

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

Application of Rock Creek Club
ANC 3C06

STATEMENT OF THE APPLICANT

This is the application of Rock Creek Club (“**RCC**” or “**Applicant**”) for special exception approval of a community center, pool, and tennis courts (“**Center**”) at 2325 Porter Street NW (Square 2224, Lots 4, 823, and 826) (“**Property**”). The Property is located in the R-1A Zone District; it is a historic landmark known as “Greystone” that is part of a collection of buildings known as the “Greystone Enclave.”

I. NATURE OF RELIEF SOUGHT

The Applicant requests that the Board of Zoning Adjustment (the “**Board**”) grant special exception approval pursuant to Subtitle X, Section 901.2 of Title 11 of the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations (“**Zoning Regulations**”) for approval of a community center, pool, and tennis courts operated by a non-profit organization pursuant to Subtitle U, Section 203.1(d).

II. JURISDICTION OF THE BOARD

The Board has jurisdiction to grant the special exception approval requested pursuant to Subtitle X, Section 900.2 of the Zoning Regulations.

III. THE APPLICANT

The Rock Creek Club is a nonprofit organization organized under the District of Columbia Nonprofit Club Act of 2010 for the purposes of promoting the social welfare of the neighborhood it serves, which is the area surrounding the central portion of Rock Creek Park within a mile of the Property and on both sides of the Park that includes portions of Cleveland Park, Mount Pleasant,

Forest Hills, and Crestwood. Any resident who falls within the one-mile range and within ANC 3C, which is the ANC in which the Property is located, is eligible for membership, provided there is capacity and the resident agrees to abide by RCC's membership agreement and pay its dues and fees. At any given time, at least 80% of RCC's members must live within the one-mile range or within ANC 3C.

RCC was formed by a number of District families who live near the Property, primarily in the Mount Pleasant and Cleveland Park neighborhoods. These families desire to create a social and recreation gathering space within close proximity to their homes. While such recreational centers and gathering spaces are often integrated into new residential developments (including not only new residential neighborhoods but also other communities such as large apartment complexes and continuing care retirement communities), these facilities were not constructed within older residential neighborhoods. Further, the communities served by the Center lack nearby public recreation and community facilities, as the closest facilities are located in the western portion of Cleveland Park and in Columbia Heights, to the south and east of Mount Pleasant.¹ Finally, while Rock Creek Park itself serves as a wonderful recreational amenity for some outdoor activities, it lacks facilities for swimming, indoor physical activity, and social gathering within walking distance of these neighborhoods.

Indeed, neighborhood-serving community and recreation centers are commonly found in residential neighborhoods outside of the District, often either as "pool and tennis clubs" that serve older established residential neighborhoods² or as community clubhouses and facilities

¹ The area around the Property also lacks access to private recreation facilities that are open to nearby residents, such as fitness, pool, and tennis facilities operated by local universities in neighborhoods like Foggy Bottom, Georgetown, and Foxhall, or the swim club and tennis center available to residents near St. Albans School.

² See, for example, the Arlington Forest Club, Dominion Hills Pool, and the Overlee Community Association in Arlington, Virginia, or similar facilities in Fairfax, Virginia, and Montgomery County, Maryland.

constructed as a part of the subdivision itself and operated by homeowners' associations. While rare in the District, there are a handful of examples including the Lenore Pool and Tennis Club in Forest Hills, which was approved pursuant to the same special exception sought by the Applicant. The families that founded RCC desire to create a similar community-centered facility that is proximate to their homes and will fill the void of a missing "third space" for social gathering and recreation.

IV. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPERTY AND SURROUNDING AREA

The Property consists of approximately 142,622 square feet, or approximately 3.27 acres, of land area. The Property is located at the far eastern end of the Cleveland Park neighborhood in Ward 3. It abuts Rock Creek Park and is across the Park from the Mount Pleasant neighborhood in Ward 1.

