

**BEFORE THE BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT  
OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

Application of Southwest Public Library  
ANC 6D

**STATEMENT OF THE APPLICANT**

This is the application of the District of Columbia Public Library (the “**Applicant**”) for special exception relief from the lot occupancy, vehicular and long-term bicycle parking, and surface parking screening requirements for the construction of a new public library at 900 Wesley Place, SW (Square 542, Lot 87) (“**Property**”). The Property is approximately 22,032 square feet in size and is located in the R-3 Zone District.

**I. NATURE OF RELIEF SOUGHT**

The Applicant requests that the Board of Zoning Adjustment (the “**Board**”) approve special exception relief from the lot occupancy requirements of Section C-1603, the vehicular parking requirements of Section C-701, the long term bicycle parking requirements of Section C-802, and the screening requirements for surface parking of Section C-714.

**II. JURISDICTION OF THE BOARD**

The Board has jurisdiction to grant the special exception approval requested pursuant to Subtitle C §§ 1610, 703, 807, 714.3 and Subtitle X § 900.2 of the Zoning Regulations.

**III. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPERTY AND SURROUNDING AREA**

The Property is located in the southwest quadrant of the District in Ward 6. It is 22,032 square feet in size and located in the R-3 Zone District. It is bounded by three streets: Wesley Place, SW to the west, K Street, SW to the south and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, SW to the east. It abuts the 3<sup>rd</sup> and I Street Park to the north. The Property is improved with a public library and a surface parking

lot. The existing library will be razed and replaced with a two-story state-of-the-art library complete with multipurpose rooms, work rooms and a conference center. The proposed library will be approximately 20,792 square feet in size.

The properties surrounding the library include religious institutional uses (Christ United Methodist Church), single family residential, and multi-family residential uses. The surrounding properties are located in the R-3 Zone, RA-1, RA-3, RA-4 and MU-9 zone districts.

#### **IV. PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND RELIEF SOUGHT**

The Applicant is constructing a new library to serve the Southwest DC community. The existing library was constructed in 1961 and no longer serves the needs of the community as effectively as desired. For example, shortly after the existing library was built, the children's room was consolidated with the adult reading spaces on the first floor as a result of budgetary constraints, which resulted in suboptimal spaces for both children and adults. The District would like to improve this condition and provide distinct spaces for the children and adults. This comports with the library's mission to be a true community resource and it aligns with its receipt of a federal grant for a computer-based adult literacy program to assist adults studying for their GED, improve their job skills or refine their resumes. The District now has the opportunity to construct a new, state-of-the-art library with these spaces, allowing it to more effectively serve its community.

The proposed library will be approximately 38 feet in height and include 20,792 square feet of gross floor area. It will consist of two floors, with the first floor dedicated to children services, complete with multipurpose rooms, and the second floor dedicated to teen/adult services, complete with private study areas and collaborative work spaces. Both the children and the teen floors will include outdoor terraces for passive recreation opportunities. The library will also

include a “reading porch,” which looks out to the public open space of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and I Park to the north.

While the Applicant anticipates most patrons of the library will live in the neighborhood and walk to it, it is providing 7 parking spaces on a surface lot to the east of the building. Access to the spaces will be from K Street, just as it is today with the existing library. The spaces will be appropriately screened. The Applicant will also provide both short term and long term bicycle spaces to accommodate both workers and visitors who bike to the library.

The library will incorporate numerous sustainable design elements, including a green roof and photovoltaic panels. The building will be designed to meet the standards of LEED Gold.

## **V. COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

The Applicant has conducted extensive community outreach throughout the Project’s development. It held its first community meeting in July and has subsequently hosted two additional meetings in September and December, respectively. The Applicant has also hosted five focus groups, including one for adults, one for parents and one for seniors. The Applicant is actively seeking input from the community through meetings, online feedback, and surveys to ensure the success of the programming of the building. The Applicant presented this application to the ANC at its public meeting on November 13, 2017.

