

MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment
FROM: Karen Thomas, Case Manager
Joel Lawson, Associate Director Development Review
DATE: February 23, 2016
SUBJECT: BZA Case 17703A, 3825 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W. Sidwell Friends.

I. OFFICE OF PLANNING RECOMMENDATION

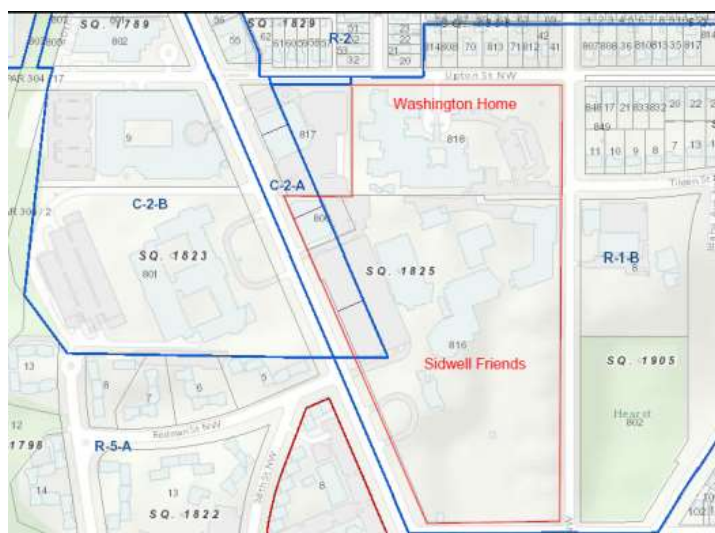
The Office of Planning (OP) **recommends approval** of Special Exception relief pursuant to §3104 under §206 to allow:

- the proposed physical expansion of the existing Sidwell Friends Campus by 5.7 acres, including the Washington Home buildings to the north for adaptive reuse as campus facilities; and
- an initial increase in the number of students and faculty/staff from its maximum approved enrollment of 850 students and 190 staff to 1,150 students and 250 staff; Subsequent increases to a maximum of 1,250 students and 260 faculty/staff would be subject to the following conditions agreed to between the applicant and the ANC 3F, as follows:
 - If after two consecutive monitoring periods, the School meets the goals of the TDM Plan, then student population may be increased by 50 students and faculty/staff to 260;
 - If after the increase to 1,200 students is effectuated, and the School demonstrates continued conformance with the requirements of the TDM Plan for two additional monitoring periods, it may increase the student enrollment to 1,250.
 - **and**

subject to the detailed conditions agreed to between the applicant and ANC 3, submitted to the record.

II. LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

Address	3825 Wisconsin Avenue, NW
Legal Description	Square 1825, Lots 816, and 818
Ward	3/ANC 3F02
Lot Characteristics	The property is comprised of two large lots of variable topography. The property is bound by Upton Street to the north, 37 th Street to the east, Quebec Street to the south and Wisconsin Avenue, to its front, on the west.
Zoning	The site is zoned C-2-A/R-1-B, which permits private school use as a special exception under § 206.
Existing Development	The subject property is located between the Cleveland Park and North Cleveland Park neighborhoods. The 17-acre school property is currently developed with 2 gymnasium buildings, middle and upper school buildings and an art center. In addition, the site also contains the administration building at the historic Zartman House, three athletic fields, eight tennis courts and a six-lane track. The area to the east or rear of the property is developed with single-family detached homes. The site is primarily zoned R-1-B with a small portion to the northwest corner zoned C-2-A per Zoning Commission Order No. 350, September 30, 1998.
Surrounding Neighborhood Character	A U.S Postal Office and offices of Fannie Mae to the northwest. The neighborhood to the east of 37 th Street and north of Upton Street is primarily single-family detached homes. Hearst Elementary School is located across 37 th Street immediately opposite the subject school campus. To the west across Wisconsin Avenue are the McLean Gardens condominiums and the headquarters of Fannie Mae.



Zoning Map



Aerial

(Reproduced from Applicant's Submission)

III. BACKGROUND

The existing Sidwell site has been developed since 1937 as the Middle and Upper Schools in the Quaker educational tradition. Since then, there have been a number of approved modifications and expansions, detailed below. It is the first secondary school in the United States to have a LEED Platinum rating and the first LEED Platinum building in the District of Columbia.

