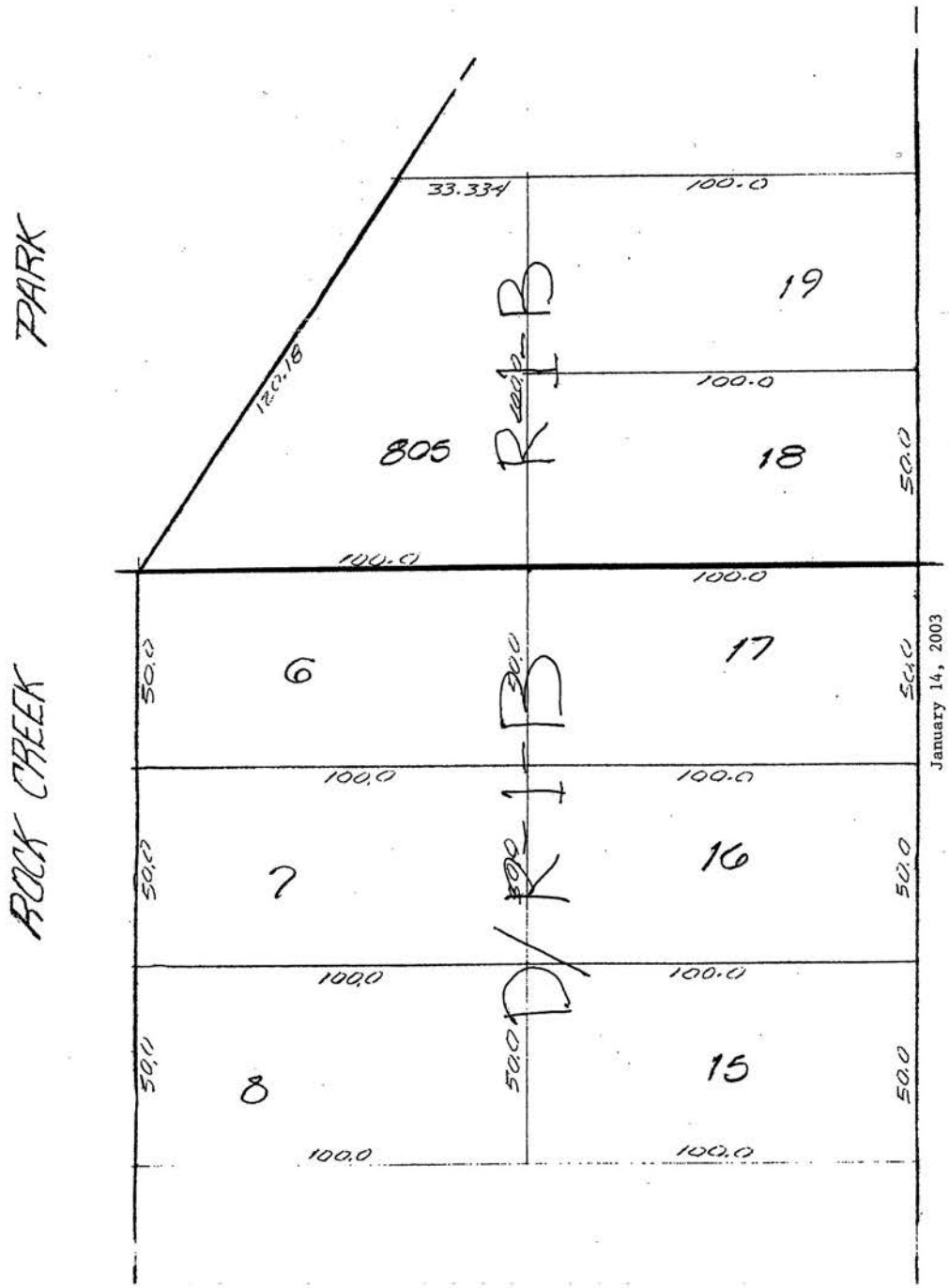
I hereby certify that all existing improvements shown hereon, are completely dimensioned, and are correctly platted; that all proposed buildings or construction, or parts thereof, including covered porches, are correctly dimensioned and platted and agree with plans accompanying the application; that the foundation plans as shown hereon is drawn, and dimensioned accurately to the same scale as the property lines shown on this plat; and that by reason of the proposed improvements to be erected as shown hereon the size of any adjoining lot or premises is not decreased to an area less than is required by the Zoning Regulations for light and ventilation; and it is further certified and agreed that accessible parking area where required by the Zoning Regulations will be reserved in accordance with the Zoning Regulations, and that this area has been correctly drawn and dimensioned hereon. It is further agreed that the elevation of the accessible parking area with respect to the Highway Department approved curb and alley grade will not result in a rate of grade along centerline of driveway at any point on private property in excess of 20% for single-family dwellings or flats, or in excess of 12% at any point for other buildings. (The policy of the Highway Department permits a maximum driveway grade of 12% across the public parking and the private restricted property.)

Date: _____

_____
(Signature of owner or his authorized agent)

NOTE: Data shown for Assessment and Taxation Lots or Parcels are in accordance with the records of the Department of Finance and Revenue, Assessment Administration, and do not necessarily agree with deed description.

RECEIVED
D.C. OFFICE OF ZONING
2003 JAN -8 PM 4:22



January 14, 2003

I certify and attest that the official records of the Zoning Commission for the District of Columbia indicate that Lots 6, 7, 8, 15, 16, and 17, in Square 2501 are zoned D/R-1-B, Lots 18, 19, and 805 in Square 2501 are zoned R-1-B, as shown on this plat.

JERRILY R. KRESS, FAIA
Director
Office of Zoning

F

United States Department of State

Office of Foreign Missions
Washington, D.C. 20520

September 22, 2005

Ms. Jerrily R. Kress
Director
Office of Zoning
One Judiciary Square
441 4th Street, N.W., 2nd Floor
Washington, D.C. 20001

RE: BZA Application No. 17382
Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman
2535 Belmont Road, N.W.