## **VI. THE APPLICATION SATISFIES THE CRITERIA FOR SPECIAL EXCEPTION RELIEF FROM LOT OCCUPANCY, PARKING AND SCREENING REQUIREMENTS**

### *A. Lot Occupancy*

Section C-1603.2 provides that the minimum lot occupancy for a public library shall not exceed 40%. The proposed library will occupy approximately 47% of the lot area, thus exceeding the mandated minimum. The Board is authorized to grant exceptions to this development standard

pursuant to section C-1610.2 so long as the relief is (1) in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps; and (2) will not tend to affect adversely the use of neighboring property in accordance with the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps. The requested relief from the lot occupancy requirements satisfies this standard.

1. The requested relief is in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps

The library will have a lot occupancy of 47.2%, which exceeds the maximum permitted lot occupancy by approximately 7.2%. The library has frontage on three streets. Urban planning typically encourages designing buildings to street fronting lot lines; however, to do so in this instance would result in either a long, narrow building that complies with lot occupancy requirements but does not have a functional floor plan, or requires relief from the lot occupancy requirements. In this instance, the Applicant tried to reconcile the desire to build to the street front lot lines within the lot occupancy requirements, by providing setbacks around the perimeter of the building. The building is set back from the northern and western lot lines approximately 16 feet, from the southern lot line approximately 13 feet and from the eastern lot line nearly 48 feet. As such, the building is set back significantly from neighboring properties and provides much of the desired open space along the public spaces, enhancing the pedestrian experience. The height of the building, as compared to the height of other buildings in the proximity of the Property, further minimizes its appearance and its impact. Finally, the park area to the north makes up the balance of the land in the Square, further mitigating any impacts from the reduced open space on the Property.

2. The requested relief will not affect adversely the use of neighboring property in accordance with the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps

The increase in lot occupancy will neither infringe upon the privacy of neighboring lots nor affect their light and air. The library has frontage on three streets and a public park; as such, it is removed from the neighboring properties by a significant distance. With a height of only 38 feet and a minimum distance of 76 feet from the closest neighbor (west of Wesley Place), the library will not impact the privacy, light or air of that property or any of its other neighbors. As noted above, the library is set back from all four of its lot lines, which further mitigates any impact of the increase in lot occupancy by increasing the distance between the building and its neighbors.

#### *B. Vehicular Parking*

Section C-701.5 requires .5 parking spaces for every 1,000 square feet in excess of 2,000 square feet for all new local government buildings. Section 703.2 gives the Board the authority to grant a full or partial reduction in number of required parking spaces so long as the relief is (1) in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps; and (2) will not tend to affect adversely the use of neighboring property in accordance with the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps and the Applicant can demonstrate that the property is well served by mass transit, shared vehicle or bicycle facilities.

1. The requested relief is in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps

The library will provide 7 of the 9 required parking spaces.<sup>1</sup> The library will be approximately 20,792 square feet in size and will provide surface parking. In light of the limited size of the building program, it is not economically feasible to provide below grade parking. Accordingly, in order to provide the full amount of required parking, the Applicant would have to provide an additional aisle of parking spaces. Doing so would reduce the length of the building by an additional thirty feet, effectively reducing the size of the library by approximately 20%. Such a reduction would undercut the programming of the building as it would reduce significantly the spaces allocated to children and teen services. The proposed site plan balances the programming needs of the library against the parking requirements: the proposed amount of parking is sufficient to meet the library's needs while also retaining a sufficient amount of area for the library building itself.

2. The requested relief will not tend to affect adversely the use of neighboring property in accordance with the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps

Given the community nature of the use, the Applicant anticipates that most patrons of the library will walk to the site from the surrounding neighborhood. It does not anticipate that there will be a need for more than 7 spaces at any one time. It will also encourage its staff to use

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<sup>1</sup> The Property is located within ½ mile of the Waterfront-SEU Metrorail station; however, because it is located in a residential zone, it cannot take advantage in the reduced parking requirement afforded by Section C-702.1.

alternative modes of transportation, such as Metro or bicycles, to further minimize the need for on-site parking.

3. The Property is well served by mass transit, shared vehicle or bicycle facilities

The Property is less than a quarter mile from the Waterfront-SEU Metro station and in close proximity to the Benning Heights/M Street and Anacostia/Eckington bus lines. Additionally, there is a ZipCar lot located on K Street and two additional ZipCar lots located within 3 blocks of the Property. The proximity of the Property to mass transit and shared vehicles will minimize the parking demand of this site, ensuring that 7 spaces will be more than enough to satisfy the parking demand for the Property.

