District of Columbia
Office of Planning

MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment

FROM: Crystal Myers, Development Review Specialist
MBR
Maxine Brown-Roberts, Associate Director Development Review

DATE: October 26, 2026

SUBJECT: BZA Case # 21510 – Special Exception relief to permit a community center use at 2325 Porter Street, NW.

I. OFFICE OF PLANNING RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning (OP) recommends **approval** of the requested special exception relief, pursuant to Subtitle X § 901.2:

- Subtitle U § 203.1(d) Community Center building subject to the following conditions:

1. Inclusion of the appropriate conditions advanced by the Applicant, the ANC and DDOT; and
2. A three to five (3-5)-year time limit.

OP recommends a time limit because the proposed use would introduce a substantial level of new activity to the subject property and the area. The facility would be accessed by a narrow, unimproved, private driveway and is expected to generate additional vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle traffic. Although the Applicant states that most trips would be by bicycle, there seems to be several events where members will use car share rides or park on adjacent streets and walk to the facility, which could generate more activity in the area. Additionally, there is a substantial number of conditions to which the Applicant has committed, in addition to ones recommended by the ANC and DDOT in order to make the facility not have an adverse impact on the adjacent neighbors. A time-limited approval would allow the Applicant to commence operations, identify and address any unforeseen operational issues, and provide the Board with an opportunity to evaluate the facility's performance and neighborhood impacts before considering a longer-term approval.

II. LOCATION AND SITE DESCRIPTION

Address	2325 Porter Street, NW
Applicant:	Rock Creek Club
Legal Description	Square 2224, Lots 4, 823, 826
Ward / ANC	Ward 3; ANC 3C
Zone	R-1A

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 21510
EXHIBIT NO. 129

Historic District or Resource	Rock Creek Park and Greystone Enclave Historic District and Site of Greystone Enclave
Lot Characteristics	3.27-acre property adjacent to Rock Creek Park
Existing Development	The subject property is a former residential estate with a large single-family house, an accessory building with a dwelling unit, a detached garage, pool, and a tennis court. The property has a covenant and an agreement with ANC-3C that prevents it from being subdivided or redeveloped with other houses.
Adjacent Properties	The adjacent properties have single family detached houses. The property is also adjacent to the Pierce-Klingle Estate and Rock Creek Park.
Surrounding Neighborhood Character	The surrounding neighborhood is a single family detached, residential neighborhood that is adjacent to Rock Creek Park.
Proposed Development	The Applicant proposes to use the property as a community center

III. LOCATION MAP



IV. PROPOSAL

Rock Creek Club (RCC or Applicant), requests approval to adaptively reuse this historic estate as a private community center a variety of indoor and outdoor facilities. Membership would be open to

residents within a designated one-mile radius of the property which generally includes portions of Mount Pleasant, Cleveland Park, Woodley Park, Lanier Heights, and Crestwood neighborhoods on each side of Rock Creek Park, but would be limited to 270 households contingent on payment of an initiation and other fees and any agreements imposed by RCC. The RCC would reserve 20 memberships (Exempt Members) for households that reside on the 2300 block of Porter Street, NW, the 3500 block of Williamsburg Lane, NW, and the 2700 block of Quebec Street, NW. These households would be exempt from paying the initiation fees and dues but would be subject to all other rules and regulations of the RCC. Further, RCC states that at least 85% of its memberships (including the exempt members) would have to reside within the one-mile radius with the remaining 15% for other persons residing within the District.

This historic house is proposed to be renovated to accommodate community center spaces that include lounge areas, co-working space, a café/bar, a library, and an open studio to accommodate fitness classes and a children's play area. The guest house would be converted into a fitness center, and the garage would be repurposed as a pool house. The existing pool would be reconfigured as a lap pool, and additional aquatic amenities—such as a children's pool, cold plunge, and/or hot tub—would be added. The existing tennis court would remain, and the plans indicate the addition of a second tennis court, as well as two paddle courts.

