

**BEFORE THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT**

**APPLICATION OF
BROWN STREET MAKER COOPERATIVE**

ANC 1D06

STATEMENT OF THE APPLICANT

I. NATURE OF RELIEF SOUGHT

This statement is submitted on behalf of the Applicant, Brown Street Maker Cooperative (the “**Applicant**”), for the property located at 3320 Brown Street NW (Square 2611, Lot 804) (the “**Property**”) in support of its application pursuant to the 11 DCMR (the “**Zoning Regulations**”) Subtitle X § 901.2 for special exception relief from the use requirements under Subtitle U § 203.1(d) to provide a community center building use in the RF-1 zone.

II. JURISDICTION OF THE BOARD

The Board of Zoning Adjustment (the “**Board**”) has jurisdiction to grant the special exception relief requested herein pursuant to Subtitle X § 901.2 of the Zoning Regulations.

III. BACKGROUND

A. The Property and the Surrounding Neighborhood

The Property is in the RF-1 Zone District and is approximately 840 sq. ft. in land area. A copy of the Zoning Map is attached at **Tab A**. Located on a corner lot, the Property is bounded by Newton Street NW to the north, Brown Street NW to the east, and two single-family homes to the south and west. The Property is improved with a semi-detached structure that was previously used as a grocery store (the “**Existing Building**”). The Property is located in the Mount Pleasant neighborhood of Ward 1, which is primarily residential in nature with some commercial uses, and is also located in the Mount Pleasant Historic District. As such, the Property is subject to review by the D.C. Historic Preservation Review Board.

B. Traffic Conditions and Mass Transit

The Property has excellent access to public transportation options. The Columbia Heights Metro Station is located a half-mile from the Property. There are several Metrobus lines located within two blocks of the Property. To the east is the S2 line located on 16th Street NW. To the southeast are the S2, S9, and H8 lines near the intersection of 16th Street NW and Park Road NW. Southwest of the Property are the D32 and H4 lines at the intersection of Park Road NW and Mount Pleasant Street NW. The Lamont & Mt. Pleasant NW Capital Bikeshare Station is located less than 0.2 miles from the Property. The area is bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly, as Walkscore.com designates the Property as “Very Bikeable” and a “Walker’s Paradise” with “Excellent Transit.”

C. The Project

The Applicant proposes to transform the empty Existing Building into a nonprofit maker space for the design and creation of a wide variety of crafts and sustainable projects through arts and education focused classes, clinics, and skill-building events (the “**Proposed Use**”). The Proposed Use will consist primarily of activities that will be well-accommodated in the space such as 3D printing and engraving, jewelry making, electronics, woodworking, and “fix-it” programs where community members can help one another repair and reuse various household items.

The operations at the Property will be managed by a nonprofit organization to be established by the Applicant and will provide the space, materials, tools, and guidance for activities which will be regularly accessible by appointment and available to the community through designated events. The hours of operation will vary based on interest and involvement, but regularly scheduled events and classes will conclude by 9pm.

The Zoning Regulations define a “private community center” as a “building, park, playground, swimming pool, or athletic field operated by a local community organization or association.” *See* Subtitle B § 100.2. As the proposed maker space will be located in a building operated by a nonprofit organization for community use, the Proposed Use falls within the scope of a community center building use.

As shown on the architectural plans (the “**Plans**”) attached at **Tab B**, the Applicant proposes primarily interior renovations and will not alter the footprint of the Existing Building. The public sidewalk will be improved and a window located on Brown Street NW will be converted into an entryway with multi-purpose green space, which will achieve a more inviting experience for the community and allow for space for potential outdoor activities. The Applicant may further improve the public realm, which will improve access to light and air.

Internally, the Applicant proposes to remove the stairs and attic located at the rear of the property and replace it with a storage loft. The bathroom will be slightly expanded and reconfigured. In order to maximize the interior space to provide for a variety of programming configurations outlined on Sheet A102 of the Plans, certain fixtures and appliances will be removed. The interior space will be modular and thus, allow for shifting between crafts and flexibility to add new equipment, as necessary.

IV. NATURE OF SPECIAL EXCEPTION RELIEF SOUGHT AND STANDARD OF REVIEW

The Applicant requests special exception relief from the use requirements under Subtitle U § 203.1(d) to provide a community center building use in the RF-1 zone. Pursuant to D.C. Code § 6-641.07(g)(2) Subtitle X § 901.2, the Board is authorized to grant a special exception where it finds the special exception:

- (1) Will be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps;
- (2) Will not tend to affect adversely, the use of neighboring property in accordance with the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps; and
- (3) Subject in specific cases to special conditions specified in the Zoning Regulations. 11 DCMR Subtitle X § 901.2.