BZA Approvals (1970 – Present)	Granted	Conditions
1970 –Appeal #10460	2nd and 3rd story additions to Middle School building.	Unknown (OP has no information)
1979 – #12945	Gym, Art Center; Maintenance building and an increase in parking spaces from 110 to 145.	700 Students; 100 faculty; 30 staff; 145 parking spaces
1993 – #15769	Class room addition; increase in employee cap from 100 to 130.	Bench Decision
1996 – #16139	Addition to Upper School building to accommodate library; increase student cap from 700 to 780 and employee cap from 130 -190	Bench Decision
2004 - #17149	Increase in student cap from 780 to 800 and to 850 after 1 year for grades 5-12; Staff increase to 190; building additions, primarily including: - Renovation and expansion of the Zavitz Middle School, construction of a below-grade garage, Expansion of athletic fields, construction of a new gymnasium, construction of a new Quaker meeting house, renovation of the Kenworthy Gym for conversion to arts teaching space, partial to provide an appropriate place for worship and a gathering place for academic functions.	Two phases, TMP Plan, annual reports to ANC 3C and 3F and BZA.
2008 - # 17703	Modification of the approved plan referenced above, including; - Placement of new athletic facilities for the middle and upper school underneath an existing football field, instead of above grade as previously approved. The Kenworthy Gym would no longer be used for athletics. - Reuse of the Kenworthy Gym as the Quaker Meeting House, instead of building a new meeting house. - Provision of a daycare center for faculty and staff in the Senser Building for 16 children and 6 staff members.	Order granted March 10, 2008, with conditions.

IV. PROPOSAL

Sidwell Friends is currently located on two campuses consisting of a Lower School, currently located in Bethesda, Maryland, and a Middle/Upper School on the existing Wisconsin Avenue, DC site. Sidwell proposes to relocate the Lower School to the Wisconsin Avenue campus, on the property now occupied by the Washington Home, directly north of the existing Middle/Upper

School school site. The proposed consolidation would add an additional 5.7 acres to the existing 17 acre campus, and would also involve the following:

- Renovation of the Washington Home building – 1st and 2nd floors for classrooms and administrative office, library and cafeteria: - 3rd floor administration, seminar rooms and lecture hall for use by the Lower and Upper Schools.
- Demolition of a one-story addition to the Washington Home, to be replaced with a new gym.
- Demolition of two existing campus buildings to create space for a new campus center that would connect the Washington Home building to the existing campus. The Center is intended for a cafeteria, faculty dining, and kitchen with maintenance service spaces.
- Improved landscaping with a new central outdoor space; extension of the existing wetlands; and additional lawn space. LEED Platinum Certification would be sought for the school expansion.
- Improved circulation to accommodate new traffic patterns anticipated by staff and student increases, including drop-off and pick up by the Lower, Middle and Upper Schools.

V. ZONING REQUIREMENTS and RELIEF REQUESTED

R-1-A	Requirement	Existing	Proposed	Relief
Lot Area § 401.3	15,000 sq. ft. min.	669,753 sq. ft.	918,071	Conforms
Lot Occupancy § 403	40% max.	32%	34%	Conforms
Height § 400.1 § 400.9	40 ft. max.(res.) 90 ft. (institutional)	40 ft. (WH) 54 ft. (WH penthouse)	54 ft. Campus Center	Conforms*
Parking Spaces § 2101	253 spaces	328 spaces	353 spaces	Conforms
No. of Students § 206	Not prescribed	Middle and Upper School = 860 students Lower = 300	1,250 students	Special Exception
No. of Staff § 206	Not prescribed	190 staff	275 staff	Special Exception

The proposal conforms to the height, massing and yard requirements for the zone.

* Based on the Zoning Administrator's review, it was determined that variance relief from Section 400.9¹ was not required, since the new campus center building would meet the 1:1 setback ratio from the property lines. The tallest portion of the building at 54 feet would be removed from all property lines by more than 200 feet.

¹ 400.9 An institutional building or structure may be erected to a height not exceeding ninety feet (90 ft.); provided, that the building or structure shall be removed from all lot lines of its lot a distance of not less than one foot (1 ft.) for each foot of height in excess of that authorized in the district in which it is located.

VI. OFFICE OF PLANNING ANALYSIS

A. Special Exception Relief pursuant to § 206

- i. **206 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 school has worked with the neighborhood, including community organizations and the ANC, to address community so that the proposed additions and expansions do not become objectionable to nearby properties due to noise, traffic or student increases. The proposed changes would involve limited construction, as not all existing buildings of the Washington Home would be demolished but would be remodeled and reused. One, single-story addition to the Washington Home would be demolished and replaced with a gymnasium. A construction management plan (for the proposed renovation and one-story addition) and a comprehensive traffic review (CTR – Exhibit 6B1, 6B2), are under review by DDOT. Renovations and the projected consolidation are anticipated to be completed by September 2019.