Dear Ms. Kress:

The Department of State hereby provides its comments concerning the application submitted to the Foreign Missions Board of Zoning Adjustment ("FMBZA") by the Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman on June 13, regarding the Embassy's desire to expand its chancery by constructing an addition to its current chancery property located at 2535 Belmont Road, N.W. The application was submitted pursuant to Section 206 of the Foreign Missions Act (22 U.S.C. §4306.) and D.C. Code 5-1206 and the case is scheduled to be heard on October 11, 2005.

On behalf of the Secretary of State, and pursuant to the Foreign Missions Act, 22 U.S.C. §4301, *et seq.*, particularly sections 4303 and 4306, I hereby convey to the FMBZA the following comments and determinations concerning the subject application. These comments and determinations relate to the statutory criteria governing FMBZA determinations that lie within the purview of the Federal Government, namely 22 U.S.C. §4306(d)(1), (4), and (6), as well as the pertinent portion of (d)(3).

First, with respect to the criterion set forth in 22 U.S.C. §4306(d)(1), I have determined that favorable FMBZA action on the present application would fulfill the international obligation of the United States to facilitate the acquisition of adequate and secure premises by the Government of Oman for its diplomatic mission in Washington.

Second, after consultation with Federal agencies authorized to perform protective services, I have determined, pursuant to 22 U.S.C. §4306(d)(6), that there exist no special security requirements relating to parking requirements in this case. I have also, after similar consultation, and pursuant to 22 U.S.C. §4306(d)(4), determined that the subject site and area are capable of being adequately protected.

Third, pursuant to 22 U.S.C. §4306(d)(6), I have determined that a favorable decision on this application would serve the federal interest. The United States Embassy in Muscat owns its chancery and several residential properties in Oman and the Government of Oman has consistently been supportive of the United States Embassy in its diplomatic property needs.

For the above reasons, the Department of State supports the application of the Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman and respectfully urges the FMBZA to act favorably on it.

Sincerely,

Richard J. Griffin
Ambassador

G

OUTLINE OF TESTIMONY
APPLICANT
FIRST SECRETARY ABDULLAH AL SULEIMANI
EMBASSY OF THE SULTANATE OF OMAN

I. INTRODUCTION

II. EXISTING USE OF SITE

III. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

IV. CONCLUSION

H

OUTLINE OF TESTIMONY
ARCHITECT
TAREK ELAROUSSI, AIA
FORUM INTERNATIONAL, INC.

I. INTRODUCTION AND PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

II. SITE AND LOCATION DESCRIPTION

A. OVERVIEW OF SITE, VICINITY AND LAND USE/ZONING

B. SITE PLANNING – SIZE, LOT CONFIGURATION, TOPOGRAPHY

III. PROJECT AND BUILDING DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

IV. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT

V. CONCLUSION

I

OUTLINE OF TESTIMONY
HISTORIC PRESERVATIONIST
EMILY EIG
EHT TRACERIES, INC

I. INTRODUCTION AND PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

II. SITE AND LOCATION DESCRIPTION

- A. CHANCERY OF OMAN
- B. FORMER SQUASH COURT
  - 1. HISTORY AND BUILDING DOCUMENTATION
- C. NEW BUILDING

III. CONCLUSION

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A Brief History of

2535 BELMONT ROAD, N.W.

Square 2501 – Washington, D.C.

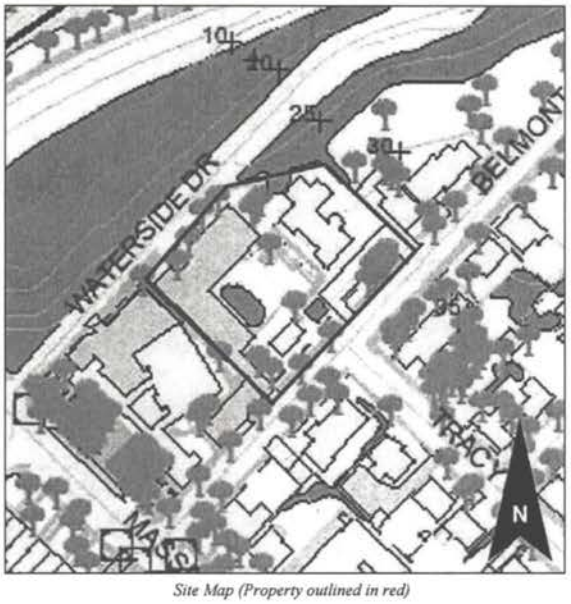


2535 Belmont Road, N.W. (EHT Traceries, 2005)

Chancery of the Sultanate of Oman

Prepared by:
Andrea F. Schoenfeld & Carrie E. Albee
EHT Traceries, Inc.
August, 2005

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION



Site Map (Property outlined in red)

Property. The property at 2535 Belmont Road, N.W., is located on the northwest side of Belmont Road in Square 2501 (lots 6-8, 15-19, and 805), east of Massachusetts Avenue and directly south of Waterside Drive and Rock Creek Park (*left*). The property is located along the northern boundary of the Sheridan-Kalorama Historic District, in a residential area characterized by medium- to large-scale residential buildings and sloped topography. The property comprises ten lots as laid out in the original Kalorama subdivision, making 2535 Belmont Road one of the largest parcels in the neighborhood. Many of the surrounding properties are similarly comprised of two or more original subdivision lots. The principal building at 2535 Belmont Road, constructed as a private residence in 1927 and now the Chancery of the Sultanate of Oman, is located at the northeast end of the property. To the south of the principal building is a one-story, brick-masonry secondary building, constructed in 1931 as a squash court and now vacant. Also present on the property are a formal garden, parking lots, a brick shed and satellite dish.

