

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

Application of  
HGIT 1015 Half Street LLC

BZA Application No:

**STATEMENT OF THE APPLICANT**

This is an application by HGIT 1015 Half Street LLC (the “**Applicant**”) to locate roof-mounted antennas on property located at 1015 Half Street SE (Square 697, Lot 45) (the “**Site**” or “**Building**”) in the D-5 Zone District. The Applicant requests special exception relief pursuant to 11 DCMR Subtitle C § 1312.1 from the setback requirement of Subtitle C § 1304.1(a) for eight (8) roof mounted antennas, and the maximum mounted height requirement of Subtitle C § 1304.1(b) for twenty-five (25) roof-mounted antennas. The project will conform to the Zoning Regulations in all other ways.

**I. NATURE OF RELIEF SOUGHT**

The Applicant requests that the Board of Zoning Adjustment (the “**Board**”) grant special exception relief from the setback requirement of Subtitle C § 1304.1(a) for eight (8) roof-mounted antennas and maximum mounted height requirement of Subtitle C § 1304.1(b) for twenty-five (25) roof-mounted antennas pursuant to 11 DCMR Subtitle C § 1312.1.

**II. JURISDICTION OF THE BOARD**

The Board has jurisdiction to grant the relief requested pursuant to Subtitle X § 900.2 of the Zoning Regulations.

**III. DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE, SURROUNDING AREA, AND BACKGROUND**

Acquired by the Applicant in 2021, the Site is located in the D-5 Zone District and also located in the M and South Capitol Streets SE Downtown Subarea. The Site is located in Advisory Neighborhood Commission (“**ANC**”) 8F and Ward 6. It has a total land area of approximately

45,687 square feet. The Site is surrounded by Half Street to the east, L Street SE to the south, private property and an alley to the west, and K Street SE to the north.

The Building was constructed circa 2011 and has included broadcast facilities for DC, Federal, utilities, and disaster support organizations for several years, as shown in the photographs and drawings submitted with this application as Exhibit H (the “**Plans**”).

The Applicant is working with its tenant, DC Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DC HSEMA), to install the proposed antennas to augment, modernize, and supplement the existing communications equipment and capabilities of the District to address homeland security and emergency preparedness issues. DC HSEMA is responsible for leading the planning and coordination of the District of Columbia's homeland security and emergency management efforts. DC HSEMA works closely with our District, federal and regional partners to ensure that the District of Columbia is prepared to prevent, protect against, respond to, mitigate and recover from all threats and hazards. In addition, DC HSEMA provides situational awareness, logistical and resource support and a field command operation to coordinate critical incident response, mitigation and recovery to emergencies, severe weather conditions, disasters and other major events impacting quality of life in the District. The proposed antennas and satellite equipment will support DC HSEMA's mission-critical operations and the exchange of information with a variety of public safety agencies. This equipment will perform an essential role in improving the District's capacities in these areas and ensuring that public logistics and safety operations are efficient, robust, and intact at all times, regardless of circumstances.

#### **IV. THE APPLICATION SATISFIES THE ROOF-MOUNTED ANTENNA REQUIREMENTS**

All roof-mounted antennas, except for those regulated by Subtitle C § 1306 or exempted by Subtitle C § 1307, must comply with the requirements of Subtitle C § 1304.1. Here, all roof-

mounted antennas comply with the requirements of Subtitle C § 1304.1, except as described below.

The specific requirements of Subtitle C § 1304.1 are as follows:

- a) Each part of an antenna shall be set back from each edge, excluding party walls, of the roof a minimum distance equal to its total mounted height above the roof;*

As shown on Pages A9, A10, and A13 of the Plans, eight (8) antennas will not be set back from the edge of the roof a minimum distance equal to their total mounted height above the roof. More specifically, as shown on Pages A13 of the Plans, Antennas 9 through 16 are set back twenty-five (25) feet from exterior edge along the alley on the western side of the building while having heights greater than twenty-five (25) feet above the Building's roof. As a result, these eight (8) antennas extend into the one-to-one setback a range of 5.45 feet to 12.47 feet. The other proposed antennas have a compliant setback pursuant to Subtitle C § 1304.1(a). Therefore, the Applicant respectfully requests special exception relief from this requirement, as further discussed below.