Relief granted through a special exception is presumed appropriate, reasonable, and compatible with other uses in the same zoning classification, provided the specific requirements for the relief are met. In reviewing an application for special exception relief, “[t]he Board’s discretion . . . is limited to a determination of whether the exception sought meets the requirements of the regulation.” *President & Dirs. of Georgetown College v. D.C. Bd. of Zoning Adjustment*, 837 A.2d 58, 68 (D.C. 2003); *see also Stewart v. District of Columbia Bd. of Zoning Adjustment*, 305 A.2d 516, 518 (D.C. 1973)). If the applicant meets its burden, the Board must ordinarily grant the application. *Id.*

V. APPLICANT MEETS BURDEN FOR SPECIAL EXCEPTION RELIEF

The Proposed Use will be in harmony with the purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations, will not tend to adversely affect the use of neighboring property, and satisfies the special conditions for a community center building use under Subtitle U § 203.1(d).

A. The Relief is Harmonious with the General Purpose and Intent of the Zoning Regulations and Maps

The Proposed Use will be in harmony with the purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and related maps. The “RF” zones are intended to “allow for limited compatible non-residential uses.” *See* Subtitle E § 101.2(b). The proposed community center building use is compatible with the surrounding community providing a valuable artistic and educational service to the community.

The District has placed a renewed policy emphasis on efficient land use and encouraging arts and culture. One of the general purposes of city planning objectives is to encourage the rehabilitation of abandoned structures within the community, such as the Property. Further, the Mount Pleasant neighborhood would benefit from the transformation of the underused site into a new vibrant destination and creative building. The Proposed Use would be in harmony with the Zoning Regulations because it is intended to support programs and events for all residents, including youth and older adults, to develop and present creative work.

The Applicant intends to promote policy goals by transforming a closed corner store into a community center building use providing a variety of artistic and educational classes and activities for the benefit and enjoyment of the surrounding community.

B. The Relief Will Not Tend to Adversely Affect the Use of Neighboring Property

The Proposed Use will not adversely affect the use of neighboring properties. The proposed activities will primarily take place inside the building. There will be a limited number of participants permitted to attend the activities given the small size building footprint. Further, the hours of operation will be limited and is not anticipated to extend beyond 9pm. Finally, the Applicant does not currently plan any major structural changes to the exterior of the existing building. Therefore, this proposal will not impact light and air for neighboring properties because there will be minor changes to the existing exterior conditions.

C. The Project Satisfies the Special Conditions of Subtitle U § 203.1(d) for a Community Center Building Use

In addition to the general special exception standard, this application satisfies the special conditions under Subtitle U § 203.1(d) for a community center building use in the RF-1 zone as follows:

- (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 community center building will be operated by a nonprofit organization for the artistic and educational skill-building activities for the surrounding community and as such, complies with this requirement.

- (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;*

The Applicant does not propose to provide retail sales to the general public on the Property and as such complies.

- (3) *The use shall not likely become objectionable in a R zone because of noise or traffic; and*

The Proposed Use will not likely become objectionable due to noise or traffic because the proposed activities will primarily occur inside the building, which is only about 840 sq. ft. in size and thus limits the number of participants attending the programs. Further, the community building center use will operate during the day and will not extend past 9pm. The use is intended to service the neighborhood so most participants will be walking or biking to the Property.

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

The Proposed Use will be convenient to the neighborhood in that it will provide artistic and education classes, clinics, and skill-building events in the heart of the Mount Pleasant neighborhood that will produce crafts and projects useful in the everyday lives of community members. Providing a space where the community can learn, design, and create will be a great benefit and addition to the surrounding neighborhood.

IV. COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The Applicant met with neighbors on February 8, 2024, and also attended ANC 1D's public meeting on June 20, 2024 to introduce the proposed maker space to the community. In accordance

with ANC 1D's procedures and guidelines, the Applicant will formally present the application to ANC 1D at its next available public meeting.

V. CONCLUSION

For the reasons stated above, the Project meets the applicable standards for special exception relief under the Zoning Regulations. Accordingly, the Applicant respectfully requests the Board grant the application.

Respectfully Submitted,

COZEN O'CONNOR



Meridith H. Moldenhauer



Madeline Shay Williams

TAB A