Principal Building. The primary resource on the property at 2535 Belmont Road is a three-story brick building executed in the Georgian Revival style. The building has a rectangular footprint oriented perpendicularly to Belmont Road. Extending from this main rectangular block is a semi-circular bay on the northeast elevation and an L-shaped wing off the north corner that is smaller in scale than the main block, suggesting an original service function (*right*). The brick is laid in English bond, with alternating

View Northwest (EHT Traceries, 2005)



rows of stretchers and headers. The brickwork features relatively thick mortar joints light in color, creating a regular, contrasting pattern in the masonry. The basement level is parged in concrete with a rough pebble aggregate. The three above-ground stories exhibit traditional classical proportion in the progressive shortening of window heights from first to third stories. Windows on the first story are twelve-over-twelve double-sash. Windows on the second and third stories are eight-over-eight double-sash with louvered shutters. The corners of the building are set off by robust brick quoins. A stone belt course is present between the second and third stories. The building is capped by a flat roof with a parapet, and a molded stone cornice that runs the circumference of the building. Four large brick chimneys are present on the roof of the building.



Southeast Elevation (EHT Traceries, 2005)

The building has two principal façades: one facing southeast towards Belmont Road and one facing southwest overlooking a formally landscaped garden. The southeast façade contains the primary entry to the building and is approached by a semi-circular drive (*right*). The façade is three bays in width with a projecting east bay set off by a closed triangular pediment above the third story. The entry is located on the projecting east bay and has a robust, rusticated surround capped by a broken pediment.

The southwest façade has a tripartite articulation, with a recessed central portion three bays in width flanked on both sides by projecting, single-bay wings (*below*). Fenestration on the first story features blind arches in the brickwork with keystones. The first-story, central entry is approached from a raised veranda with a stone balustrade. A fieldstone retaining wall separates the building from the garden and serves as a transition from natural to architectural.

Southwest Elevation (EHT Traceries, 2005)

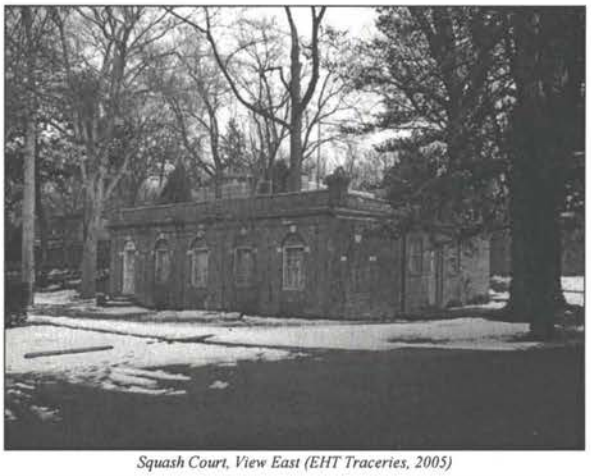


Secondary Features. The grounds at 2535 Belmont Road are characterized by a formally landscaped garden on the southwest side of the principal building. Paved drives are located on the southeast and northeast sides of the principal building, and paved parking lots are present to the west of the garden. A brick shed and modern satellite dish are located west of the

principal building. At the south end of the garden is a one-story brick building originally constructed as a squash court (*below*). The building mimics the Georgian Revival-style ornamentation of the principal building in its flat roof with a parapet and blind arches with keystones. A brick-masonry wall with piers capped by spherical stone or cast concrete finials lines the property to the northeast and southeast along Belmont Road.

CONSTRUCTION HISTORY

The Chancery of the Sultanate of Oman at 2535 Belmont Road, N.W., was constructed as a private residence in 1927. The residence stood on approximately an acre of grounds that included historic lots 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 15, 16, 17, 18, and 19 of Square 2501. The building was designed by Boston architect William Chester Chase with associated architect Lynch Luquer, and built by local contractor Andrew Murray. The original owners were Keith Merrill, a diplomat, and his wife Katherine Ayer Merrill. The residence was one of the first buildings to be constructed on Square 2501.



Squash Court, View East (EHT Traceries, 2005)

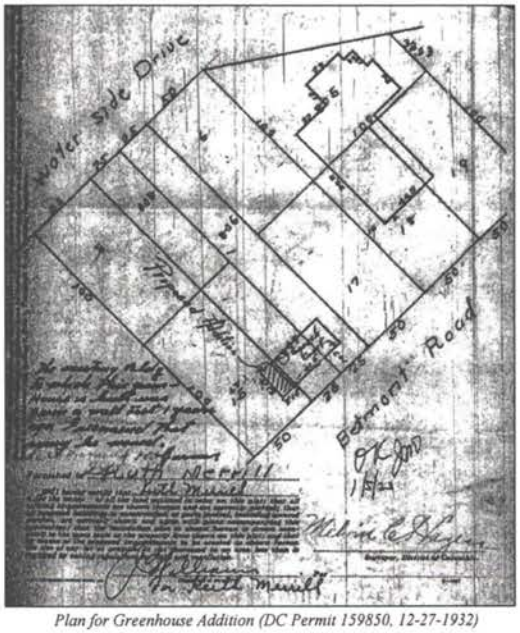
The original building permit for the construction of the residence, D.C. Permit #1118, was issued August 9, 1927. The building permit application described the residence as a three-story brick building with a basement and a flat tar-and-gravel roof. The foundation was to be concrete. The dimensions of the forty-room building were given as 44' wide, 99' deep, 41' from the sidewalk to the highest point of the roof in front and 40' from the level of the yard to the eaves at the back. The estimated cost of construction was $125,000.

Subsequent building permits issued during the Merrill ownership (1927-1945) do not reveal any significant alterations to the residence. A passenger elevator was installed in 1928 (D.C. Permit #116375, 8/9/1928). However, several permits were issued for construction of secondary buildings, retaining walls and fences. The Merrills built the squash court south of their residence in 1931 (D.C. Permit #148459, 11/17/1931). According to the permit records, the small brick Georgian Revival–style building was designed by architect George T. Santmyers and was to measure 41'6" by 21'4". The court was below grade and had an above-grade gallery. A year later, in 1932, a glass-and-brick greenhouse addition was constructed at the southwest end of the squash court (D.C. Permit #159850, 12/27/1932) (*next page*). The addition was to measure 8'10" by 21'4" with a pitched glass roof.

