



Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2A

“Serving the Foggy Bottom and West End communities of Washington, D.C.”

December 02, 2024

Mr. Frederick Hill
Chairperson
Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street, NW, Suite 210S
Washington, DC 20001
bzasubmissions@dc.gov

RE: Appeal of the West End DC Community Association to Building Permit No. B2401624 (BZA Case No: 21221)

Dear Chairperson Hill,

At its regularly scheduled meeting on November 20, 2024, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2A (“ANC2A” or the “Commission”) considered the above-referenced matter. With five of six commissioners present, a quorum at a duly noticed public meeting, after a motion made by Commissioner Patel and seconded by Commissioner Comer to adopt the following resolution by 5-0-0.

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.

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.

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.

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.

WHEREAS, The Aston has a maximum capacity of up to 190 individuals. The District intends to operate the Aston 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.

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Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 21221
EXHIBIT NO. 27

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 which 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”

WHEREAS, ANC 2A, after hearing comments from the community, including those that supported and opposed the Aston, unanimously supported the Aston proposal, provided that the District comply with a number of conditions to address residents concerns, 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 and West End Citizens Association, Ward 2 Councilmember Brooke Pinto, DGS and DHS, and homeless services stakeholders.

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;
- * develop 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:

- Irreparable harm due to economic loss
- The District’s application to DOB was done in error
- The Property is subject to a Planned Unit Development (PUD).

THEREFORE, ANC2A wishes to identify the following facts for consideration in this matter.

1. On Friday, November 8, 2024 ANC Chair Patel and Commissioner Comer (SMD2A04) visited the Aston shortly before it was to begin accepting residents. The physical nature of the facility is that of a student dormitory. There is a common area on the first floor where residents can gather and food will be served. There are 2 rooms for reception and office. There is a guard station at the front door. There is a backyard with seating where residents can gather. The building has internet access. After the building began accepting residents, Commissioner Comer has seen a security guard inside the front door.
2. Each floor contains 6 efficiency apartments each with 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.
3. The ANC anticipates that computers will be provided and available to residents.
4. There is no medical facility in the Aston.

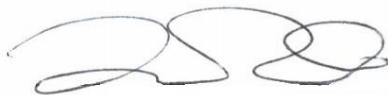
5. The current layout of the building appears to be precisely what one would expect from a college or graduate student dormitory, with the exception of the shutdown of the stoves and the limitation on movement between floors, which is intended to promote safety and security for residents.
6. In our opinion, 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 (usually 3 months long) or two.
7. In addition, the ANC has recently reviewed a proposal from a developer to convert an office building at 2100 M Street NW to about 400 high-quality residential apartments. 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.
8. In our opinion, this proposal helps demonstrate 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.
9. Many residents of ANC 2A 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 ANC2A urges the BZA to consider the facts and opinions that we have set forth in evaluating the appeal in this matter.

Commissioner Trupti Patel (2A03@anc.dc.gov) is the Commission's representative in this matter.

ON BEHALF OF THE COMMISSION.

Sincerely,



Trupti Patel
Chairperson

CC:
Mayor Muriel Bowser, District of Columbia
Chairman Phil Mendelson, District of Columbia Council

Councilmember Kenyan R. McDuffie, At-Large, and Chair Pro Tempore, District of Columbia Council
Robert C. White, Jr., At-Large Councilmember District of Columbia Council
Christina Henderson, At-Large Councilmember District of Columbia Council
Brooke Pinto, Ward 2 Councilmember, District of Columbia Council
Janeese Lewis George, Ward 4 Councilmember, District of Columbia Council
Brian Hanlon, Director, The Department of Buildings
Laura Zeilinger, Director, The Department of Health & Human Services
Delano Hunter, Director, The Department of General Services
Brian Schwalb, District of Columbia Attorney General
Brian Lampert, Assistant General Counsel, The Department of Buildings
Brandon Heath, Assistant Attorney General, Civil Litigation Division, Equity Section
David Wasserstein, Assistant Attorney General, Civil Litigation Division, Equity Section
Wayne Turnidge, Deputy Mayor, The Department of Health & Human Services
David Ross, Chief of Staff, The Department of Health & Human Services
Rachel Pierre, Interim Director, The Department of Health & Human Services; Director, Family Services Administrator
Anthony Newman, Deputy Administrator, Homeless Services, The Department of Health and Human Services
Sakina Thompson, Legal Counsel & Sr. Policy Advisor, Executive Office of the Mayor (EOM) Office of the Deputy Mayor for Health & Human Services (DMHHS)
John Stokes, Associate Director, External Affairs, The Department of General Services
Alan Karnofsky, Chief of Staff, The Department of General Services
Tadai Abilla, Ward 2 Liaison, Mayor's Office of Community Relations