The main and vehicular access to the property would continue to be via a 25-foot wide, gravel, roadway. RCC proposes to construct a new vehicular turnaround area on the property, a drop off/pick up area, a bicycle parking area, and if possible, improvements to the driveway. The property also has a small frontage along Porter Street, NW, where a new pedestrian and bicycle entrance would be established. (See Site Plan at Exhibit 3 and Exhibit 21B)

V. OFFICE OF PLANNING ANALYSIS

NOTE: A party in opposition has asserted that the proposed facility should be classified as a "private club." However, the application before the Board is a self-certified submission by the Applicant and does not reflect a classification or determination made by the Zoning Administrator (ZA). OP consulted with the ZA, who confirmed that the application was not submitted for review or an official use determination and therefore remains self-certified. Accordingly, OP's review is based on the use as proposed and self-certified by the Applicant, namely, a community center seeking special exception approval.

The Zoning Regulations at Subtitle B § 100 provides the following definition for a private community center:

> ***Community Centers, Private****:* A building, park, playground, swimming pool, or athletic field operated by a local community organization or association.

Special Exception Review, Subtitle U Chapter 203(d)

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

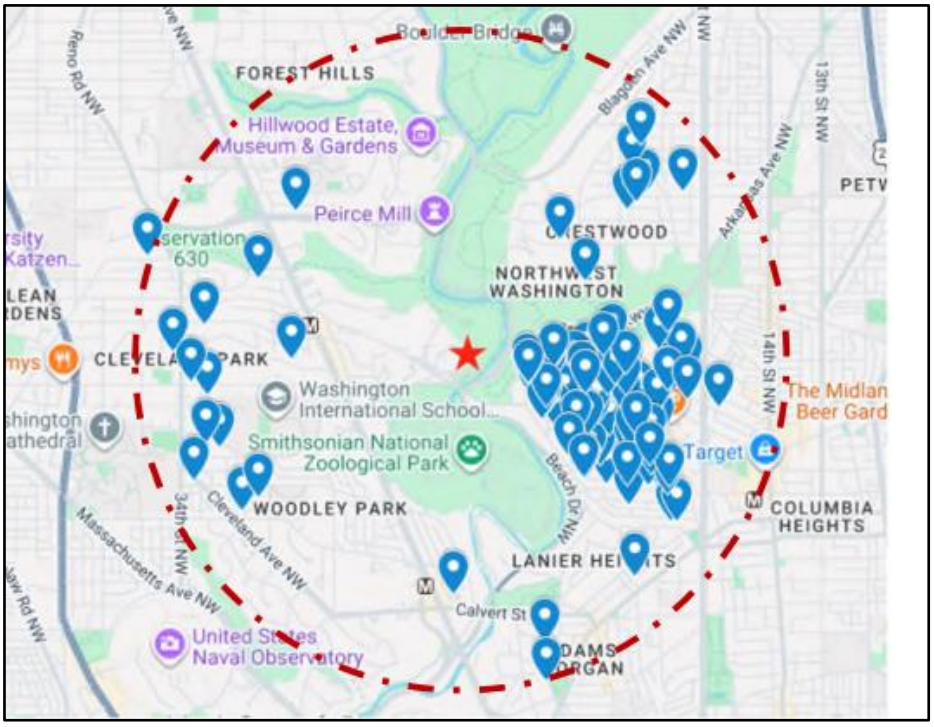
(d) Community center building, park, playground, swimming pool, or athletic field, operated by a local community organization or association, subject to the following conditions:

The proposed community center would be operated by the newly formed Rock Creek Club, which is a local community organization created to manage the use of the property. This organization could be classified as "local" as it would have up to 270 household memberships and would require that 85 percent of its members live within a mile of the property. The organization has also stated that 20 memberships will be reserved for households that are closest to the property. The organization requires that all its members be District residents.

It is unclear from the proposal if the analysis was based 270 families/households, and would an extended family member be covered and be allowed to visit and use the facility independently.

(1) The use shall not be organized for profit, but shall be organized exclusively for the promotion of the social welfare of the neighborhood in which it is proposed to be located;

The Rock Creek Club (RCC) is a nonprofit organization established to promote the social welfare of the surrounding community. According to the Applicant, there are limited facilities within walking distance or proximity to area residents that provide a comparable combination of outdoor recreation, swimming, indoor physical activities, and opportunities for social gatherings. The Applicant further asserts that existing recreational facilities do not adequately serve the adjacent older neighborhoods and generally do not offer the same range of recreational and social amenities proposed by RCC.



