



DONOHUE & STEARNS, PLC

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Via IZIS

Board of Zoning Adjustment for the
District of Columbia
441 4th Street, N.W., Suite 200S
Washington, D.C. 20001

Re: BZA Case No. 20083 – Application of Studio Acting Conservatory
3423 Holmead Place, N.W. (Square 2834, Lot 163)

Dear Members of the Board:

On behalf of the Studio Acting Conservatory ("Applicant" or Conservatory"), please accept this letter as a supplemental statement in support of the above-referenced application for special exception relief to allow a private acting school in the former church building at 3423 Holmead Place, N.W. (Square 2834, Lot 163) ("Property") in the RF-1 District. This application is filed pursuant to 11-U DCMR §§ 320.1(a) and 203.1(l). The submission includes revised architectural drawings which include dimensions, as requested by the Office of Planning ("OP"), attached as Exhibit A.

1. Background

As described in its preliminary statement of compliance with the burden of proof, Studio Acting Conservatory is a private school devoted to training students in the theatrical arts. Unlike the majority of private schools reviewed by the Board of Zoning Adjustment, the Conservatory does not provide primary or secondary educational classes intended to meet state and federal academic standards. Rather, it focuses solely on theater classes. The Conservatory was founded 44 years ago as the Studio Theatre Acting Conservatory and held classes in the theater building at 1501 14th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. Earlier this year, Studio Theatre determined to close its acting program and the independent Studio Acting Conservatory was formed shortly thereafter. The Conservatory will move to temporary space for the coming fall classes while it secures zoning approval to relocate permanently at the Property.

Geared to adults and young actors alike, classes include core acting, techniques (voice, movement, speech dialect), directing, classic and modern master works of the theater, and other acting-related training. Conservatory programs are offered as individual classes or workshops, or as part of a three-year curriculum.

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VA 22314

The school will have a maximum attendance of approximately 52 students and teachers on site at any given time. Most classes are held in the evenings or on the weekends during the school year. In the summer, the school provides six-weeks of full-day sessions, but those sessions end at 3pm each day, well before the rush hour begins. There are no more than four classes scheduled at one time, with a total maximum of up to 48 students and four instructors (for four classes) per session. Each semester culminates in “Final Scenes,” a public showing of the student work for each class. Final Scenes take place in the evening for a period of one week (Monday through Sunday). Regularly scheduled classes do not take place during this time period. Between 20 and 50 people attend each night of Final Scenes.

The majority of classes offered will be for adults, ages 18 and older. The “young actors” class is open to students ages 13-17, but is limited to no more than 12 students. The young actors class takes place on Saturdays from 10am – 1pm in the fall and spring seasons. The youth summer program runs Monday-Friday from 9am-3pm for a total of six weeks, but is also limited to 12 students.

2. Community Outreach

The Conservatory has had multiple discussions and meetings with Advisory Neighborhood Commission 1A and its representatives. On June 18, the Conservatory presented the application to the ANC 1A’s Zoning, Parks, and Planning Committee, which was generally receptive to the proposed private school use. In response to the committee’s request, the Conservatory organized a community open house on July 2, 2019. Flyers were distributed to neighbors providing information about the application and the open house. Only ANC members attended the open house. The Conservatory has provided the ANC a copy of the transportation study prepared by Gorove/Slade Associates submitted to the District’s Department of Transportation (“DDOT”) 45 days in advance of the hearing. Finally, at the request of the ANC, the Conservatory agreed to a condition of approval that would ensure that the number of faculty/staff and students would be limited so as not to generate any additional parking beyond the five spaces provided. The ANC will vote on the Conservatory’s BZA application at its full meeting on July 10, 2019.

The Conservatory has significant support in the community. Letters of support from Councilmember At-Large David Grosso, the GALA Hispanic Theatre, the Dance Institute of Washington, Horning Brothers, and District Bridges are included with this submission, attached as Exhibit B.

