



MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment

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

DATE: October 11, 2019

SUBJECT: BZA #20134 – 7100 Georgia Avenue, NW – Walter Reed – Request for special exception relief for the length of retail frontage

I. RECOMMENDATION

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

- K § 902.7(e) Retail Frontage on Elder Street, pursuant to K § 921 (50' of consecutive frontage permitted, 92'9" proposed).

OP's recommendation is based on the following conditions, which would help to ensure the commercial frontage in question achieves an active and interesting streetscape and eliminate blank walls, in conformance with the intent and purposes of the WR-2 zone, as referenced by the special exception criteria of K § 921.

- Any tenant occupying the leasable space shown as "0102 Retail Tenant" in the floor plan in Attachment 1, or occupying any portion of that space that fronts on Elder Street, shall provide windows on Elder Street that provide visual access into the leasable space, as described in this condition. Transom windows located 8' or more above the adjacent grade shall not be subject to the limitations of this condition.
 - If the use is an eating or drinking establishment use, the windows shall provide open views into either the seating or bar areas, or into an active kitchen food preparation area. However, tenant signs or displays applied to the window and digital displays mounted immediately behind a window may cumulatively occupy up to 25% of the total horizontal width of any individual window.
 - If the use is a retail or service use, the windows shall provide open views into publicly accessible areas of the retail or service use, such as a shopping aisle. Display cases or other furnishings shall not block the windows; However, tenant signs or displays applied to the window and digital displays mounted immediately behind a window may cumulatively occupy up to 25% of the total horizontal width of any individual window. Any shelves shall be placed no closer than six feet to the windows, or, if projecting show windows are present, six feet from the exterior plane of the main façade.
- An office use shall not be permitted in the leasable space shown as "0102 Retail Tenant" in the floor plan in Attachment 1.

OP has discussed these conditions with the applicant and they generally approve of the concept but are continuing their review of the exact language.

II. LOCATION AND SITE DESCRIPTION

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| Applicant | TPWR Developer, Inc. |
| Address | 7100 Georgia Avenue |
| Legal Description | Square 2950, Lot 846 |
| Ward / ANC | 4A |
| Zone | WR-2 (Walter Reed medium density mixed use) |
| Historic District or Resource | Walter Reed Historic District |
| Adjacent Properties and Neighborhood Character | <p>The portion of the former Walter Reed hospital site that was conveyed to the District is intended to become a mixed-use area, re-integrated with the surrounding neighborhood. It is intended to have active, walkable streets. The subject site is in the interior of the Walter Reed development.</p> <p>The neighborhood around Walter Reed is largely single-family homes, with apartments and commercial uses along Georgia Avenue NW.</p> |
| Lot Characteristics | The building site in question is a vacant rectangular property that fronts on 12 th Street to the east, Dahlia Street to the south and Elder Street to the north. The applicant would construct an alley to the west. The grade slopes slightly up from south to north. |
| Proposed Development | The applicant proposes a seven-story mixed use building with retail on the ground floor. The intent is that this building would be part of the town center for Walter Reed, along with buildings across 12 th Street, and that 12 th Street would be the main retail street for the development, with other retail on side streets. |
| Zoning Proposal | Provide a single non-residential frontage on Dahlia Street longer than permitted. See the floor plan in Attachment 1. |

III. ZONING REQUIREMENT AND REQUESTED RELIEF

The subject site is located in the WR-2 zone, which provides design criteria for retail on the ground floor of buildings, including the length of frontage that any non-residential use can occupy:

K § 902.7 In the WR-2 zone, all portions of the ground floor devoted to non-residential uses shall be subject to the following requirements:

[...]

- (e) *On 12th Street, no single non-residential occupancy shall occupy more than one hundred (100) consecutive linear feet of ground-floor building frontage. On other streets, no single non-residential occupancy shall occupy more than fifty (50) consecutive linear feet of ground-floor building frontage; [...]*

The applicant requests a single retail space frontage on Elder Street of 92’9”, relief that can be granted by the Board as a special exception, pursuant to K § 921:

K § 921 SPECIAL EXCEPTION RELIEF (WR)

921.1 Except for Subtitle K §§ 903.10 through 903.14 and 903.18 or as provided elsewhere in this chapter, relief from any section of this chapter may be heard and decided by the Board of Zoning Adjustment as a special exception. In addition to the general special exception criteria of Subtitle X, Chapter 9, the Board of Zoning Adjustment must find that the request for relief is consistent with the purposes of the WR zone.

IV. ANALYSIS

Below is OP’s analysis of the relevant purposes of the Walter Reed zone, as called for by § 921.1.

K § 900 GENERAL PROVISIONS AND PURPOSE AND INTENT

K § 900.1 The purposes of the Walter Reed (WR) zones (WR-1 through WR-8) are to:

[...]

- (d) *Create a vibrant town center that will provide economic development, employment, and retail opportunities for the District and adjacent neighborhoods;*

[...]

The subject retail space is part of a larger town center area. Buildings across 12th Street would have a number of retailers, and the subject building would, in addition to some smaller retailers, have an anchor grocery store at its southern end. The retail space in question would be at the northern end of the building, and is described as a “sub-anchor” (Exhibit 6, p. 4), though OP is not aware that a specific lessee has yet been signed. Having a grocery store anchor and a sub-anchor would help create foot traffic that should add to the success of the town center. And it is logical that a sub-anchor would have a floor plate larger than a typical in-line retailer and might require a longer street frontage than would otherwise be typical.

K § 902 WR-2 ZONE

K § 902.1 The WR-2 zone is intended to:

(a) Create a vibrant and pedestrian-oriented commercial and residential center to serve as a housing, commercial, and retail anchor for the Walter Reed campus, adjacent neighborhoods, and the District.

(b) Promote an engaging streetscape to activate adjacent uses and users;

[...]

While the proposed sub-anchor retailer would help bring foot traffic to the town center, it is still a purpose of the WR-2 zone to maximize the engaging nature of the streetscape and minimize blank walls facing sidewalks. To that end, OP proposes two conditions of approval; One, that the windows into the space provide actual visual access into a public portion of the future use to better activate the adjacent public sidewalk; And two, that the space shall not be leased to an office use.

V. HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The design of the subject buildings has been reviewed by the Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB), most recently on October 3, 2019. The HPRB delegated final approval to staff, with certain provisions regarding the design of the building, none of which would impact the length of the non-residential frontage.

VI. COMMENTS OF OTHER DISTRICT AGENCIES

As of this writing the record contains no comments from other District agencies.

VII. COMMUNITY COMMENTS

As of this writing the record contains no comments from the community or the ANC.

VIII. ATTACHMENTS

1. Floor Plan of the Leasable Area in Question

Attachment 1 Floor Plan of the Leasable Area in Question