The Zoning Regulations do not define the term "neighborhood," leaving its scope subject to interpretation. Common definitions may rely on geographic boundaries, social and community relationships, shared identity, or access to local amenities. For purposes of the proposed use, the Applicant has defined the neighborhood as the area within a one-mile radius of the property and has proposed a membership requirement whereby at least 85 percent of members must reside within that defined area. The proposed community center, including its

swimming pools and recreational courts, is intended to provide recreational opportunities and social gathering spaces primarily for residents of the surrounding neighborhood.

The RCC will operate as a nonprofit organization and that membership fees will be used solely to support the maintenance and operation of the facility. According to the Applicant, the membership restrictions are not intended to generate profit or exclude the public, but rather to manage the facility's capacity and ensure that its amenities remain available to those residing within the defined neighborhood.

(2) The use shall not include retail sales to the general public but may charge a fee to members for services, which may include refreshments;

RCC states that the proposed community center would not include retail sales to the general public. However, there would be a café or bar to sell prepackaged refreshments to members. Members would also be able to attend a weekly catered buffet-style dinner for a fee. A commercial kitchen would not be included in the design so cooking would be limited. As stated above the membership fees are charged to provide for the services provided, upkeep and operation of the facility.

(3) The use shall not likely become objectionable in a R zone because of noise r traffic;

There is the possibility that the proposed community center could become objectionable because of noise and traffic, especially with the increased outdoor activities and vehicular trips to and from the site. To eliminate or mitigate these impacts, RCC proposes to take several actions.

Noise Impacts

The proposed use should not result in noise impacts that are objectionable because of the proposed hours of operation, location of activities, and restrictions on operations and events.

Hours of Operation

Noise could be minimized through limiting the hours of operation to the following times:

- Sunday: 8:00 am to 9:00 pm
- Monday: 7 :00 am to 9:00 pm
- Tuesday: CLOSED (if open then it would be 7:00 am to 9:00 pm
- Wednesday: 7:00 am to 9:00 pm
- Thursday: 7:00 am to 9:00 pm
- Friday: 7:00 am to 10:00 pm
- Saturday: 8:00 am to 10:00 pm

Use of the courts would also be limited to 8:00 am to sunset.

Other Events

In addition to general activities, RCC would have what are termed Special Events described as:

- Once or twice per week, buffet “Family Dinner” for up to 100 members on Friday, Saturday, or Sunday.
- Events such as July 4, Memorial Day celebrations with more than 100 persons, would be restricted to no more than six times a year.
- Member hosted, personal, social events with no more than 49 persons.

Except for special events, the Applicant commits to no use of amplified sound. **OP recommends that the use of amplified sounds be limited to the six special events per year.**

Location of Activities
At 142,622 square feet, the subject property is approximately 19 times larger than the minimum R-1A lot, thus providing substantial space to situate outdoor activities away from the residences to the west and south. Locating other aquatic activities such as a hot tub, cold plunge, and kids pool, which could generate some noise, to the east of the existing pool and closer to the main building and the park, would take them farther from neighboring residences. Maintaining the existing garden area should help mitigate and buffer potential noise impacts.

RCC is also proposing a second tennis court and paddle court further into the property, closer to the main residence, and is studying whether the second tennis court could be located immediately adjacent to the existing tennis court. The proposed locations along with the promise to install an acoustic barrier along the tennis court fence could help minimize sounds from these activities .

Lighting
Lighting on the property would be limited to serve security and safety lighting with no additional lighting of the pool or tennis facilities. RCC has committed to use down lighting to minimize light spills to adjacent residences and the park.

Traffic
According to the Applicant's transportation management plan, (Exhibit 120) nearly two-thirds of all trips to the site would occur by foot, bicycle, or transit. The property is well served by public transportation and is located approximately 0.6 miles from the Cleveland Park Metrorail Station. The proposal includes creating a dedicated pedestrian and bicycle entrance on Porter Street, NW and adding a turnaround circle along the access roadway to accommodate pick-up and drop-off activity.

The property currently contains 14 parking spaces, and the Applicant does not propose to add any additional on-site parking. A gate would be installed to prevent unauthorized use of the spaces. When on-street parking is needed, the Applicant has identified some availability on Porter Street NW. In response to community concerns, the Applicant has agreed to discourage members from parking on Williamsburg Lane and will support any petition to establish residential permit parking along that street. According to the TMP, authorization to park on the site will be limited to members with special access needs, staff, vendors, emergency response vehicles, and owners of the property. Attendees for special events will be required to pre-register. Each attendee will be assigned an arrival window when registering. Windows will be 15 to 30 minutes. DDOT's comments at Exhibit 127 Page 8 noted that it "*finds the TDM component of the Transportation Management Plan to be sufficiently robust to encourage alternatives to auto travel provided*."