The Property is improved with a large single family house known as "Greystone" and two accessory buildings (a garage and a guest house) on Lot 4, a pool and pergola structure on Lot 823, and a tennis court on Lot 826. Greystone was constructed in 1913. The home was designed by noted architect Waddy Wood as a country estate that opens out onto the landscape and city to its south. It is part of an enclave of buildings that are designated as a historic landmark because of both their architectural style and their relationship with their surrounding landscaped settings.³

A portion of the Property directly abuts Porter Street NW, but vehicular access to the Property is provided via a right-of-way from Porter Street established as part of a 25 foot-wide "roadway or highway" network created in connection with the original 1907 subdivision of the

³ Greystone Enclave Historic Landmark Nomination Form, available at <https://www.dropbox.com/s/pb8jdo0cmntvg9q/Greystone%20Enclave%20nom.pdf?dl=1> (source: DC Historic Sites – Greystone Enclave: The Four Houses Exemplify Changing Architectural Trends in D.C)

area surrounding the Property as Coleman Park. The Property's Porter Street frontage is adjacent to an entrance to the Rock Creek pedestrian and bicycle multi-use trail.

The Property was first listed for sale over a year ago in April 2025. The Property is subject to a 1999 agreement with ANC 3C.⁴ Pursuant to this agreement, the then-owners of the Property agreed to abandon plans to subdivide the property and construct a series of homes. Instead, they agreed to only construct one new home (the property located at 2331 Porter Street NW) and refrain from developing the rest of the Property with residential dwellings. Therefore, the Property cannot be further developed beyond its existing configuration. RCC identified the Property, which was already improved with a pool and a tennis court and is centrally located between the communities that are part of RCC, as a one-of-a-kind opportunity to meet the communities' needs for a gathering and recreation center. To capitalize on this moment, members of RCC formed an entity, Greystone Holdings LLC, to acquire the Property, and RCC will serve as the sole tenant at the Property.

The Property is located in the R-1A Zone. The immediate area to the west, both along the private roadway and further west along Williamsburg Lane, is also located in the R-1A Zone and is comprised of additional single-family detached homes, including the Gearing Bungalow and Pine Crest Manor, which are also part of the Greystone Enclave historic landmark. Further to the west, along Porter Street and less than 1,000 feet from the Center, is a 200-unit apartment building approved pursuant to a Planned Unit Development and related rezoning to the R-5-A (now RA-1) Zone District. Property to the north, east, and south is part of Rock Creek Park and includes the National Park Service's Rock Creek headquarters within the Pierce-Klingbe Mansion (the last part of the Greystone Enclave historic landmark). Further to the east is the Mount Pleasant neighborhood, which is located in the RF-1 Zone District.

⁴ Declaration of Covenants dated May 1999 by Thomas R. Gibian and Christina G. Grady, for the benefit of Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3C, recorded in the Land Records at Instrument No. 9900085104.

V. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Applicant seeks to establish a privately-run nonprofit community center, pool, and tennis courts at the Property that will serve the social welfare of the communities near the Property. The proposed adaptive reuse of the Property as a community center will facilitate the continued preservation and maintenance of the historic landmark as a country estate yet also significantly extend access to the landmark and use of the Property to benefit the broader neighborhood, rather than a single family. RCC is intentionally inclusive—it extends to neighborhoods on both sides of Rock Creek Park, and membership is available to all residents that fall within RCC’s geographic boundaries. At the same time, given the scale of the Center, membership will be limited to 250 members, plus an additional 20 memberships reserved for the residents that live immediately proximate to the Center.⁵

As shown on the plans attached as Exhibit H (“**Plans**”), the Applicant intends to maintain the existing historic structures and adaptively reuse the buildings and grounds for community center uses. The Manor house will be renovated to create a variety of gathering spaces for the Center, including lounge spaces, a café/bar, library and co-working spaces, and an open studio space envisioned as a space for group fitness classes as well as children’s play space. The former guest house is anticipated to be converted into a fitness center, and the former garage is anticipated to be reused as a pool house. Other anticipated improvements include the reconfiguration of the existing pool and pool terrace to allow for a lap pool and addition of smaller aquatic amenities, such as a kids’ pool, a cold plunge, and/or a hot tub, and the reconfiguration of the existing tennis court to add either a second tennis court or additional padel courts. The balance of the Property closest to Rock Creek Park will remain wooded and unimproved. Any exterior improvements will

⁵ By comparison, the Dominion Hills Pool has 521 voting members, the Arlington Forest Club has a maximum of 675 members and the Overlee Community Association has a maximum of 800 active members. Larger

be subject to review by both D.C. historic preservation officials and the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts.