As originally constructed, the residence included a two-car garage in the basement level of the north wing. In 1932, a permit (D.C. Permit #149649, 1/18/1932) was issued for the construction of an additional freestanding, one-car garage. No longer extant on the site, the garage was located along the northeast property line, adjacent to the existing built-in garage. The permit indicates that the freestanding garage was to be 10' high, with a footprint that measured 10'6" wide by 18' deep.

ARCHITECTS

William Chester Chase, Principal Architect. William Chester Chase (ca. 1865-1954) had an architectural practice in Boston, Massachusetts, for close to sixty years. His obituary, published in the *Boston Herald*, May 1, 1954, described him as a "retired Boston architect, who designed many homes in Boston and on the North Shore....A native of Lowell, he started his professional career as a draftsman with Frank Hill Smith. He later became a partner in the Boston architectural firm of Chase and Ames, but in the later years of his active work operated independently." Records in the Boston Public Library indicate that he had his own firm from 1894 to 1898, was a partner in Chase and Ames from 1899 to 1902, and again had his own firm from 1906 to 1954. Very little has been published on Chase. The Avery Index to architectural periodicals lists only two references to Chase. Both are 1898 photographs of the Mrs. Frank Bradley residence in Evanston, Illinois.



Plan for Greenhouse Addition (DC Permit 159850, 12-27-1932)

Lynch Luquer, Associate Architect. The building permit for 2535 Belmont Road lists Washington-based Lynch Luquer as associate architect. He was born in Dresden, Saxony [Germany] in 1878, graduated from Harvard University in 1899, and attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology School of Architecture 1901-1905. He practiced from 1911 to 1936 and his buildings include St. John's Orphanage at 20th and F Streets, N.W., (1914) and the Home for Incurables on Wisconsin Avenue, N.W., (1924).[1] Luquer

[1] Application of Lynch Luquer to the D.C. Board of Examiners and Registrars of Architects, original in the D.C. Archives, Washington, D.C.

notified the D.C. Building Department on September 17, 1927 that he was no longer connected with the Keith Merrill residence on Belmont Road.[2]

Andrew Murray, Builder. The original building permit for 2535 Belmont Road identifies the builder as Andrew Murray (born circa 1865), a Scottish-born building contractor who immigrated to the United States in 1890.[3] Murray was a prolific building contractor in Washington, D.C., in the 1910s and 1920s, and an active member of the D.C. Builders and Manufacturers' Exchange.[4]

PROPERTY OWNERS

Keith Merrill and Katherine Ayer Merrill, 1927-1945. Keith Merrill (1887-1959) was a Foreign Service officer who served in London, England, and Madrid, Spain, and later headed the State Department's Foreign Buildings Office. Born in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Merrill was the son of a banker. He graduated from Yale University in 1911 and from Harvard Law School in 1914. He joined the United States Foreign Service in 1917 and retired in 1937. In World War II, as a commander in the U.S. Naval Reserve, he served as assistant to Captain W. D. Puleston, Navy liaison officer to the Board of Economic Warfare.[5] At the end of the war, he was responsible for the transportation and exhibition of German and Austrian art treasures recovered by General George S. Patton's Third Army.



Merrill Home Sale Ends Another Era in Society Here

WASH DAILY NEWS

JAN 16 1946

By EVELYN PEYTON GORDON

THE sale of their Belmont Road house by Comdr. and Mrs. Keith Merrill somehow brings to an end another era of Washington society. For a good many years Keith Merrill was attached to the State Department. Their handsome house, with its beautiful gardens and huge swimming pool, was a rendezvous for members of society,—the Merrills' friends and the younger groups who came to visit their children.

*Newspaper Article, 1946 (*Washington Post, *16 January 1946)*

Merrill married Mary Katherine Ayer in 1917. She was the daughter of Frederick Ayer, a leading Boston financier and first president of the American Woolen Company which, in the early twentieth century, was the largest woolen manufacturer in the United States, controlling twenty percent of the nation's textile production. The Merrills maintained a summer residence in Pride's Crossing, Massachusetts, on Boston's fashionable North Shore. Mrs. Merrill's ties to the Boston area presumably account for the Merrills' selection of an architect from Boston to design their Washington residence. The Merrills had three children. One of Mrs. Merrill's sisters, Beatrice

---

[2] This letter was filed with D.C. Building Permit #1118, 8/9/1927.

[3] United States Federal Census, 1920.

[4] "New Builders' Home," *Washington Post*, 24 May 1914.

[5] Naval Historical Center, Sources on U.S. Naval History in the United States, Yale University Libraries; available from http://wwww.history.navy.mil/sources/ct/eb0.htm; Internet; accessed February 2005.

Ayer, was married to General George S. Patton and she resided at 2535 Belmont Road, N.W. some of the time that her husband served overseas during World War II.[6]

In 1945, Keith and Katherine Merrill sold their property at 2535 Belmont Road to the French government and moved to their country residence, Southdown, in Fairfax County, Virginia, built as a weekend retreat in the mid-1930s.[7] Noting the sale of the property on Belmont Road, a society columnist wrote that the "handsome house, with its beautiful gardens and huge swimming pool, was a rendezvous for members of society, – the Merrills' friends and the younger groups who came to visit their children."[8] (*previous page*) The swimming pool, no longer extant on the property, was located to the west of the residence, in the area now occupied by the north parking lot.[9]



*Documentary Photograph, 1946 (*Washington Star, *23 March 1946)*

Government of France, 1945 – 1986. The French government purchased the Merrill residence at the close of 1945 for use as its chancery.[10] Previously, its chancery had been located at 2129 Wyoming Avenue, N.W. The building served as the French chancery until 1984 when the French government completed construction of a new chancery at 3905 Reservoir Road, N.W.

In March 1946 the *Washington Star* described the house at 2535 Belmont Road as "now being renovated to serve as the chancery of the French Embassy," but the building permit index does not list any permits for 2535 Belmont Road in that year.[11] The 1946 *Washington Star* photograph of 2535 Belmont Road (*above*) reveals that the two wings flanking the main block on the garden (southwest) elevation were originally only two stories high.[12] By the 1960s wood-frame, third-story additions to the

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[6] "Advice to Soldiers; Wives: Get Reliable Newspaper and a Good Map...," *Washington Post*, 10 November 1942, p. 12.