3. Proposed Condition and TDM Measures

In response to the ANC 1A’s request for a condition restricting the number of persons as it relates to the parking requirement, the Applicant proposes the following language be included with the approval order should the Board grant the application:

The Applicant shall not increase the numbers of faculty, staff and students unless the applicant meets the minimum parking zoning requirement under Subtitle C.

Additionally, the Applicant prepared a transportation statement in coordination with DDOT. It is anticipated that there will not be adverse transportation impacts generated by the proposed use. The transportation statement, filed in the BZA record as Exhibit 32, concludes that the proposed use “meets ZR16 regulations and DDOT’s preferred parking rate for sites 0.25 to 0.5 miles from a Metrorail Station.” Additionally, the transportation statement makes further conclusions, as follows:

- The site’s location and proximity to Metrorail and Metrobus makes public transit a preferable option for instructors and students.
- The site’s proposed trip generation will not trigger DDOT’s 25-vehicle in the peak direction criteria for a vehicular analysis.
- The proposed project includes bicycle accommodations that will meet ZR16 requirements for short-term and long-term parking.
- Long-term bicycle parking will be available in the rear of the building and short-term bicycle parking will be placed curbside along Holmead Place.
- The proposed Pick-up/Drop-off Plan will separate vehicles from pedestrians and bicycles and ensure that vehicles will not idle on the neighborhood streets.
- The proposed Transportation Management Plan adequately promotes non-auto modes of travel for instructors and students that are consistent with the specific needs of the site and updated District standards and goals.

See Transportation Statement at 2, 18.

In order to further minimize potential impacts of the project to the surrounding neighborhood, the Applicant will implement the following TDM measures:

- Identify Transportation Coordinators for the planning, construction, and operations phases of development. The Transportation Coordinators will act as points of contact with DDOT, goDCgo, and Zoning Enforcement. There will be a Transportation Coordinator for the entire site. The Transportation Coordinators will act as points of contact with DDOT, goDCgo, and Zoning Enforcement.
- Will provide Transportation Coordinators’ contact information to goDCgo, and report TDM activities to goDCgo once per year.
- Transportation Coordinators will develop, distribute, and market various transportation alternatives and options to employees and students, including promoting transportation events (i.e., Bike to Work Day, National Walking Day, Car Free Day) in any internal building newsletters or communications.
- Transportation Coordinators will receive TDM training from goDCgo to learn about the TDM conditions for this project and available options for implementing the TDM Plan.
- Will meet or exceed ZR16 short- and long-term bicycle parking requirements. Long-term bicycle parking will be provided free of charge to all employees. The development will provide two (2) long-term spaces in the rear of the building and three (3) short-term spaces on the Holmead Place frontage.
- Provide comprehensive transportation information and directions on the school website in a “getting here” section in a visible and prominent location with a focus on non-

automotive travel modes. Links will be provided to goDCgo.com, CommuterConnections.com, Capital Bikeshare, DC Circulator, and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA). Instructions will be provided for students discouraging parking on-street in Residential Permit Parking (RPP) zones.

- Provide brochures with information on non-automotive options for traveling to the school available at all times in a visible location in the building.

See Transportation Statement at 17-18.

4. Satisfaction of Private School Plan Requirements

This application satisfies the requirements of Subtitle X, Sections 104-106 pertaining to a private school plan as shown in Exhibit C, attached hereto.

5. Expert Witnesses

In addition to the witnesses identified in the application, a representative from Gorove/Slade, the Applicant's transportation consultant, will present expert testimony in support of the application. An outline of witness testimony and expert witness resumes are attached as Exhibit D.

6. Conclusion

For the reasons set forth in the Applicant's initial statement of compliance with the burden proof, as supplemented above, this application satisfies the special exception requirements to operate a private school on the site.

Respectfully submitted,

DONOHUE & STEARNS, PLC

By: 

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Enclosures

cc: Brandice Elliott, Office of Planning (via email)

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I HEREBY CERTIFY that a copy of the foregoing document was served by email this


10th day of July, 2019, on the following:

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By: 
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