As a community center serving adjacent urban neighborhoods, the Applicant expects that the vast majority of users will come to the Property by walking, biking, or transit. To facilitate pedestrian access, the Applicant plans to create a new pedestrian entrance to the Property directly from Porter Street. This entrance will serve as the primary “front door” entrance to the Center; it will be highly visible and well-located along the primary walking, biking, and bus routes between Cleveland Park and Mount Pleasant as well as within Rock Creek Park. The new entrance is also located at the southeast corner of the Property and furthest from the residential homes to the west, and it will significantly reduce the potential use of the private roadway by the vast majority of the Center’s patrons. Vehicular access to the Property will be extremely limited and continue to be from the private street. While the Property has approximately 14 parking spaces,⁶ accessed from the existing private roadway, access to these parking spaces and use of the private road will be restricted to only the founding members of RCC (which is capped at 25 founding members), members with special needs, employees, and authorized vendors. Members who violate this restriction will be subject to expulsion from RCC.

VI. THE APPLICATION SATISFIES THE CRITERIA FOR SPECIAL EXCEPTION APPROVAL OF A COMMUNITY CENTER, POOL, AND TENNIS COURTS

The Applicant is seeking special exception approval to establish a private community center, pool, and tennis courts in an R-1A Zone District, which is permitted pursuant to Subtitle U § 203.1(d) as a special exception. “Zoning Regulations allow the BZA to grant special exceptions

⁶ As a historic landmark, the change in use of the Property is exempt from requirements for additional vehicle or bicycle parking. See 11-C DCMR §§ 705.3; 802.4. Nevertheless, the Applicant notes that the existing 15 parking spaces is double the parking requirement for general institutional use that would otherwise apply.

upon a determination that an applicant meets the requirements ‘Special exceptions ... are expressly provided for in the Zoning Regulations.’” Henderson v. D.C. Board of Zoning Adjustment, 352 A.3d 772, 778 (D.C. 2026). The standard for special exception approval requires the Applicant demonstrate that the proposed project is in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps, will not tend to adversely affect the use of neighboring properties, and meets the special conditions specific to the relief requested, and meets the other specific conditions for the special exception set forth in the Regulations. 11 DCMR Subtitle X, Section 901.2. Once the applicant has met this burden, the BZA “‘must grant the request if it finds that all of the express conditions for the exception set forth in the zoning regulations have been met.’” Friends of the Field v. D.C. Board of Zoning Adjustment, 321 A.3d 673, 686 (D.C. 2024) (citation omitted).

As discussed in detail below, the Center satisfies both the specific standards for the community center approval as well as the general standard for special exception relief.

A. U 203.1(d): Community Center Building, Swimming Pool, and Athletic Field Operated by a Local Community Organization

Under Subtitle U, Section 203.1(d), a community center operated by a local organization or associate must meet four specific conditions enumerated in the Zoning Regulations:

- (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;
- (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;
- (3) The use shall not likely become objectionable in a R zone because of noise or traffic; and
- (4) The use shall be reasonably necessary or convenient to the neighborhood in which it is proposed to be located.

The Center meets all of the above criteria as described in detail below.

1. RCC is a Non-Profit Organized Exclusively for the Promotion of Social Welfare of the Neighborhood it Serves

As described above, RCC is a District of Columbia nonprofit organization that, as is expressly stated in its bylaws, is organized for the purposes of serving the social welfare of the Greystone Enclave and the surrounding neighborhood. Through the establishment of the Center, RCC hopes to create space for social gathering and recreational activities that will support and strengthen the character and quality of life in the neighborhood, which is otherwise lacking proximity to public and private recreation centers as is detailed elsewhere in this statement.

The neighborhood served by RCC is expressly defined in the bylaws as the area within one mile of the Center and the ANC in which the Center is located (i.e. ANC 3C). As further set forth in the bylaws, while RCC requires membership⁷ and limits membership to 250 members (plus an additional 20 memberships reserved for immediately proximate neighbors),⁸ the membership is not a selective membership and any individual residing within the above area is eligible to join. This affirms the focus of RCC is on serving the social and recreational needs of the neighborhood as a whole, rather than other particular group. Further, the bylaws prioritize and affirm RCC's

⁷ Membership in an association, and the associated fees, are expressly acknowledged as a component of the use pursuant to prong 2 of the special exception test, which anticipates that "fees" may be charges to "members." Such fees are necessary to maintain the services and upkeep of the facilities. Prior uses approved under this special exception have also been member-run organizations. See BZA Order No. 14619, *Lenore Pool and Tennis Club* (limiting use of the Lenore Pool and Tennis Club to members of the homeowners association and their guests); BZA Case No. 21192, *Brown Street Maker Cooperative*, Tr. Nov. 12, 2024 at 188-190 (describing the Brown Street Maker Cooperative as a "member-run facility" and explaining that "a limited number of individuals [] would be able to participate in this given facility").