Number of Students and Faculty/Staff

The most recent BZA Order #17703 approved a student cap of 850 students after the first year of the parking garage's operation and a faculty increase of up to 190 staff persons. The school has reported a current enrollment of 854 students with 187 faculty and staff. The Lower School (LS) at Bethesda has a current population of 295 students and 50 faculty/staff. Based on the proposed consolidation and expanded facilities, which is anticipated to accommodate up to 400 new students and 85 new faculty and staff, an increase to 1,250 students and 275 faculty/staff is requested. The ANC proposed staggering the proposed student and staff increases up to the maximum requested pending satisfaction of the goals of the applicant's TDM Plan, as follows:

- If after two consecutive monitoring periods, the School meets the goals of the TDM Plan, then student population may be increased by 50 students and faculty/staff to 260;
- If after the increase to 1,200 students is effectuated, and the School demonstrates continued conformance with the requirements of the TDM Plan for two additional monitoring periods, it may increase the student enrollment to 1,250.

Noise

The subject property does not directly abut any residential properties but is separated from the existing office uses on the square (Fannie Mae – 3974 Wisconsin Avenue) by an easement between properties. On the opposite sides of Upton Street and 37th Street from the expanded site are single family residences; the scale, site plan, and large setbacks proposed should minimize noise or potential shading impacts of the expansion and new construction. The proposed addition of a cafeteria building among other buildings on the campus should have no undue effect on the light and air to adjacent properties, or residential properties across the street.

The proposed renovations to the Washington Home buildings are expected to increase the indoor space for academic and extra-curricular activities and reduce external noise. There are no anticipated changes in the hours of the school's operation or increases in extracurricular activities that would substantially increase noise in the neighborhood beyond what currently exists.

Traffic

The traffic study and traffic management plan approved in 2004 addressed neighborhood concerns regarding the drop-off and pick-up of students, on-street student parking and the impacts on 37th Street, particularly given the presence of Hearst Elementary School directly across 37th Street from the site. These impacts continue to be mitigated with the school's below-grade parking structure now in operation and the commitment to increase transit usage by staff and students to 10%.

The most recent transportation assessment submitted with the current application (Exhibits 6B1, 6B2) considered evaluation of the following:

- The ability to accommodate the parking demand and on-site drop-off /pick up for the LS;
- The ability to accommodate traffic operations for the Lower School without interfering with the Middle and Upper Schools' traffic operations;
- Necessary improvements to accommodate traffic due to the proposed relocation.

The applicant's transportation report addressed the neighborhood concerns regarding queuing traffic on 37th Street and Upton Street due to the proposed introduction of the LS and its interaction with existing drop/off and pick-up routines of the Middle and Upper schools. A multi-faceted approach was recommended for pick-up operations, including increasing the on-site queuing capacity at selected locations of the LS and that Sidwell commit to reducing all vehicular traffic to the School by 30%. Fifty eight queuing (stacked) spaces on-site would be provided for the LS with entrance from 37th Street and exit onto Upton Street for drop-off/pick-up. Options are discussed at length in the applicant's report (Exhibit 6B2 – Page 11-16) and will be reviewed by DDOT for comments. The ANC has indicated support for this, as a condition of approval. In addition, the ANC also requested that the school monitor the effectiveness of its TDM Plan and continue to work with the neighborhood "through periodic meetings to ensure any traffic concerns by either party can be addressed in a timely manner." The ANC also requested that the school hire a MPD Officer to control traffic at the intersection of 37th and Upton Streets during the Lower School pick-up and drop-off periods. Signage changes are also being requested by the ANC for the west side of 37th Street to restrict stopping, standing or parking between 8:00 am to 4:00 pm on school days.

Class start times for the 3 schools would vary by a half-hour period and dismissal by 15 minutes, as follows:

School	Start Time (Monday-Friday)	Dismissal Time (Monday-Friday)
Lower	8:30 am	3:15 pm : 2:00 pm (Tuesdays)
Middle	8:00 am	3:30 pm : 2:00 pm (Tuesdays)
Upper	8:00 am	3:30 pm

These times inform the proposed traffic management for drop-off and pick-up, which is subsequently referenced and discussed in detail in the traffic assessment submitted for DDOT's review.

Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Plan

The following TDM measures and an operations management plan for the Lower School (in part) have been proposed for the consolidated campus:

- Provision of carpool matching assistance;
- Implementation of a shuttle bus service to Bethesda and/or Tenleytown Metro;
- Provision of transit/alternate commute incentives;

- Consideration of a Capital Bikeshare station closer to Sidwell friends for easy access by students and staff;
- Outreach and Education Strategies to promote Safe Routes to School Program, walking, and biking;
- Implementation of an Operations Management Plan for the Lower School to include:
 - Expanded pick-up duration to reduce potential overflow queuing into the public street;
 - Focused drop-off and pick-up for the LS on its campus via 37th Street and Upton Street;
 - Assignment of color coded vehicle tags to parents for specific drop-off /pick-up locations;
 - Provision of parking in the Upper School garage for parents who may want to leave their vehicles during drop-off/pick-up times.

Other Issues

Sustainable “Green Architecture” Design

The current campus met the highest standards of the U.S. Green Building Council, becoming the first school in the United States to have a LEED Platinum rating and the first LEED Platinum building in the District of Columbia. The intent is to retain that designation with the proposed renovation and addition to complement this certification. Thus, the green buffer around the campus’s edge at the corner of Upton and 37th Street would be preserved, including existing trees to reduce the campus’s visibility from public space and contain run-off from the site. Considerable green roof area would also be added where none currently exists.

Historic Preservation

The Historic Preservation Review staff expressed no concern about the landmarked Zartman House structure.

Parking

206.2 Ample parking space, but not less than that required in Chapter 21 of this title, shall be provided to accommodate the students, teachers, and visitors likely to come to the site by automobile.

“The number of teachers or employees shall be computed on the basis of the greatest number of persons to be employed at any one period during the day or night, including persons having both full-time and part-time employment.”

The existing campus currently has 307 spaces in a below-grade garage and 21spaces for stacked parking, for a total of 328 on-site parking spaces. Section 2101 requires 255 spaces to accommodate the proposed increase in the student and faculty/staff population (275 employees 1250 students and an athletic center capacity with 800 seats). The proposed expansion would provide a total of 353 on-site spaces. Therefore, the parking requirements would be satisfied.

To address management of the spaces at peak times, which coincide with drop-off/ pick-up times, the applicant has offered alternatives, in conjunction with a TDM plan. The intent would be to minimize queuing on Upton and 37th Street. DDOT comments on this will be provided in their report to the Board.

i. Is the proposal in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps?

The existing school property has operated as a school since 1931 and subsequent to 1970 has sought various BZA approvals for any changes related to the site's development and the school's enrollment. The campus buildings will continue to be upgraded and renovated to accommodate updated curricula and space needs on the campus. The proposed campus expansion should not be objectionable due to noise, traffic or other conditions, as the proposed design account for these factors in its site planning and design. The applicant has proposed actions to minimize traffic and construction impacts in collaboration with the community and DDOT. The proposed additions would not require relief from the bulk and yard requirements.

ii. Would the proposal appear to tend to affect adversely the use of neighboring property?

The proposal would not tend to affect adversely the use of neighboring property, as the existing Washington Home buildings would not be demolished and rebuilt to accommodate the school's expansion. As proposed, the minimal construction of the one-story interior building on the site and other ancillary interior renovations would be less disruptive for the neighborhood, and construction would be staged on-site. The proposed on-site parking and traffic management proposed at the morning and afternoon peak times would mitigate a reduction of the neighborhood's on-street parking supply at drop-off/pick-up times. The applicant has met extensively with the neighborhood to discuss and address concerns, and to minimize impacts through their submitted Comprehensive Traffic Assessment to the District Department of Transportation (DDOT).