[7] Marie McNair, "Parties for Canadian Cabinet Officer will Highlight Social Round of Week," *Washington Post*, 11 January 1948, p. S1.

[8] Evelyn Peyton Gordon, "Merrill Home Sale Ends Another Era in Society Here," *Washington Daily News*, 16 January 1946.

[9] Preliminary drawings of various parking arrangements on the site prepared by architect Davis Buckley circa 1989 indicate the location of the swimming pool.

[10] "French Purchase Merrill House for New Chancery," *Washington Star*, 14 January 1946.

[11] *Washington Star*, 23 March 1946.

[12] Negative 3659, Washington Star Photograph Collection, Washingtoniana Division, Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library, Washington, D.C.

wings had been constructed. They appear in drawings by architect Harry Barrett showing the building as it was in December 1961 and can be seen in a circa 1987 photograph.[13] (*below*)

Between 1945 and 1958, the squash court was used for archival storage.[14] The building was subsequently converted into a dwelling circa 1965. The greenhouses addition was probably enclosed with brick at this time. The freestanding 1932 garage was demolished during the period of French ownership. Although it appears on Baist maps as late as 1968, the garage is not shown on the 1961 site plan drawn by Harry Barrett.

Sultanate of Oman, 1986 – Present. The Sultanate of Oman purchased 2535 Belmont Road from the French government by deed (Document No. 8600000684) recorded January 7, 1986. Since their acquisition of the property in 1986, the Sultanate of Oman has made several substantial alterations to the property. Among these is the circa 1990 replacement of the wood-frame, third-story additions on the wings of the garden (southwest) elevation with permanent brick additions designed by architect Davis Buckley to be in keeping with the style of the original building. Other alterations made to the property since its acquisition by the Sultanate of Oman include the removal of the Merrill's swimming pool and the creation of the parking lots around the garden.[15] The Sultanate of Oman also undertook the replacement of the metal pales of the Belmont Road property fence with brick-masonry infill between the existing brick piers and the construction of the modern brick-masonry wall along the northeast property line, the brick piers of which mimic those of the Belmont Road wall.



Documentary Photograph, 1987 (Traceries, 1987)

[13] Photograph from Sheridan-Kalorama Historic Resources Inventory, 1987-1989, and Barrett drawings in files of EHT Traceries, Inc.

[14] Frances Rowan, "All Those Frenchmen Couldn't be Wrong," *Washington Post*, 11 July 1958, p. C 15.

[15] Preliminary drawings of various parking arrangements on the site prepared by architect Davis Buckley circa 1989 indicate that at that time the swimming pool was still present. It is unclear at this time whether or not Davis Buckley is responsible for the design of the parking lots to the west of the garden.

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District of Columbia Building Permits.

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Gordon, Evelyn Peyton. "Merrill Home Sale Ends Another Era in Society Here." *Washington Daily News*, 16 January 1946.

McNair, Marie. "Parties for Canadian Cabinet Officer will Highlight Social Round of Week." *Washington Post*, 11 January 1948.

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Negative 3659. Washington Star Photograph Collection. Washingtoniana Division, Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library. Washington, D.C.

"New Builders' Home," *Washington Post*, 24 May 1914.

Project files. Davis Buckley Architects and Planners. Washington, D.C.

Property files. EHT Traceries, Inc. Washington, D.C.

Rowan, Frances. "All Those Frenchmen Couldn't be Wrong." *Washington Post*, 11 July 1958.

United States Federal Census.

Washington Star, 23 March 1946.

Former Squash Court
Chancery of the Sultanate of Oman

2535 Belmont Road, N.W.
Washington, D.C.

History and Building Documentation

Prepared for the

Sultanate of Oman

EHT Traceries, Inc.
August 2005

Former Squash Court

History and Building Documentation

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Summary

The former Squash Court is located on the property at 2535 Belmont Road, N.W., which currently serves as the Chancery of the Sultanate of Oman. The principal building on the property was originally constructed as a residence in 1927 for Keith and Katherine Ayer Merrill. The Squash Court, designed by prolific local architect George T. Santmyers, was constructed for the Merrills in 1931-1932. In 1932, a greenhouse addition was built onto the southwest elevation. In 1945 the property at 2535 Belmont Road, N.W., was purchased by the government of France to serve as the French Chancery. While under the ownership of the government of France, the Squash Court was used for archival storage. The Squash Court was converted into a dwelling circa 1965 resulting in substantial alteration, including the puncture of the exterior walls for windows, the partitioning of the interior spaces and the enclosure of the Greenhouse Addition. In 1986 the property was purchased by the government of the Sultanate of Oman to serve as the Omani Chancery. Since its conversion to a dwelling, the Squash Court appears to have been used for additional office and/or storage space. The Squash Court is currently vacant.

This report was produced as documentation of the Squash Court pursuant to the proposed demolition of the building as part of the Chancery expansion plan. This plan includes the construction of a new freestanding building directly northwest of and directly adjacent to the Squash Court.

Part I: Historical Information

A. Physical History:

1. **Date of erection:** 1931-1932. The building permit for the construction of the Squash Court was issued on November 17, 1931.[1] Architectural drawings for the Squash Court were completed in November 1931.[2] This suggests that the Squash Court was completed by early 1932.

2. **Architect, engineer:** George T. Santmyers, Architect.

3. **Original and subsequent owners:**

    a. Keith and Katherine Ayer Merrill, 1927-1945. The Merrills are known to have acquired the property on which the Squash Court is located by 1927, when the principal building was constructed on the site.
    b. Government of France, 1945-1986.
    c. Sultanate of Oman, 1986-present.