⁸ Restrictions on the number of memberships to such centers are a common element of such privately-operated community centers, particularly when they are created "after the fact" within a neighborhood to ensure that the facilities are not overwhelmed. Moreover, a limit on the number of members is relevant to prong 3 of the special exception test, as it helps ensure that the use is not likely to become objectionable to neighboring properties. See, e.g. BZA Order No. 18718, *Lenore Pool and Tennis Club Modification* (limiting number of memberships to the Lenore Pool and Tennis Club); Z.C. Case No. 02-26E, *GWU Lerner Health and Wellness Center Modification* (limiting the number of alumni and community memberships in a university health and wellness center).

principal mission to serve the neighborhood because they require that, at any time, at least 80% of members must reside within the above area. This further ensures that the use of the Center is focused on and overwhelmingly limited to the surrounding neighborhood. Therefore, the proposed Center flatly meets the first prong.

As further support, the proposed uses within the Center also align with the definition of “community center,” which is “a building or group of buildings constituting a focal point of educational and recreational activities serving a whole community.”⁹ The proposed uses also mimic those described in a public recreation and community center, which is defined broadly to capture “a range of health and wellness, cultural, and arts and crafts, and educational classes and services” and includes spaces such as a “multipurpose room, . . . meeting space, open space, playground, playing court, . . . and swimming pool” as well as “pantry-type kitchens with limited food storage and preparation areas.”¹⁰

2. The Center will not include Retail Sales to the General Public but will Charge other Permitted Fees, Including Fees to Members for Services and Refreshments

The Center will not undertake any activities consisting of retail sales to the general public. The Center may include a small café or bar that includes sale of refreshments to its members, and the Center expects to charge its members fees for services, each of which is expressly permitted under the conditions for the special exception.

3. The Center is not Likely to Become Objectionable due to Noise, Traffic, or Other Objectionable Impacts

As discussed in detail below, the Center is not likely to become objectionable due to noise, lighting, traffic, parking, or other impacts. This is due to both to the residential nature and scale of

⁹ “Community center.” *Merriam-Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster, <https://unabridged.merriam-webster.com/unabridged/community%20center>. Accessed 28 Jun. 2026.

¹⁰ “Public Recreation and Community Center,” Subtitle B § 100.2.

the Center's program as well as physical and operational restrictions that the Applicant is developing to manage and mitigate these impacts. The Applicant has already developed some mitigation measures and, as the Applicant engages with District agencies, ANC 3C, and the Center's immediate residential neighbors, the Applicant expects to develop additional measures in response to issues and concerns raised by neighbors and other stakeholders. The Applicant is committed to working with its most immediate neighbors to ameliorate their concerns and, through these discussions, the Applicant expects to develop a series of proposed conditions regarding its operations. Following these discussions, an updated assessment of impacts and set of proposed conditions reflecting these conversations will provide to the Board in a supplemental submission prior to the hearing.

Noise and Lighting

The Center is unlikely to generate objectionable noise or lighting impacts. The Center currently expects hours of operation to be from 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. Other than during a handful of special events (anticipated to be no more than six per year), amplified noise will not be permitted. Other than security and safety lighting, no lighting of either the pool facilities or tennis courts are proposed.

Trash

The Center is unlikely to generate objectionable impacts due to trash storage and collection. The Applicant plans to create a fenced trash storage area behind the poolhouse. Private trash collection is anticipated to take place on a weekly basis.