However, the Applicant should include an analysis regarding the larger number of members who may attend the special events and whether parking along Porter Street will be sufficient to accommodate additional drivers, as it will be likely that many persons will not bike or walk. Public transportation on holidays would also be limited.

Mention is made of staff parking on the site. However, it is not stated what would be the daily level of staffing.

Although bicycle parking is required, the proposal includes 40 short-term bicycle parking spaces and DDOT has proposed a cover for the area, subject to approval during historic preservation review. Additional analysis of the transportation management plan is provided by DDOT at Exhibit 127.

Trash
Trash and recycling would be stored near the Artist Studio on the northeastern side of the property bins and would be picked up on Tuesdays and Fridays during non-peak hours, to limit disturbance, The dumpsters would be rolled to the pickup location, on the property, for collection. Additional pick-up times will be added as necessary. The trash disposal plans should help to prevent trash disposal from being disruptive to the neighborhood.

Other Operational Restrictions
Other operations restrictions that should help mitigate significantly impacting the neighboring properties include:

- No commercial kitchen or facilities would be installed for regularly making meals for large groups;
- No individual food deliveries.

(4) The use shall be reasonably necessary or convenient to the neighborhood in which it is proposed to be located;

This proposed community center would be reasonably necessary and convenient for the neighborhood. As stated by the Applicant, many of the facilities that would be provided are not currently being provided in the older neighborhoods. The community center would be reasonably convenient to the defined neighborhood. The property is centrally located within this area and is well connected to nearby Metrobus routes (C61, C87, and D72), as well as existing bikeways. The new bicycle and pedestrian entrance on Porter Street would be adjacent to the Rock Creek Park multi-use trail entrance. The property is also located approximately one-half mile from the Cleveland Park commercial corridor and 0.6 miles from the Cleveland Park Metrorail station.

Subtitle X Chapter 901 SPECIAL EXCEPTION REVIEW

901.2 The Board of Zoning Adjustment is authorized under § 8 of the Zoning Act, D.C. Official Code § 6-641.07(g)(2), to grant special exceptions, as provided in this title, where, in the judgment of the Board of Zoning Adjustment, the special exceptions:

(a) Will be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps;

The property is zoned R-1A, the general purpose of the R-1A zone is to protect quiet residential areas developed with detached houses with the intent of providing a stable residential area and promoting a suitable environment for family life. In addition, a community center is deemed to be a compatible use to the residential uses when it meets the criteria of Subtitle U § 203.1.

OP finds that the center would satisfy this criteria if the proposed conditions are adopted and implemented. The proposal also satisfies the criteria as it could enhance the character of the neighborhood by adaptively reusing a large property and introducing additional recreational opportunities for local residents.

(b) Will not tend to affect adversely, the use of neighboring property in accordance with the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps; and

The proposed community center use will mostly affect residents along Williamsburg Lane, Porter Street and the driveway shared with the subject property. However, with the implementation of the conditions and restrictions proposed by the Applicant, the ANC and DDOT relating to parking and traffic, noise, lighting, and other potential operational impacts, the use of the neighboring properties should not be adversely affected.

(c) Subject in specific cases to the special conditions specified in this title.

The specified conditions of Subtitle U § 203.1 are addressed above.

VI. HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The property is a designated historic resource. According to the Historic Preservation Office staff, the property's private access road cannot be widened due to its historic designation. The official historic preservation review will take place subsequent to the BZA review.

VII. COMMENTS OF OTHER DISTRICT AGENCIES

The Department of Transportation (DDOT) provided its report at Exhibit 127. OP also referred the application to Fire and Emergency Medical Services (FEMS). Their comments were sent to OP who submitted them under separate cover.

VIII. ANC COMMENTS

The property is within ANC-3C. The ANC submitted a letter in support at Exhibit 122.

IX. COMMUNITY COMMENTS

Two adjacent neighbors have requested to be parties to the application. There are several letters in support and in opposition in the record.

Attachment: **Proposed Site Plan**

PROPOSED SITE PLAN
(Exhibit 3, Page 6)