4. **Original and subsequent occupants:**

    a. Keith and Katherine Ayer Merrill, 1927-1945. The Merrills had the Squash Court built for non-commercial use. They resided in the principal building on the property.
    b. Government of France, 1945-1986. The government of France used the principal building on the property as its chancery. During its tenancy the Squash Court was used for archival storage, and then as a dwelling.
    c. Sultanate of Oman, 1986-present. The Sultanate of Oman uses the principal building on the property as its Chancery. Currently the Squash Court is vacant, but it appears to have been used for office and/or storage space during the Omani tenancy.

5. **Original plans and construction:** One original sheet of architectural drawings is held at the National Archives. The sheet is located in Record Group 66, the Records of the Commission of Fine Arts, Shipstead-Luce Case Files, Case #59. The drawings for the Squash Court were completed in November 1931. The building permit for the construction of the Squash Court was issued on November 17, 1931.[3] This suggests that the Squash Court was completed by early 1932.

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[1] Washington, D.C., Building Permit #148459 dated November 17, 1931.

[2] Case #59, Shipstead-Luce Case Files, Records of the Commission of Fine Arts, RG 66, Entry 18, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

[3] Washington, D.C., Building Permit #148459 dated November 17, 1931.

6. Alterations and additions:

a. Greenhouse Addition, 1932-1933. A small greenhouse with a concrete floor, brick foundation walls and a steel-and-glass roof was added to the southwest end of the Squash Court in 1932-1933.[4]
b. Use as Archival Storage, ca. 1945-ca. 1965.[5] By 1958, the Squash Court is being used for archival storage. There is no indication that the building underwent any physical change during this period.
c. Conversion to Dwelling, ca. 1965.[6] This conversion required extensive alterations including the puncture of the original northwest and southeast elevations with windows, the removal of the cast stone benches on the northwest elevation, and the addition of an entry on the southeast elevation. The interior open space was partitioned into two stories with multiple rooms on each floor. The Greenhouse Addition was converted into a bathroom and kitchen. An HVAC system was installed.
d. Use as Office and/or Storage, post-1965. Extant interior partitions suggest an office and/or storage use that post-dates the initial conversion to a dwelling circa 1965.

B. Historic Context

1. **History of the property:** The Chancery of the Sultanate of Oman at 2535 Belmont Road, N.W., was constructed as a private residence in 1927. The residence stood on approximately an acre of grounds that included historic lots 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 15, 16, 17, 18, and 19 of Square 2501. The building was designed by Boston architect William Chester Chase with associated architect Lynch Luquer, and built by local contractor Andrew Murray. The original owners were Keith Merrill, a diplomat, and his wife Katherine Ayer Merrill. The residence was one of the first buildings to be constructed on Square 2501.

   The original building permit for the construction of the residence, D.C. Permit #1118, was issued August 9, 1927. The building permit application described the residence as a three-story brick building with a basement and a flat tar-and-gravel roof. The foundation was to be concrete. The dimensions of the forty-room building were given as 44' wide, 99' deep, 41' from the sidewalk to the highest point of the roof in front and 40' from the level of the yard to the eaves at the back. The estimated cost of construction was $125,000.

   Subsequent building permits issued during the Merrill ownership (1927-1945) do not reveal any significant alterations to the residence. A passenger elevator

[4] Washington, D.C., Building Permit #159850 dated December 27, 1932.
[5] Frances Rowan, "All Those Frenchmen Couldn't be Wrong," *Washington Post*, 11 July 1958, p. C 15.
[6] Based on extant physical evidence (*see Section B 2 below*).

was installed in 1928 (D.C. Permit #116375, 8/9/1928). However, several permits were issued for construction of secondary buildings, retaining walls and fences. The Merrills built the squash court south of their residence in 1931 (D.C. Permit #148459, 11/17/1931). According to the permit records, the small brick Georgian Revival–style building was designed by architect George T. Santmyers and was to measure 41'6" by 21'4". The court was below grade and had an above-grade gallery. A year later, in 1932, a glass-and-brick greenhouse addition was constructed at the southwest end of the squash court (D.C. Permit #159850, 12/27/1932). The addition was to measure 8'10" by 21'4" with a pitched glass roof.

As originally constructed, the residence included a two-car garage in the basement level of the north wing. In 1932, a permit (D.C. Permit #149649, 1/18/1932) was issued for the construction of an additional freestanding, one-car garage. No longer extant on the site, the garage was located along the northeast property line, adjacent to the existing built-in garage. The permit indicates that the freestanding garage was to be 10' high, with a footprint that measured 10'6" wide by 18' deep.

The principal architect of 2535 Belmont Road, N.W., was William Chester Chase. Chase (ca. 1865-1954) had an architectural practice in Boston, Massachusetts, for close to sixty years. His obituary, published in the *Boston Herald*, May 1, 1954, described him as a "retired Boston architect, who designed many homes in Boston and on the North Shore....A native of Lowell, he started his professional career as a draftsman with Frank Hill Smith. He later became a partner in the Boston architectural firm of Chase and Ames, but in the later years of his active work operated independently." Records in the Boston Public Library indicate that he had his own firm from 1894 to 1898, was a partner in Chase and Ames from 1899 to 1902, and again had his own firm from 1906 to 1954. Very little has been published on Chase. The Avery Index to architectural periodicals lists only two references to Chase. Both are 1898 photographs of the Mrs. Frank Bradley residence in Evanston, Illinois.

Chase was assisted in his design for 2535 Belmont Road, N.W., by associate architect Lynch Luquer. Luquer was born in Dresden, Saxony [Germany] in 1878, graduated from Harvard University in 1899, and attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology School of Architecture 1901-1905. He practiced from 1911 to 1936 and his buildings include St. John's Orphanage at 20th and F Streets, N.W., (1914) and the Home for Incurables on Wisconsin Avenue, N.W., (1924).[7] Luquer notified the D.C. Building Department on

[7] Application of Lynch Luquer to the D.C. Board of Examiners and Registrars of Architects, original in the D.C. Archives, Washington, D.C.

