GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DISTRICT DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Office of the Director

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Jerrily R. Kress, FAIA
Director, Office of Zoning

FROM: Kenneth Laden
Associate Director
Transportation Policy and Planning

DATE: November 26, 2002

SUBJECT: BZA Application # 02-26 -- The George Washington University's Lerner Heath and Wellness Center Request to Modify the Conditions contained in the BZA Order No. 16276

The applicant seeks a modification to the BZA Order No. 16276 including:

1. Deleting conditions restricting the classes of users at the Lerner Health and Wellness Center; and
2. Changes to the hours of operation.

The DC Department of Transportation (DDOT) supports the recommendation of the Office of Planning to revise condition #1 to limit new members to residents of the Foggy Bottom/West End community, as well as students, faculty and staff from the Mount Vernon Campus, provided adequate transit service is provided. We also concur with the recommendation of the Office of Planning to limit hours of operation to 11:30 PM, seven days a week.

The subject property is located on the George Washington University campus at the corner of 23rd and G streets, NW, which are respectively principal street and collector street. On-street metered parking is available on G Street and 23rd Street, NW with rush hour parking restrictions on 23rd Street, NW, while multiple off-street parking lots are available in the area.

There is a high level of pedestrian traffic in the area, and the site is well served by multiple Metrorail stops, including Foggy Bottom, Farragut West on the Orange Line and Farragut North on the Red Line. The site is also well served by bus transit.

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The applicant has proposed an increase of 3000 more users to the existing building. As described by the applicant the 3000 additional members and additional hours of operation will cause minimal new traffic in the area.

The requested change to the classes of users this **could** vastly increase the number of users. However, the applicant has indicated that new membership would be limited to only 3000, of which one-third would be local residents. The applicant conducted surveys of existing Center users and President's Club members at the Smith Center that indicated that auto use as a transportation mode is between 10 and 18%. The applicant predicted that only 15% of the new members would access the site by automobile. The consultants conducted further analysis to determine that projected traffic trips will be only 32 additional cars during a peak evening hour. This small number, dispersed across the traffic network was assumed to have no impact.

While these assumptions appear reasonable on the surface, there would be no method for the University to guarantee this level of automobile travel to the Center if membership was open to alumni and friends of the University. Up to 2000 alumni and friends of the University could add a significant amount of new vehicular traffic to the neighborhood, which is already congested from institutional and employment uses. Therefore, we join the Office of Planning in recommending that new membership be limited to local residents and students, faculty and staff of the Mount Vernon Campus, provided that transit service is expanded to this Campus. We note that allowing adjacent residents to use the Center will serve the District by reducing traffic circulation to other health and wellness centers throughout the region.

Regarding the increased hours of operation from 11:00 PM to 1:00 AM, Sunday through Friday, these are off-peak hours with very light traffic. The adjacent roadways can easily deal with the very limited number of additional automobiles. However, the late hours of operation could cause noise and other disruption to the community, therefore we support the 11:30 PM closing time recommended by the Office of Planning.

Pedestrian and bicycle traffic will continue to have adequate access to the Center. However, DDOT notes the need for additional bicycle parking facilities within the George Washington University campus. DDOT encourages the applicant to increase bicycle parking at the site and offers to expedite review of any public space permit applications necessary for their installation.

The applicant also mentions the possibility of hosting intercollegiate squash tournaments. The applicant asserts that for those tournaments attracting 30 to 40 team members using a team van, the traffic impacts should be minimal. We strongly recommend that these activities occur during off-peak hours, and that vans unload in the Center parking facility and not on the streets adjacent to the facility. DDOT recommends, however, the need for individualized Transportation Management Plans for those tournaments or special activities with over 50 participants. The Transportation Management Plan should be submitted to the DC Department of Transportation, Transportation Policy and Planning

Administration a minimum of 14 calendar days prior to the event for review and comment, and a copy should be sent to the local Advisory Neighborhood Commission.

In conclusion, DDOT supports the Office of Planning's recommendation to revise condition #1 to limit new members to residents of the Foggy Bottom/West End community, as well as students, faculty and staff from the Mount Vernon Campus, provided adequate transit service is provided to and from the Mount Vernon Campus. We also concur with the recommendation of the Office of Planning to limit hours of operation to 11:30 PM, seven days a week. Further we recommend that the Center develop a Transportation Management Plan for special events with more than 50 participants and the Center provide additional bicycle storage facilities and establish policies to further encourage transit usage.

I apologize for the late submittal of these comments, and request that the Zoning Commission waive the rule regarding late testimony to allow their inclusion in the record.