- b) An antenna may not exceed a total mounted height of twelve feet (12 ft.) above the roof;*

As shown on Pages A10-A14, A19 and A20 of the Plans, twenty-five (25) antennas will exceed a total mounted height of twelve (12) feet above the roof. More specifically, Antennas 2 through 25 and Antenna 30 have heights ranging from 13.78 feet to 22.58 feet above the roof structure's roof, as detailed on Pages A19-A20. The other proposed antennas have a height of less than the twelve (12) foot height permitted by Subtitle C § 1304.1(b). As a result, the Applicant respectfully requests special exception relief from this requirement, as further discussed below.

- c) Each antenna installation shall be located or screened such that its visibility from public spaces, navigable waterways, historic landmarks, and national monuments is minimized to the greatest practical extent;*

As shown on Page A16 of the Plans, visibility of the antennas from public spaces, navigable waterways, historic landmarks, and national monuments is minimized by virtue of the height of the building on the Site, significant buildings constructed on the surrounding properties to block

views towards the Site, the location of the antennas towards the middle of the Building where possible, and the minimal profile of the antennas being installed on the Site. Regarding building height specifically, at 110 feet of building height, the Building is comparable in height to its neighbors, so visibility of its roof plane, and the proposed antenna in particular, is highly constrained. In addition, the Property is located on a street with limited viewsheds, so it will not impact existing sight lines or even be viewable from many perspectives around the Building, particularly from public spaces surrounding the property. Page A15 of the Plans shows these views of the Building. Page A16 shows the primary available view of the Building both with and without the proposed antenna array. As can be seen on the image on the right side of Page A16, the impact on the views of the Building and the surrounding area are minimized. Thus, the addition of antennas will not cause any visual or aesthetic harms as the result of the proposed installation.

- d) An antenna shall be constructed of materials and colors that blend with the surroundings to the greatest practical extent;*

As shown on Pages A21 through A27 of the Plans, the antennas will be blue, black, gray, or white, which will blend in with the surroundings to the greatest extent practicable. These colors will allow for blending with the Site's surroundings. Further, each antenna is designed to be constructed of thin metallic or similar material which allows the antenna to have a minimal visual profile and virtually no visible impacts.

- e) Antennas mounted on roofs with outdoor recreation space shall be secured from unauthorized access for a minimum distance of ten feet (10 ft.), by a fence or screen at least five feet (5 ft.) in height;*

As shown on Page A9 of the Plans, there will not be any outdoor recreation space on the top of the roof structure of the Building, where the subject antenna are proposed to be located. Public and outdoor reaction access to the top of the roof structure will not be permitted. As a

result, the application is in compliance with this requirement to create security from unauthorized access around the antennas.

- f) *Any related equipment cabinet or shelter that is not internal to the building or penthouse shall be:*
  - (1) *Constructed of materials and colors that blend with the building or penthouses; and*
  - (2) *Located to reduce its visibility from public space to the greatest practical extent.*

As shown on Page A11 of the Plans, the project does not require related equipment cabinets or shelters and does not propose them to be installed or relocated. The introduction of additional cabinets or other shelters would cause visual impacts on the roof that would be greater than the impacts created by the proposed antenna. Said another way, the proposed antennas have a small visual profile and enclosing them in a cabinet or shelter would create an unnecessary appearance of mass atop the building, along with creating undue additional height. As a result, the application complies with this requirement.

## **V. THE APPLICATION SATISFIES THE CRITERIA FOR THE SPECIAL EXCEPTION RELIEF FROM THE PENTHOUSE SETBACK REQUIREMENTS**

Under Subtitle C § 1304.1(a), each part of an antenna shall be set back from each edge, excluding party walls, of the roof a minimum distance equal to its total mounted height above the roof. Further, under Subtitle C § 1304.1(b), an antenna may not exceed a total mounted height of twelve feet (12 ft.) above the roof. Since eight (8) antennas will not be set back from each edge a minimum distance equal to their total mounted height above the roof and twenty-five (25) antennas will exceed a height of twelve (12) feet, a special exception is required.

### **A. Standard of Relief**

The Board is empowered to grant special exception relief from the roof-mounted antenna requirements pursuant to Subtitle C § 1312, which requires compliance with several criteria. Here,

the application satisfies the standard for special exception relief because it meets all the listed criteria, as detailed below.