September 17, 1927 that he was no longer connected with the Keith Merrill residence on Belmont Road.[8]

The original building permit for 2535 Belmont Road identifies the builder as Andrew Murray (born circa 1865), a Scottish-born building contractor who immigrated to the United States in 1890.[9] Murray was a prolific building contractor in Washington, D.C., in the 1910s and 1920s, and an active member of the D.C. Builders and Manufacturers' Exchange.[10]

The original owners of the property at 2535 Belmont Road, N.W., were Keith Merrill and Katherine Ayer Merrill. Keith Merrill (1887-1959) was a Foreign Service officer who served in London, England, and Madrid, Spain, and later headed the State Department's Foreign Buildings Office. Born in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Merrill was the son of a banker. He graduated from Yale University in 1911 and from Harvard Law School in 1914. He joined the United States Foreign Service in 1917 and retired in 1937. In World War II, as a commander in the U.S. Naval Reserve, he served as assistant to Captain W. D. Puleston, Navy liaison officer to the Board of Economic Warfare.[11] At the end of the war, he was responsible for the transportation and exhibition of German and Austrian art treasures recovered by General George S. Patton's Third Army.

Merrill married Mary Katherine Ayer in 1917. She was the daughter of Frederick Ayer, a leading Boston financier and first president of the American Woolen Company which, in the early twentieth century, was the largest woolen manufacturer in the United States, controlling twenty percent of the nation's textile production. The Merrills maintained a summer residence in Pride's Crossing, Massachusetts, on Boston's fashionable North Shore. Mrs. Merrill's ties to the Boston area presumably account for the Merrills' selection of an architect from Boston to design their Washington residence. The Merrills had three children. One of Mrs. Merrill's sisters, Beatrice Ayer, was married to General George S. Patton and she resided at 2535 Belmont Road, N.W. some of the time that her husband served overseas during World War II.[12]

In 1945, Keith and Katherine Merrill sold their property at 2535 Belmont Road to the French government and moved to their country residence,

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[8] This letter was filed with D.C. Building Permit #1118, 8/9/1927.

[9] United States Federal Census, 1920.

[10] "New Builders' Home," *Washington Post*, 24 May 1914.

[11] Naval Historical Center, Sources on U.S. Naval History in the United States, Yale University Libraries; available from http://wwww.history.navy.mil/sources/ct/eb0.htm; Internet; accessed February 2005.

[12] "Advice to Soldiers; Wives: Get Reliable Newspaper and a Good Map...," *Washington Post*, 10 November 1942, p. 12.

Southdown, in Fairfax County, Virginia, built as a weekend retreat in the mid-1930s.[13] Noting the sale of the property on Belmont Road, a society columnist wrote that the "handsome house, with its beautiful gardens and huge swimming pool, was a rendezvous for members of society, – the Merrills' friends and the younger groups who came to visit their children."[14] The swimming pool, no longer extant on the property, was located to the west of the residence, in the area now occupied by the north parking lot.[15]

The French government purchased the Merrill residence at the close of 1945 for use as its chancery.[16] Previously, its chancery had been located at 2129 Wyoming Avenue, N.W. The building served as the French chancery until 1984 when the French government completed construction of a new chancery at 3905 Reservoir Road, N.W.

In March 1946 the *Washington Star* described the house at 2535 Belmont Road as "now being renovated to serve as the chancery of the French Embassy," but the building permit index does not list any permits for 2535 Belmont Road in that year.[17] The 1946 *Washington Star* photograph of 2535 Belmont Road reveals that the two wings flanking the main block on the garden (southwest) elevation were originally only two stories high.[18] By the 1960s wood-frame, third-story additions to the wings had been constructed. They appear in drawings by architect Harry Barrett showing the building as it was in December 1961 and can be seen in a circa 1987 photograph.[19]

Between 1945 and 1958, the squash court was used for archival storage.[20] The building was subsequently converted into a dwelling circa 1965. The Greenhouse Addition was probably enclosed with brick at this time. The freestanding 1932 garage was demolished during the period of French ownership. Although it appears on Baist maps as late as 1968, the garage is not shown on the 1961 site plan drawn by Harry Barrett.

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[13] Marie McNair, "Parties for Canadian Cabinet Officer will Highlight Social Round of Week," *Washington Post*, 11 January 1948, p. S1.

[14] Evelyn Peyton Gordon, "Merrill Home Sale Ends Another Era in Society Here," *Washington Daily News*, 16 January 1946.

[15] Preliminary drawings of various parking arrangements on the site prepared by architect Davis Buckley circa 1989 indicate the location of the swimming pool.

[16] "French Purchase Merrill House for New Chancery," *Washington Star*, 14 January 1946.

[17] *Washington Star*, 23 March 1946.

[18] Negative 3659, Washington Star Photograph Collection, Washingtoniana Division, Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library, Washington, D.C.

[19] Photograph from Sheridan-Kalorama Historic Resources Inventory, 1987-1989, and Barrett drawings in files of EHT Traceries, Inc.

[20] Frances Rowan, "All Those Frenchmen Couldn't be Wrong," *Washington Post*, 11 July 1958, p. C 15.

The Sultanate of Oman purchased 2535 Belmont Road from the French government by deed (Document No. 8600000684) recorded January 7, 1986. Since their acquisition of the property in 1986, the Sultanate of Oman has made several substantial alterations to the property. Among these is the circa 1990 replacement of the wood-frame, third-story additions on the wings of the garden (southwest) elevation with permanent brick additions designed by architect Davis Buckley to be in keeping with the style of the original building. Other alterations made to the property since its acquisition by the Sultanate of Oman include the removal of the Merrill's swimming pool and the creation of the parking lots around the garden.[21] The Sultanate of Oman also undertook the replacement of the metal pales of the Belmont Road property fence with brick-masonry infill between the existing brick piers and the construction of the modern brick-masonry wall along the northeast property line, the brick piers of which mimic those of the Belmont Road wall.

