

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment

**FROM:** Brandice Elliott, Case Manager

*JL* Joel Lawson, Associate Director Development Review

**DATE:** July 19, 2019

**SUBJECT:** BZA Case 20083 (3423 Holmead Place, N.W.) to permit a private school use in an existing building in the RF-1 zone.

**I. OFFICE OF PLANNING RECOMMENDATION**

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

- Private Schools in Residential Zones, Subtitle U §§ 320.1(a) and 203.1(l), pursuant to Subtitle X § 900 (residential uses permitted; institutional use existing; private school proposed).
- Private School Plan, Subtitle X § 104, pursuant to Subtitle X § 900

The OP report and recommendation is based on the information provided by the applicant pertaining to limitations on the operation of this proposed use which would lessen or mitigate potential undue impacts, including:

- The number of faculty/staff and students on site would not exceed 52 at any given time.
- No more than four classes would be scheduled at one time.
- Most classes would be held in the evenings or on the weekends during the school year.
- Summer classes would consist of six weeks of full-day sessions that would end at 3:00 pm each day.

**II. LOCATION AND SITE DESCRIPTION**

Address	3423 Holmead Place, N.W.
Applicant	Donohue & Stearns, PLC for Studio Acting Conservatory
Legal Description	Square 2834, Lot 0163
Ward, ANC	Ward 1, ANC 1A
Zone	The <b>RF-1</b> zone provides for areas predominantly developed with row houses on small lots within which no more than two dwelling units are permitted. Private school uses are permitted by special exception.
Historic District	None.

Lot Characteristics	The rectangular lot has 6,350 square feet of area and 50 feet of frontage along Holmead Place. The rear of the lot, also 50 feet wide, abuts a 16-foot wide public alley.
Existing Development	The lot is currently developed with a three story, semi-detached building that was purpose-built as a church.
Adjacent Properties	To the north are existing three story multi-family buildings and a five-story apartment house known as Holmead Apartments consisting of 101 units. To the south, are existing three-story row dwellings. To the east, across Holmead Place, are existing two and three-story row dwellings. To the west, across the public alley, are existing three and five story multi-family buildings.
Surrounding Neighborhood Character	The surrounding neighborhood character is predominantly moderate family residential, consisting of row dwellings and apartment houses.
Proposed Development	The applicant proposes to locate a private school, serving up to 52 students and faculty/staff in a Studio Acting Conservatory, in a purpose-built institutional building. Five parking spaces to be used by faculty/staff would be provided at the rear of the lot and accessed by the public alley. A minimum of three short-term bicycle parking spaces would be provided. There would be no associated outdoor space, and no expansions or improvements are proposed to the exterior of the building.

### III. ZONING REQUIREMENTS and RELIEF REQUESTED

Zone – RF-1	Regulation	Existing	Proposed	Relief
Height § 303	35 ft. max. and 3 stories	33.83 ft. and 3 stories	No change	None required
Lot Width § 201	40 ft.	50 ft.	No change	None required
Lot Area § 201	4,000 sq.ft. min.	6,350 sq.ft.	No change	None required
Court § 203	2.5 in. per 1 ft., but not less than 6 ft.; 8.3 ft. for proposed building	NW corner: 1.8 ft.	No change	None required
Lot Occupancy § 304	Greater of 60% max. or the lot occupancy as of the date of conversion	48%	No change	None required
Rear Yard § 306	20 ft. min.	27 ft.	No change	None required
Front Setback § 305	Within range of existing front setbacks of all structures on the same side of the street in the block	25 ft.	No change	None required
Side Yard § 304	8 ft. min., if provided	8.08 ft.	0 ft.	None required

Zone – RF-1	Regulation	Existing	Proposed	Relief
Parking § 701	2 spaces for each 3 teachers and other employees, plus 1 space for each 20 classroom seats = 5 spaces	5 spaces	5 spaces	None required
Bicycle Parking § 801	Long Term: 1 space for each 7,500 sq. ft., 2 spaces min.	Not provided	2 spaces	None required
	Short Term: 1 space for each 2,000 sq. ft., 2 spaces min. = 3 spaces	Not provided	3 spaces	None required
Private School Use U §§ 320.1(a) and 203.1(l)	Permitted by Special Exception	Institutional use	Private school	<b>Required</b>

**IV. OFFICE OF PLANNING ANALYSIS**

**a. Special Exception Relief from Subtitle U §§ 320.1(a) and 203.1(l), Private Schools in Residential Zones**

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

(l) *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 proposed use would function predominantly during off-peak times, would accommodate a maximum of 48 students and 4 staff on-site at one time, would provide a drop-off and pick-up plan, and would be well-served by public transit. The proposal does not include a large performance space. The property is located in the vibrant Columbia Heights neighborhood in a predominantly residential area, although it is approximately one block east of a mixed-use corridor on 14<sup>th</sup> Street.