VI. AGENCY COMMENTS

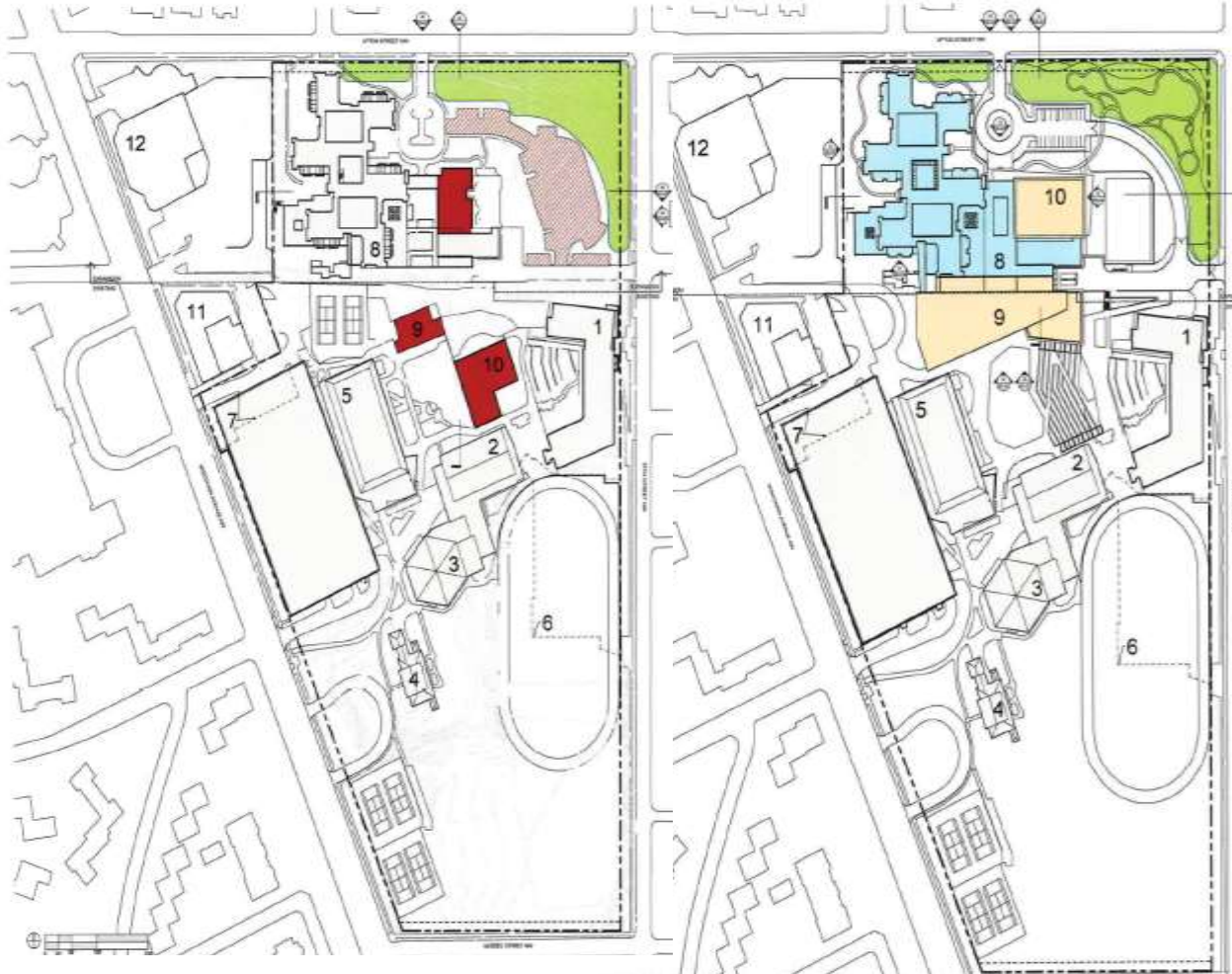
The District Department of Transportation's (DDOT) comments would be submitted separately to the record. The proposal has also been forwarded to the DOEE for review and comment???

VII. COMMUNITY COMMENTS / ANC

The applicant has undertaken extensive outreach efforts to discuss with the community the proposed changes. The school's website includes a dedicated page to updates on the proposed project and [projected timeline](#) for the completed campus expansion (September 2019). It also includes a "[Question](#)" page for neighbors, to request additional information regarding the project.

The applicant's proposal was presented to ANC 3F's regularly scheduled meeting on January 12, and February 23, 2016. The ANC's approved a recommendation of support with conditions, which is expected to be submitted separately to the record.

- LEGEND:**
- EXISTING BUILDING TO REMAIN
 - EXISTING BUILDING TO BE REMOVED
 - EXISTING DRIVE TO BE REMOVED
 - LANDSCAPE BUFFER TO REMAIN
 - PROPERTY LINE
 - SETBACK LINE
- CAMPUS BUILDINGS:**
- 1 MIDDLE SCHOOL
 - 2 QUAKER MEETING
 - 3 KOGOD ARTS CENTER
 - 4 ZARTMAN HOUSE
 - 5 UPPER SCHOOL
 - 6 ATHLETIC CENTER / TRACK
 - 7 PARKING STRUCTURE / CAMPUS SERVICE / UPPER FIELD
 - 8 THE WASHINGTON HOME
 - 9 FOX DEN
 - 10 WANNAN GYM
 - 11 3574 WISCONSIN AVE NW
 - 12 POST OFFICE



Existing Site Plan

Proposed