

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

Application of HDR Holdings, LLC for a Special Exception

1155 Dahlia Street NW (Sq. 2950, Lot 0909)

STATEMENT OF THE APPLICANT

HDR Holdings LLC (referred to herein as the “Applicant” or “Wonder”) as the prospective lessee of the property located at 1155 Dahlia Street NW (Sq. 2950, Lot 0909) (the “Property”), now seeks a special exception to establish a new “Wonder” location on the Property. Wonder is an innovative food establishment that partners with award winning and iconic chefs and restaurants to provide signature dishes at each of its neighborhood-serving locations. While the Applicant does not consider Wonder a traditional “fast food” restaurant, the proposed restaurant is classified as a “fast food establishment” under the District of Columbia Zoning Regulations. Therefore, because the Property is located in the WR-3 zone, the Applicant seeks a special exception to establish a new fast food establishment on the Property pursuant to 11 DCMR, Subtitle K, Section 915.2(d).

I. BACKGROUND

The Property is zoned to the WR-3 zoning district and is currently improved with a mixed-use residential building on Land Bay “F” known as “Clover at The Parks,” part of the overall Parks at Walter Reed Town Center development. The proposed tenant space for the new Wonder establishment is located at street level within an existing mixed use building with an address of 1155 Dahlia Street NW. The Property is located within the Walter Reed Army Medical Center Historic District. The proposed tenant space is comprised of +/-2,900 square feet.

II. NATURE OF RELIEF REQUESTED

The Applicant proposes to establish a new Wonder location within an existing retail bay located at street level in the building located at 1155 Dahlia Street NW. The space in question is

located on the northwest corner of the building at the intersection of 12th St NW and Dahlia St NW. Though Wonder is classified as a fast food establishment under the D.C. Zoning Regulations, thereby requiring a special exception from the Board of Zoning Adjustment (“Board”) to operate in the WR-3 zone, Wonder restaurants are distinct from a traditional fast food use. As noted above, Wonder is a new and innovative food establishment that partners with award winning national chefs and restaurants to bring first class cuisine to local neighborhoods.

The new proposed location in the former Walter Reed campus will provide dine-in, delivery, and take-out to local customers. All food will be prepared to-order at the new Walter Reed location. A proposed site plan showing the location of the new Wonder location is attached as Exhibit 1. A proposed interior layout of the new Wonder location is attached as Exhibit 2. Illustrative renderings of the proposed interior of the new Wonder location are attached as Exhibit 3. Interior seating will be provided for thirteen (13) guests along with eighth (8) exterior patio seats. Orders will be placed through Wonder’s mobile app or through self-serve order kiosks located in the Wonder location. Tech-forward order processing and management will ensure efficiency as well as food quality. Wonder will actively manage couriers for delivery, the majority of which are expected to be bicycle couriers, to ensure efficient and safe delivery operations. Wonder expects to employ a maximum of 12 employees at this location during peak hours and hours of operation will be between 10:00am and 12:00am. No changes will be made to the Property or the exterior of the existing building in which the Wonder restaurant will be established, with the exception of signage. No drive-through is proposed.

III. Special Exception Relief for a Fast Food Establishment Pursuant to 11 DCMR, Subtitle K, Section 915.2(d)

The Board may approve a special exception to allow a fast food establishment in the WR-3 zone under Subtitle X of the D.C. Zoning Regulations, in accordance with the standards and requirements in Subtitle K, Section 915.2(d).

A. Special Exception Standards Under Subtitle K, Section 915.2(d).

Pursuant to Subtitle K, Section 915.2(d), a fast food establishment shall be permitted as a special exception in the WR-3 zone subject to the following conditions:

- (1) No part of a lot on which a fast food establishment or food delivery business is located shall be within twenty-five feet (25 ft.) of a residential zone, including WR-1, WR-7, and WR-8, unless separated therefrom by a street or alley;**

The Property is separated by Georgia Avenue from the neighboring RA-2 zone to the east, as well as separated from the WR-1 zone to the north by Elder St NW.

- (2) Any outdoor refuse dumpsters shall be housed in a three (3)-sided brick enclosure equal in height to the dumpster or six feet (6 ft.) high, whichever is greater, with the entrance to the enclosure including an opaque gate;**

Refuse dumpsters will be kept within the existing building on the Property.