Traffic and Parking

The Applicant has engaged Wells + Associates as its transportation consultant to evaluate the transportation impacts of the Center. Wells + Associates has extensive experience evaluating the transportation impacts of educational and cultural institutional uses and has commenced discussions with DDOT regarding the scoping and evaluation of the proposed Center. A detailed transportation study will be provided in advance of the public hearing that addresses the transportation impacts, if any, of the Center. Broadly, however, the following principles will limit the transportation impacts of the Center and ensure that it is not likely to become objectionable due to traffic or parking:

- (1) ***Neighborhood Location.*** The vast majority of users of the Center live in urban areas within one mile of the Center. These are families who regularly walk, bike, and use transit to get around on a daily basis, and they are expected to use similar modes to come to the Center, both because it is part of their overall pattern of urban living and because parking is so limited.
- (2) ***New Porter Street Entrance.*** The Property is currently accessed solely by the shared private roadway. The Applicant is committed to creating a new “front door” entrance directly from Porter Street, so that patrons who are walking, biking, or otherwise arriving at the Property can enter and exit from this new entrance, away from the residential homes to the west. This new entrance will be highly visible and oriented towards the primary walking, biking, and transit routes that most guests will use. The new entrance will also serve as a location for pickup/dropoff activity for members who arrive by Uber, other rideshare services, or who are dropped off or picked up in private vehicles.

- (3) ***Limited Use of the Existing Vehicular Entrance.*** The creation of the new Porter Street entrance will significantly limit the use of the existing roadway only to those authorized to use the on-site parking spaces and limited service and delivery activity. As discussed above, the Center has approximately 14 parking spaces, and both use of the roadway and access to the Center's parking will be limited to only the founding members (which is capped at 25), those with special needs, employees, and authorized vendors. Pick-up/drop-off activity will be expressly prohibited on the street. Members not authorized to use the roadway or parking who violate the restriction (including those who use the roadway for pickup and dropoff activity) will be subject to expulsion from RCC.
- (4) ***Off-Street Parking.*** All members will be strongly discouraged from parking on Williamsburg Lane, and repeated violations of the policy will be subject to suspension from RCC.

Accordingly, the Center will not have any adverse transportation impacts.

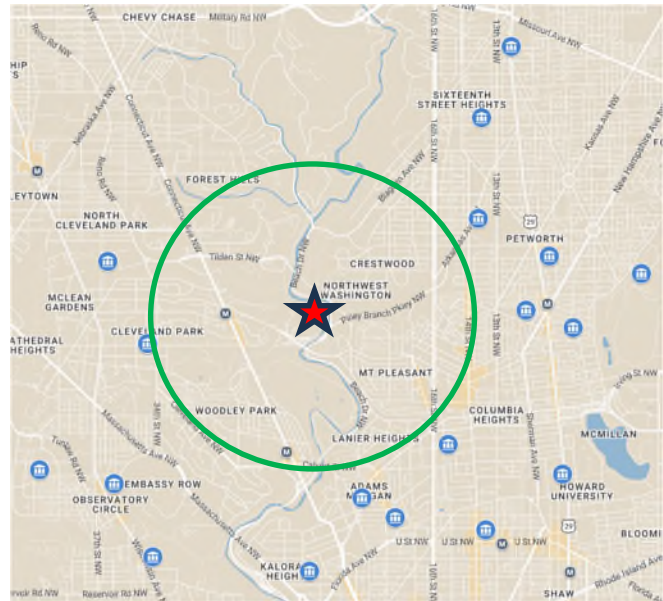
Commitment to Mitigation of Impacts

As discussed above, the Applicant will continue to work with neighborhood stakeholders, ANC 3C, OP and DDOT to review potential concerns and identify additional measures that may be implemented to further minimize any potential adverse or objectionable impacts, with the goal of creating an agreed-upon list of enforceable conditions to memorialize these commitments. A proposed list of conditions will be submitted prior to the public hearing.

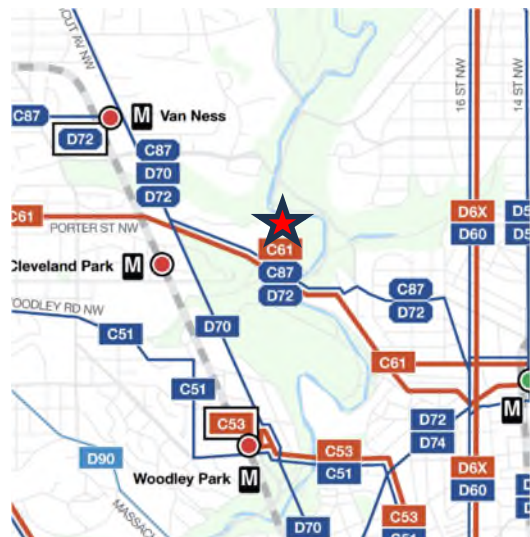
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4. The Center is Reasonably Necessary and Convenient to the Neighborhood that it Serves