The applicant has provided a drop-off and pick-up plan (Exhibit 32), which consists of the following elements:

1. Maintain the existing two spaces curbside along Holmead Place that were previously restricted parking on Sunday mornings for church services. It is recommended to designate these spaces as the curbside loading zone and restrict parking during the hours and days of the proposed school.
2. Vehicles parking at the site has access from the public alley in the rear. This will minimize vehicular-pedestrian conflicts, as no curb cuts are proposed along the site frontage.

3. Create visible signage which notifies bicyclists of on-site facilities, including the long-term bicycle spaces in the rear of the building and short-term spaces along Holmead Place. The short-term spaces will be positioned along the site frontage in a way that does not block the pick-up/drop-off area.
4. Ensure that the site frontage along Holmead Place is well-lit to enhance safety for pedestrians and bicyclists.

In addition to the drop-off and pick-up plan, the site is well-served by public transportation, as it is located 0.3 miles from the Columbia Heights Metrorail Station. The site also consists of sufficient on-site parking for faculty/staff and is served by several bus lines.

- (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 existing development provides five parking spaces at the rear of the property, accessible from the public alley, which complies with the minimum parking requirements for the proposed private school. Two long term bicycle parking spaces would be provided at the rear of the site and three short term bicycle parking spaces would be provided at the front of the site, along Holmead Place.

In addition to on-site parking, the site is located 0.3 miles from the Columbia Heights Metrorail Station, and is accessible by several bus lines. The nearest bikeshare station is approximately two blocks away at Newton Street and 14<sup>th</sup> Street.

In combination, the parking spaces, bicycle parking spaces, and accessibility to public transit should reduce parking demand on the site, resulting in less impact on the surrounding neighborhood. The ANC has requested a condition requiring that the applicant not increase the numbers of faculty/staff and students unless the minimum parking requirement can be met.

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

The Office of Planning does not recommend additional parking beyond what is required for the use.

**b. Special Exception Relief pursuant to Subtitle X § 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.*

As provided in the analysis above, for relief requested from Subtitle U §§ 320.1(a) and 203.1(l), the private school as proposed, including the limitations on the use proposed by the applicant, should not become objectionable to adjoining and nearby property due to noise, traffic, number of students, or other conditions.

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

The private school would be located on a property that is currently developed with an institutional use. Although aspects of the existing development are nonconforming to current regulations, the proposal does not include any additions or exterior modifications.

*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.*

Given that the private school would be located on a property developed with an institutional use, the density has been established; however, additions or other exterior modifications are not proposed to accommodate the private school.

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

The proposed private school would be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps. It would allow for the use of a currently vacant building as an educational institution that would be complimentary to the surrounding residential neighborhood and less intense than the previous use. The property is located one block east of 14<sup>th</sup> Street, which includes of other cultural uses, such as the GALA Hispanic Theatre and the Dance Institute of Washington. The applicant has addressed neighborhood concerns by agreeing to an ANC condition to not expand the number of faculty/staff and students without ensuring compliance with the parking requirements.

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

The proposed private school should not adversely affect the use of neighboring property. The school would not have an outdoor area, as all classes would occur within the five classrooms within the existing building. The number of students and faculty/staff would be limited so that no more than 52 people would be on site at any given time, which is less intense than the previous church use. In addition, the exterior of the building would not be modified to accommodate the use.

The proposed private school would provide parking spaces and bicycle parking spaces compliant with the Regulations. The applicant has agreed to ensure that parking complies with development standards and to not increase the number of faculty/staff and students unless additional parking can be provided. The drop-off and pick-up plan should also mitigate any concerns related to additional traffic generated by the use. Further, the site is accessible via Metrorail, bus service and bikeshare, which should also reduce vehicle trips to the site.

## **V. COMMENTS OF OTHER DISTRICT AGENCIES**

As of the date of this writing, comments from other District Agencies had not been provided to the record.

## **VI. COMMUNITY COMMENTS TO DATE**

At its regularly scheduled meeting on July 10, 2019, ANC 1A voted to recommend approval of the requested relief with conditions (Exhibit 38).

### Location Map