- (3) The use shall not include a drive-through;**

No drive-through is proposed.

- (4) There shall be no customer entrance in the side or rear of a building that faces an alley containing a zone boundary line for a residential zone;**

The customer entrance will be located at the front of the building.

- (5) There shall be adequate facilities to allow deliveries to be made and trash to be collected without obstructing public rights-of-way or unreasonably obstructing parking spaces, aisles, or driveways on the site;**

A service entrance for deliveries and trash collection for the building is located along Dahlia Street.

(6) The use shall be designed and operated so as not to become objectionable to neighboring properties because of noise, sounds, odors, lights, hours of operation

Wonder will operate this new location in an efficient, clean, and safe manner that will not become objectionable to neighboring properties because of noise, sounds, odors, lights, hours of operation, or other conditions. There will be no impacts from the proposed Wonder restaurant on the residential properties within the building as all operations will occur inside and at the front of the restaurant location. While the Zoning Regulations do not require any parking spaces for this proposed use, existing street parking along 12th Street NW, Dahlia Street, and Georgia Avenue is available for customers and delivery couriers for this location. The proposed Wonder restaurant will operate harmoniously with the existing mixed-use development, which includes a mix of retail stores and grocery establishments including the adjacent Whole Foods Market. The hours of operation for the proposed restaurant will be 10:00am to 12:00am.

(7) The use shall be located and designed so as to create no dangerous or other objectionable traffic conditions.

The proposed Wonder restaurant will be located within a retail bay already built into the existing building on the Property. As noted above, parking and deliveries will be accommodated with existing street parking along nearby streets. Further, a majority of delivery couriers for this location are expected to be bicycle couriers.

IV. Special Exception Standards Pursuant to Subtitle X, Chapter 9

Pursuant to Subtitle X, Chapter 9, the special exception relief requested must also meet the standards set forth in Section 901.2, which states that the Board may grant a special exception when the relief requested:

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

The proposed Wonder location will be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps. The Walter Reed zones are designed to “[p]rovide for the growth of the former Walter Reed Army Medical Center campus with a broad mix of uses, achieved through the adaptive reuse of existing buildings as well as new construction.” *See* 11 DCMR, Subtitle K, Section 900.1. Additional goals of the Walter Reed zone include:

(a) Preserve the unique historic architectural and landscape character of the Walter Reed campus as a resource for the adjacent neighborhoods and the District as a whole;

(b) Create a vibrant town center that will provide economic development, employment, and retail opportunities for the District and adjacent neighborhoods.

Id., Section 900.1

The WR-3 zone is further intended to “[p]rovide for moderate- to medium-density commercial and residential development that activates Georgia Avenue frontage through enhanced ground-floor retail opportunities” *Id.*, Section 903.1(a).

The proposed Wonder location is in harmony with the goals and purpose of the Walter Reed Special Purpose zones. Wonder will be a neighborhood-serving food establishment that will be located at ground-level with an existing mixed-use corridor that provides excellent access for vehicles, pedestrians, and nearby Tacoma Park Metro riders. No changes are proposed to the exterior of the existing building on the Property as part of this application. No drive-through is proposed.

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

The proposed Wonder location will not affect adversely the use of neighboring properties. As noted, the proposed location is located within an established and growing mixed-use neighborhood. Further, all operations will be located within the building and oriented towards the front of the site. No impacts should be felt to the rear of the Property. Proposed hours of operations will be 10:00am to 12:00am. Additionally, no alcohol will be served at this location.

(c) Will meet such special conditions as may be specified in this title.

As noted above, the proposed relief meets the special conditions found in Subtitle K, Section 915.2(d).

V. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Applicant will engage with ANC 4A, neighbors, and the community as this project moves forward.

VI. WITNESSES

The following witnesses will appear on behalf of the Applicant at the Board hearing on this Application:

1. Jason Bottcher, HDR Holdings LLC (Wonder): Mr. Bottcher is the Director of Land Use and Entitlements at Wonder and is overseeing this application.

VII. CONCLUSION

For all of the reasons discussed above, the Applicant respectfully requests that the Board approve this application for a special exception.



Zachary G. Williams, Esq.
Venable LLP
Authorized Agent for the Applicant