The Center is centrally located within the neighborhood that it serves. As discussed above, the Center primarily serves the residents who live within one mile of the Property, which includes primarily the Mount Pleasant and portions of the Cleveland Park neighborhood, as well as portions of Forest Hills and Crestwood. The residents within this one-mile radius currently lack a public recreation and community center or alternative private center, and the Center is necessary to create a social and recreational space for families to congregate. (The Macomb Recreation Center and the Columbia Heights Community Center recreation center are each located approximately a mile from the Property, and other recreation centers are similarly located beyond the mile radius, as shown on the map to the right.



The Center is also conveniently located for the residents of these neighborhoods. The Property is within a half-mile of the Cleveland Park commercial corridor and the center of the Mount Pleasant neighborhood. Moreover, it is located along Porter Street near the Klingle Road bridge over Rock Creek Park, which is the primary route that connects the Mount Pleasant and Cleveland Park neighborhoods. Porter Street/Klingle Road is also well-served by transit, including not only the high-frequency C61 line but also medium-frequency C87 and D72



lines, thus further connecting the Property with the Cleveland Park and Mount Pleasant neighborhoods.

Finally, the proposed new Porter Street entrance is located adjacent to an entrance to the Rock Creek multi-use trail, which creates added connections via the Park's trail system to not only portions of Cleveland Park and Mount Pleasant but also Crestwood and Forest Hills.



Conclusion

For all of these reasons, the Project satisfies the standard under Subtitle U, Section 203.1(d) for approval of a community center, swimming pool, and tennis courts.

B. X 901.2: General Special Exception Criteria

As stated above, pursuant to Subtitle X, Section 901.2, approval of special exception relief requires demonstrating that the proposed use meets the general special exception criteria; namely, that the use is in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and

Zoning Maps and will not tend to adversely affect the use of neighboring properties. For all of the reasons discussed above, the application satisfies this standard.

As discussed above, uses permitted by special exception are uses that the Zoning Commission has determined are presumed to be compatible within their zone and are thus expressly allowed, so long as the relevant standards and conditions are met. See Neighbors for Responsible Government, LLC v. D.C. Board of Zoning Adjustment, 195 A.3d 35, 53 (D.C. 2018) (“Rather, the BZA *must* approve . . . [the] special exception, regardless of . . . size, if it finds that the express conditions in the regulations are met.”) Here, the Center is expressly permitted in the R-1A Zone by special exception and is thus fully compatible with the surrounding residential uses. Indeed, the use will support and enhance the surrounding residential area by creating spaces for social and recreational gathering that are limited exclusively to those residents and their families. Similar facilities have been approved by special exception adjacent to R-1 zones, including not only other neighborhood pool and tennis clubs (see BZA Order Nos. 14619 and 18718, *Lenore Pool and Tennis Club*) but also athletic fields and facilities for educational uses. Friends of the Field, 321 A.3d at 686 (holding that Maret’s athletic fields did not “contravene[] the applicable zoning regulations).

For the reasons outlined above, the Center’s operations and activities will not tend to adversely affect the use of neighborhood property. The Center will generally avoid adverse noise and light impacts through both limits on its hours of operation and operational restrictions. The Center will also have limited traffic and parking impacts, as most patrons will walk, bike, or take transit to the Center, and the use of the private right-of-way will be strictly only those members with parking privileges, employees, and service and delivery activity. Accordingly, the requested relief is justified.

VII. LIST OF PUBLICLY AVAILABLE DOCUMENTS

1. Zoning Regulations and Zoning Map of the District of Columbia, available at dcoz.dc.gov.
2. Orders of the District of Columbia Zoning Commission and Board of Zoning Adjustment, available at dcoz.dc.gov.

VIII. CONCLUSION

For all of the above reasons, the Applicant is entitled to the requested special exception relief in this case.

Respectfully submitted,
GOULSTON & STORRS, PC

_____/s/_____
David Avitabile

June 30, 2026