*C. Long Term Bicycle Parking*

Section 802.1 requires 1 long term bicycle space for every 7,500 square feet of local government use. The library requires three long term bicycle spaces but will only provide two spaces. Section 807.2 allows the Board to grant a partial reduction in the minimum number of long term bicycle parking spaces so long as the relief is in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps, the requested relief will not tend to affect adversely the use of neighboring property in accordance with the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps, and due to the physical constraints of the property, the required spaces cannot be provided.

1. The requested relief is in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps

Long term spaces are required to be provided within the library building; however, the Applicant can only provide two of the three spaces within the building. Given the programmatic

demands of the library and its limited size, there simply is not room to provide the third space within the library, without eliminating much needed program space. Rather than compromising the programmatic needs of the library, the Applicant will instead provide two long term bicycle spaces, along with all of the required short-term spaces, as required and seeks relief from provision of the third long-term space.

2. The requested relief will not tend to affect adversely the use of neighboring property in accordance with the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps

The requested relief will not adversely affect neighboring property. The project will provide sufficient long term and short term bicycle parking, giving its employees and patrons multiple options for bike parking. The requested reduction of one space will not create a spillover effect onto neighboring properties. To the extent three long-term spaces may be needed, the Applicant can rely on its short term spaces to make up for the reduction.

3. The constraints of the building preclude provision of the required bicycle parking spaces

As noted above, the final required parking space cannot be located within the building due to the need for space dedicated to library community space. The additional space would have a corresponding reduction in the size of the community space of approximately 12 square feet, which would compromise the layout of the first floor plan and affect the programming of the building. Instead, the Applicant will provide two of the required long-term bicycle spaces and all of the required short term spaces.



#### *D. Screening of Surface Spaces*

Section C-714.1 requires that screening be provided for all external surface parking spaces in the form of a 42 inch high wall or fence or with evergreen hedges or trees. The screening is required around the perimeter of the spaces, except where a driveway is provided. Section 714.3 allows the Board to grant a waiver of these requirements so long as the relief is in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Map, and the relief will not affect adversely the use of neighboring property in accordance with the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps, including the pedestrian environment within adjacent streets, sidewalks and other public areas. The Board may consider existing vegetation, buildings or protective and screening walls located on adjacent property, as well as existing topographic and traffic conditions in granting such a waiver.

1. The requested relief is in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps

The Applicant is providing the required screening in the adjacent public space. The screening will consist of an evergreen landscape buffer that is 42 inches in height that will be provided around the perimeter of the parking areas but will not be located within the property line, but immediately adjacent to the spaces, in public space. The proposal includes plantings with a depth of 16 feet along K Street (three feet in public space) and 10 feet of plantings along 3<sup>rd</sup> Street. Plantings with a depth of five feet are located on-site to the north of the surface spaces, providing a buffer between the parking and the adjacent park. The screening will provide the same aesthetic protections as anticipated by the Zoning Regulations, albeit in public space.

2. The requested relief will not tend to affect adversely the use of neighboring property in accordance with the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps

The project will ultimately include the required screening, yet, it will be provided in public space rather than the same lot as the library. Nevertheless, this modification will not have an adverse impact on neighboring properties. Rather, the screening will help beautify the streetscape and enhance the pedestrian experience, all while mitigating the aesthetic of the surface parking spaces.

The screening will not reduce the width of the sidewalks, as planting strips were anticipated in these spaces. The sidewalks will maintain a minimum width of six feet, which meets DDOT's standards. A waiver from the screening requirements is appropriate given that the required screening will be provided on abutting property.

## **VII. LIST OF PUBLICLY AVAILABLE DOCUMENTS**

1. Zoning Regulations and Zoning Map of the District of Columbia, available at [dcoz.dc.gov](http://dcoz.dc.gov).
2. Orders of the District of Columbia Zoning Commission and Board of Zoning Adjustment, available at [dcoz.dc.gov](http://dcoz.dc.gov).

## VII. CONCLUSION

For all of the above reasons, the Applicant is entitled to the requested special exception relief in this case.

Respectfully submitted,  
GOULSTON & STORRS, PC

\_\_\_\_\_/s/\_\_\_\_\_  
Allison Prince

\_\_\_\_\_/s/\_\_\_\_\_  
Christine Roddy

January 5, 2018