



GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Dupont Circle Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2B

January 13, 2025

Mr. Frederick Hill
Chairperson
Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street NW, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20001
bzasubmissions@dc.gov

RE: The Department of General Services Proposal to Acquire The Aston

Dear Chairman Hill,

At its regular meeting on January 8, 2025, the Dupont Circle Advisory Neighborhood Commission (“ANC 2B” or “Commission”) considered the above-referenced matter. With 8 of 9 Commissioners in attendance, a quorum at a duly-noticed public meeting, the Commission approved the following resolution by a vote of (8-0-0):

WHEREAS, the District of Columbia’s Department of General Services (DGS) and Department of Human Services (DHS) have applied for and were granted Permit No. B2401624 (“Permit”) to operate a non-congregate bridge housing shelter at 1129 New Hampshire Avenue NW, also known as “the Aston”; and

WHEREAS, the West End DC Community Association (“WEDCCA”) has filed an appeal of Building Permit No. B2401624 (“Permit”) in regards to the Zoning Administrator’s (“ZA”) decision to issue the Permit, to be considered on Wednesday, January 29, 2025; and

WHEREAS, the District of Columbia, acting through its Department of General Services (DGS) and Department of Human Services (DHS) (collectively, the “District”), as the owner and operator of the property located at 1129 New Hampshire Ave. NW (the “Aston”), opposes the appeal; and

WHEREAS, the Aston was previously used as student housing by its previous owner, George Washington University (GWU). The District purchased the Aston in 2023 with the intention of using the property for non-congregate bridge housing; and

WHEREAS, “Bridge housing” is defined as temporary apartment-style units for clients transitioning into more permanent housing. Each resident will have access to and control of a private unit, including a kitchen and bathroom and the ability to lock their respective units. Clients will remain at the Aston for at least one month with the average projected stay lasting three to five months; and

WHEREAS, the District intends to operate the Aston for up to 190 individuals, primarily consisting of couples, mix-gendered adult families, and clients in need of medical services, or those who cannot be served by current shelter facilities in the District; and

WHEREAS, as part of the Aston’s redevelopment, DGS filed an application for the Permit in November 2023 that was reviewed during the summer of 2024 and that the Department Of Buildings issued on August 7, 2024. The District indicated that the “Existing Use(s) of Building” and the “Proposed Use(s) of the Building” would remain the same: “Apartment Houses”; and

WHEREAS, the boundaries of ANC 2B extend to within one block of The Aston, and residents and businesses in ANC 2B are within 500 feet of the Aston; and

WHEREAS, ANC 2B recognizes that individual homelessness remains high in the District of Columbia and is in support of an expansion of facilities to help those seeking stable and permanent housing; and

WHEREAS, ANC 2B, after hearing comments from the community, including those that supported and opposed the Aston, voted 7-0-1 to support the Aston proposal at its regular meeting on July 12, 2023; and

WHEREAS, Subsequently, the District, at the request of ANC 2A, formed a Community Advisory Team (CAT), which is made up of representatives from ANC 2A, the Foggy Bottom Association, the West End Citizens Association, Ward 2 Councilmember Brooke Pinto, DGS, DHS, and homeless services stakeholders; and

WHEREAS, the CAT has constructively engaged with members of the community to provide feedback over an extended period on issues such as:

- community members’ quality of life during any building repurposing, construction, and during the first two years of operation of the Aston;
- development of Good Neighbor Agreements, and
- means to address any concerns from neighbors about safety and security.

WHEREAS, WEDCCA filed an appeal against the Permit issued based on the following claims:

- Irreparable harm due to economic loss

- That the District's application to DOB was done in error
- That the Property is subject to a Planned Unit Development (PUD); and

WHEREAS, ANC 2B wishes to identify the following facts for consideration in this matter:

1. Each floor contains 6 efficient apartments, each with a bathroom, 2 storage closets, a kitchen with sink, refrigerator, microwave, counter and a stove (which is shut off for safety reasons). There are 2 beds and chairs in each unit. Each floor also has a common area with a similar kitchen, TV and windows overlooking New Hampshire Avenue. Residents may use the common area on the floor they live on, but are limited in their ability to travel to other residential floors.
2. There is no medical facility in the Aston.
3. The current layout of the building appears to be precisely what one would expect from a college or graduate student dormitory, with the exception of the shutdown of the stoves and the limitation on movement between floors, which is intended to promote safety and security for residents.
4. The proposed plan of the Aston to have residents stay from 2 to about 5 months as they transition to permanent housing is similar in extent and duration to a dormitory where students can stay a semester or two, which would last roughly 3 to 6 months.
5. A proposal from a developer to convert an office building at 2100 M Street NW to about 400 high-quality residential apartments has been recently announced. The back of this project overlooks the Aston, with a direct view of the Aston's backyard and back units. The rents for this building are expected to be high and consistent with the rents being charged by other newer apartment buildings in the West End. This proposal demonstrates that the Aston has not reduced the attractiveness of the West End for high end residential development and, when completed, will add to the vitality of the area.
6. Many residents of ANC 2B continue to express strong support for the Aston and have urged the District government to use it to help reduce homeless encampments in our ANC.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that ANC 2B urges the BZA to consider the facts and opinions that the Commission has set forth in evaluating the appeal in this matter.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that ANC 2B believes the use of the Aston for bridge housing is a use that is substantially similar to its prior use as a dormitory and which is consistent with the existing zoning on the site.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that ANC 2B does not believe use of the Aston for bridge housing will result in irreparable harm to adjacent or nearby property owners, and that failing to

address the homelessness crisis in the District presents a significantly larger risk to property values in ANC 2B.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that ANC 2B opposes the appeal filed by the West End DC Community Association, and supports the operation of the Aston as bridge housing.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that ANC 2B encourages the government of the District of Columbia to open this shelter as expeditiously as possible.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that ANC 2B officially requests Intervenor Status in the matter of BZA Appeal No. 21221 and authorizes Commissioner Matt Johnson (2B06) to represent the Commission before the Board of Zoning Appeals in this matter.

ON BEHALF OF THE COMMISSION.

Sincerely,



Zachary Adams
Chair