**B. Special Exception Relief from Roof-Mounted Antenna Requirements of Subtitle C § 1304.1**

*1. A map of area to be served by the new antenna;*

A portion of the area to be served by the new antennas is shown on Page A4 of the Plans, although the antenna will also serve the entirety of the District. The proposed antennas will augment the number of existing antennas on the Building's roof and will allow for enhanced services for the building's tenants to assist with District of Columbia homeland security, emergency services and related municipal and public safety functions.

*2. A map and explanation of the area being inadequately served that necessitates installation of the proposed antenna;*

The proposed antennas, which will support the emergency response services for the whole of the District, are necessary to modernize and enhance existing equipment. These enhancements will replace and augment outdated antennas, improve emergency responsiveness and coverage, and build capacity to handle security and emergency response issues as technologies and requirements continue to evolve and increase. The proposed antennas constitute a necessary and timely improvement to the existing municipal communications equipment.

*3. A map indicating the location of any other antennas and related facility sites providing service by the applicant, and any antenna tower or monopole of any provider, within a two (2) mile radius, including public space, of the proposed antenna site, with identified heights above grade;*

The Applicant does has five (5) other antennas located on the same roof as the proposed antennas. Additional antennas in the vicinity of the Site are shown on Page A4 of the Plans. Shown on Page A5 and A6 of the Plans are pictures of eight (8) identifiable sites with antennas in the vicinity of the Site. All of these sites are located on the map on Page A4 and include their

addresses for easy identification. While the heights of these antennas above grade are not known, these images demonstrate that the proposed antennas are within the character of the surrounding properties and are to be expected in the vicinity.

4. *A site, and roof plan if applicable, showing all structures and antennas on site;*

A site plan of the Building and its roof plan showing all structures and antennas on site are included in the Plans as Pages A7 and A9. A more detailed roof plan is included as Page A10 of the Plans.

5. *Elevation drawings of the structure and proposed antennas from all four (4) directions;*

The Plans include elevation drawings of the structure and proposed antennas from all four directions on Pages A11 through A14.

6. *A picture of the proposed antenna;*

The Plans include pictures and specifications for all proposed antennas on Pages A21 through A28. The implementation of these antennas are shown in the site plans, elevations, and rendering included on Pages A9-A14 and A18 in the Plans.

7. *The total mounted height of the antenna relative to the tops of surrounding trees as they presently exist within one-quarter mile (.25 mi.) of the proposed location; and*

The Site is located in a highly urban context. While there are street trees planted throughout the public space around the Site, there is not a great deal of tree canopy in the immediate vicinity of the Site. As shown on Pages A8, A15, and A16 of the Plans, the buildings in the vicinity of the Site, and particularly the Building itself, are generally taller than the tops of surrounding trees.

8. *Other information as may be necessary for impact assessment of the antenna.*

The Applicant will provide additional information as the Board may deem necessary to assess the impact of the proposed replacement antennas.

**C. General Special Exception Review Standards**

1. *The requested special exception relief will be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and will not tend to affect adversely the use of neighboring property.*

Since it satisfies the specific criteria under Subtitle C § 1312, the proposed antennas will be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and Maps “to create conditions favorable to health, safety, transportation, prosperity, protection of property, civic activity, and recreational, educational, and cultural opportunities,” among other purposes. D.C. Official Code §6-641.02 (2024 Repl.). The new antennas will allow the continued, high-quality signal and technologically-enhanced communications necessary for DC, Federal, utilities, and disaster support organizations. By enhancing and improving existing antennas, the proposed special exception will not tend to affect adversely the use of neighboring properties or not create any appreciable change to the existing favorable conditions of the area.

The requested special exception relief will not have adverse impacts on the neighbors, Zone Plan, or District. The minimal visual impact of these antennas and their location atop a 110-foot building, surrounded by similarly tall buildings, will mitigate impacts that stem from the appearance of additional antennas. Further, the antennas are barely visible from neighboring properties, designed for minimal visual intrusion, and made of material that blends with the surroundings.

Perhaps most importantly, the antennas will improve the District’s existing emergency response and security systems, ultimately creating a safer and more robust municipal infrastructure system and enhancing protection of the public.



#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

For the above reasons, the Applicant has satisfied the standards for special exception relief and respectfully requests approval of the application.

Respectfully submitted,

\_\_\_\_\_/s/  
Jeffrey Utz

\_\_\_\_\_/s/  
Derick Wallace