



MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment

FROM: Matt Jesick, Case Manager
Joel Lawson, Associate Director for Development Review

DATE: September 19, 2024

SUBJECT: BZA #17552A – St. Anselm’s Abbey School – Request for relief to construct an addition to the existing school

I. RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning (OP) recommends **approval** of the following special exception relief:

- X § 104, pursuant to X § 901 and Y § 704 – Private School Plan (Private school existing; physical expansion of the school proposed);
- U § 203.1(m), pursuant to X § 901 and Y § 704 – Private School use (Private school existing; physical expansion of the school proposed).

The conditions previously approved by the Board in case 17552 are not proposed to be changed and would remain in effect. Those conditions are:

1. The total enrollment shall not exceed 280 students.
2. The total number of staff shall not exceed 70.
3. A minimum of 87 parking spaces shall be made available on the site for the school's use.

II. LOCATION AND SITE DESCRIPTION

Applicant	The Benedictine Foundation
Address	4501 South Dakota Ave., NE
Legal Description	Square 3977, Lot 133
Ward / ANC	Ward 5, ANC 5A
Zone	R-1B – Single family detached residential; Private schools permitted by special exception
Historic District / Resource	None
Lot Characteristics and Existing Development	Large, irregularly-shaped institutional lot; 1,731,645 sq. ft. (39.8 acres); Site consists of significant wooded areas, including around the school building; Existing development includes the abbey building, the school building, the gym and performing arts building, as well as athletic fields and courts; Primary entrances to school and gym buildings from South Dakota Avenue; Service entrance to rear of school from 16 th Street.



Adjacent Properties and Neighborhood Character	Adjacent properties include institutional uses such as Whitefriars Hall, Boys Town, and the North Michigan Park Recreation Center. The broader neighborhood is a primarily a mix of detached and semi-detached homes.
Proposal	The applicant proposes to expand the school building, on the south side of the existing building. The new area would be used for a library, chapel, offices, and a classroom. Total area of the addition would be 9,965 sf. The number of staff and students would remain the same.

III. ZONING REQUIREMENTS AND RELIEF REQUESTED

The following data is taken from Exhibit 15, the self-certification.

Item	Regulation	Existing	Proposed	Relief
Private School Plan X 104	A plan is required for private school campuses	Existing plan approved by the Board	Plan proposed to be modified with an addition to the main school building	Requested
Private School Use U 203.1(m)	A private school is permitted by special exception	Existing school approved by the Board	School proposed to be modified with an addition to the main school building	Requested
Lot Area D 202	5,000 sf min.	1,731,645 sf	No change	Conforming
Lot Width D 202	50 ft. min.	>50 ft.	No change	Conforming
Height D 203	40 ft. 3 stories	Varies; 26 ft. 2 in. adjacent to addition; 1 story	26 ft. 2 in. 1 story for addition	Conforming
Rear Yard D 207	25 ft. min.	637 ft. 2 in.	No change	Conforming
Side Yard D 208	8 ft. min.	100 ft. 6 in. min.	No change	Conforming
Lot Occupancy D 210	40%	6.1%	6.6%	Conforming
Vehicle Parking C 701	2 per 3 staff + Greater of (1 per 20 classroom seats) OR (1 per 10 seats in the largest auditorium, gym, or area for public assembly) = 89	160	No change	Conforming

IV. ANALYSIS

In order to expand the existing school building, the applicant seeks a modification with hearing to amend the prior Board approval. Two areas of relief are requested: a private school plan pursuant to X § 104 and a private school special exception pursuant to U § 203.1(m). The relevant criteria of those sections are reviewed below.

Special Exception for a Private School Plan – Subtitle X § 104

104 PRIVATE SCHOOL PLAN

104.1 Education use by a private school shall be permitted as a special exception subject to review and approval by the Board of Zoning Adjustment after its determination that the use meets the applicable standards of Subtitle X, Chapter 9 and conditions of this section.

104.2 The private school shall be located so that it is not likely to become objectionable to adjoining and nearby property because of noise, traffic, number of students, or otherwise objectionable conditions.

The addition to the school should not become objectionable to nearby properties. The traffic to the school would not increase, as the number of students and staff would remain the same, and the addition should not substantially change the nature of activities at the school. The amount of noise should not increase because the space would be used for quiet activities, including offices, a library, a chapel, and one classroom. Furthermore, the school building is located near the middle of the site, far removed from property lines, and largely surrounded by wooded land.

104.3 The development standards for a private school shall be those of the zone in which the private school is located.

The proposed addition would meet all development standards for the R-1B zone, including yards, height and lot occupancy. The applicant has sought no relief for any development standards.

104.4 In calculating density, the land area shall not include public streets and alleys, but may include interior private streets and alleys within the school boundaries.

The campus does not include any public streets.

Special Exception for a Private School – Subtitle U § 203.1(m)

203.1 The following uses shall be permitted in R-Use Groups A, B, and C, if approved by the Board of Zoning Adjustment as a special exception pursuant to Subtitle X, Chapter 9 and subject to the applicable conditions for each use below:

- (m) Private schools and residences for teachers and staff of a private school, but not including a trade school, subject to the following conditions:*
 - (1) Shall be located so that it is not likely to become objectionable to adjoining and nearby property because of noise, traffic, number of students, or otherwise objectionable conditions;*

The addition to the school should not become objectionable to nearby properties. The traffic to the school would not increase, as the number of students and staff would remain the same, and the addition should not substantially change the nature of activities at the school. The amount of noise

should not increase because the space would be used for quiet activities, including offices, a library, a chapel, and one classroom. Furthermore, the school building is located near the middle of the site, far removed from property lines, and largely surrounded by wooded land.

- (2) *Ample parking space, but not less than that required by this title, shall be provided to accommodate the students, teachers, and visitors likely to come to the site by automobile; and*

The site currently provides almost twice as much parking as required. The parking requirement would not increase as a result of the present application.

- (3) *After hearing all evidence, the Board of Zoning Adjustment may require additional parking to that required by this title;*

Because the site already provides almost twice as many vehicular parking spaces as required, OP does not recommend additional parking. OP, however, defers to any recommendation from DDOT.

Subtitle X § 901.2

- 901.2 (a) *[Granting the special exception] Will be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps;*

Granting the requested relief should not impair the intent of the Regulations. Subtitle A § 101.1(c) states that one purpose of the Regulations is to provide for adequate educational opportunities. Subtitle D § 101.2(c) also states that compatible non-residential uses are contemplated in the R zones. The proposal would further those objectives while also meeting the goals of the R zones to preserve neighborhood character and the overall environment (D §101.2(b)).

- 901.2(b) *[Granting the special exception] Will not tend to affect adversely, the use of neighboring property in accordance with the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps;*

The addition to the school should not become objectionable to nearby properties. The traffic to the school would not increase, as the number of students and staff would remain the same, and the addition should not substantially change the nature of activities at the school. The amount of noise should not increase because the space would be used for quiet activities, including offices, a library, a chapel, and one classroom. Furthermore, the school building is located near the middle of the site, far removed from property lines, and largely surrounded by wooded land.

V. COMMENTS OF OTHER DISTRICT AGENCIES

As of this writing the record contains no comments from other District agencies. OP received an email from DDOT indicating no objections to the application.

VI. ANC COMMENTS

As of this writing, the record does not contain a report from the ANC.

VII. COMMUNITY COMMENTS

The Queen's Chapel Civic Association submitted a letter in support at Exhibit 18.

VIII. VICINITY MAP