2. **History of the Squash Court:** The Squash Court was originally constructed in 1931-1932 for Keith and Katherine Ayer Merrill. The original building permit, issued November 17, 1931, indicates that the Squash Court was designed by architect George T. Santmyers, and was to be one story in height with two interior rooms.[22] The Squash Court was to measure 41'5" by 21'3", and was to have a concrete foundation, brick-masonry walls and a flat slag roof. The building measurements indicate that it was to accommodate one court, the standard size of which is 40' by 20'.

   Original drawings for the Squash Court indicate the following:

   > "Exterior walls to be 12" solid brick. Interior wall to be 8" solid brick. Walls to be thru bonded every 6th course. Wall ftgs. To be 2/0 x 1/0 concrete. Provide two slate courses in foundation walls. Rfc. Concrete to be 1.2.4 mix. Bridge roof rafters once in each 8/0 span or less."[23]

   These original drawings reveal the appearance of the Squash Court as originally constructed.

   The Squash Court was one story above grade on the exterior, but extended below grade on the interior to accommodate the 20' regulation height of a squash court. The building was located at the south corner of the property,

[21] Preliminary drawings of various parking arrangements on the site prepared by architect Davis Buckley circa 1989 indicate that at that time the swimming pool was still present. It is unclear at this time whether or not Davis Buckley is responsible for the design of the parking lots to the west of the garden.

[22] Washington, D.C., Building Permit #148459 dated November 17, 1931.

[23] Case #59, Shipstead-Luce Case Files, Records of the Commission of Fine Arts, RG 66, Entry 18, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

close to Belmont Road. Like the main residence on the property, the Squash Court was executed in the Georgian Revival style.

The principal facade was the northwest elevation. As originally constructed this elevation was five bays in width, delineated by brick pilasters that repeated at the corners. Each of the bays featured a blind arch with rowlock voussoirs and cast-stone (or concrete) springers and keystone. At the base of each blind arch was a cast-stone bench on consoles. The entry was in the northeast bay of the northwest elevation and was approached by brick steps laid in a semi-circular pattern. The entry contained an arched door with a multi-light, fixed sash in the upper portion and molded panels in the lower portion. A brick parapet with copper coping circumscribed the building and was set off by a copper cornice. A soldier course marked the base of the building and a header course ran above the blind arches.

The northeast elevation was three bays in width and was articulated similarly to the northwest elevation. The central bay contained a blind arch with wood lattice attached. In each of the flanking bays was a pair of eight-light metal casement windows with rowlock sills and jack-arch lintels with a cast keystone.

The southeast and southwest elevations are not shown in the Santmyers drawings. Extant architectural evidence suggests that the southeast elevation had no fenestration and little ornamentation with the exception of the copper cornice and soldier-course base. The original configuration of the southwest elevation, now obscured by the Greenhouse Addition, is not known.

The original entry to the Squash Court, located in the east bay of the northwest elevation, opened onto a narrow gallery that overlooked the playing court. An open stair led from the southeast end of the gallery down to the squash court. The court itself had a concrete surface, and the interior walls were finished in stucco.

Comparison of the Squash Court as it stands today with the original drawings reveals that the building has been substantially altered since its construction.

On December 27, 1932, a permit was issued to Keith Merrill for the construction of a one-story, one-room addition to the southwest elevation of the Squash Court for the purposes of a greenhouse. The 8'10" by 21'3" greenhouse was to be made of brick foundation walls with a steel-and-glass structure. The Greenhouse Addition was completed in 1933, but the original exterior articulation remains unknown. The current configuration appears to reflect later alterations related to the circa 1965 conversion of the Squash Court into a dwelling. It is also notable that a 1961 site plan of the property prepared by architect Harry Barrett does not show the Greenhouse Addition to

the Squash Court.[24] However, this may be due to the fact that the architect used existing, earlier documents to produce his drawing and does not necessarily suggest that the Greenhouse Addition was no longer present by this time.

Following the 1945 purchase of the property at 2535 Belmont Road, N.W., by the government of France for use as its chancery, the Squash Court appears to have ceased functioning as a squash court. A 1958 newspaper article indicates that "a small house that was formerly a squash court is now used to hold archives."[25] The building is again noted as a "store house" on the 1961 site plan of the property prepared by architect Harry Barrett.[26]

Extant architectural evidence taken in concert with the above-referenced documentation suggests that the Squash Court was converted to a dwelling circa 1965. The building was extensively altered at that time on both the exterior and the interior. On the exterior, the new residential function required the piercing of the exterior walls for additional windows. While the northeast elevation appears to have remained intact, the northwest elevation was radically changed by the installation of six-over-six wood-sash windows with canted rowlock sills in each of the blind arches. Two below-grade windows openings were cut into the brick-masonry wall. The original cast-stone benches were likely removed at this time. The principal entry was altered, as well, with the addition of a modern rectangular door and the infill of the arched opening above the door. The southeast elevation was also radically altered with the installation of four six-over-six wood-sash windows with canted rowlock sills and a new entry in the southeast bay, directly across from the entry on the opposite elevation. On the interior of the building, a new floor was inserted, bisecting the original open squash court. Room partitions were added, and the former Greenhouse Addition was converted into a kitchen and bathroom. An HVAC system was installed.

The Squash Court appears to have changed little since its conversion to a dwelling. The building is currently vacant and does not appear to have been regularly inhabited for some years. Light-weight, more temporary partitions are present on the interior, suggesting that the building may have had some an office and/or storage use since its conversion to a dwelling.

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[24] Harry Barrett, "2535 Belmont Rd. N.W., Washington, D.C. Chancery Embassy of France," 28 December 1961. Copies of original drawings in the private collection of EHT Traceries, Inc., Washington, D.C. The drawing indicates a variety of sources for the site plan, suggesting that the plan was drawn from secondary sources rather than an on-site survey.

[25] Frances Rowan, "All Those Frenchmen Couldn't be Wrong," *Washington Post*, 11 July 1958, p. C 15.

[26] Harry Barrett, "2535 Belmont Rd. N.W., Washington, D.C. Chancery Embassy of France," 28 December 1961. Copies of original drawings in the private collection of EHT Traceries, Inc., Washington, D.C.