

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF PLANNING



Office of the Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Zoning Commission

FROM: Jennifer Steingasser, Deputy Director. *JS*

DATE: November 8, 2007

SUBJECT: GWU Lerner Health and Wellness Center
Modification and Further Processing

CASE: Z.C. Case No. 02-26A

APPLICATION

George Washington University has filed for further processing special exception relief pursuant to §§ 210 and 3104 of 11 DCMR and modification of Zoning Commission Order 02-26 to allow a change in the classes of persons authorized to use the Lerner Health and Wellness Center located at 2301 G Street N.W.

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning recommends approval of the modification and further processing.

GWU CAMPUS PLAN

The existing campus plan for the GWU Foggy Bottom Campus became effective on October 26, 2007. The Plan lays out potential development on campus for a term of twenty years. The plan made no change to the use or conditions on the Lerner Health and Wellness Center. These conditions were laid out in the order for Zoning Commission case 02-26.

The existing conditions for use of the center include the limitation of use to:

- a) students, faculty, and staff of the Foggy Bottom and Mount Vernon Campus
- b) member's of the University's Board of Trustees
- c) students of the School Without Walls

The existing conditions also limit the hours of operation to between 6:00 a.m. and 11:30 p.m.

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
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CASE NO. 02-26A
EXHIBIT NO. 19

PROPOSAL

The University has proposed modification of the existing conditions on the Center. They seek to add a total of up to 300 users to the Center. These would include persons residing in nearby residential facilities including St. Mary's Court and the Remington Condominium, members of St. Mary's Episcopal Church, and a limited number of GW alumni residing in the Foggy Bottom area. The university seeks no change to the hours of operation stipulated in the original order.

The proposal would allocate at least 50 of the 300 new users to St. Mary's Court, Remington Condominium, and St. Mary's Church. The remainder would be available to GW alumni living in the area.

ANALYSIS

The Center was originally built to accommodate up to 2000 users at any given time. GW's user data shows that weekday usage is less than 2,500 users per day, with peak hour usage of less than 300 persons. These numbers suggest that there is no immediate risk of overtaxing this facility. Moreover, the population of eligible users is currently just under 30,000. An addition of 300 persons is equivalent to only a one percent increase. This is not expected to result in a noticeable impact on the surrounding community.

The proposed changes are not anticipated to have an impact on either the level of service within the building or on the traffic in the area. All new categories of users will be local and well within walking distance of less than one half mile. OP does not believe that there will be any noticeable traffic impact from the change.

RELIEF REQUESTED

The application is in conformance with the criteria contained within § 210, COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES, as described below.

"210.1 Use as a college or university that is an academic institution of higher learning, including a college or university hospital, dormitory, fraternity, or sorority house proposed to be located on the campus of a college or university, shall be permitted as a special exception in an R-1 District if approved by the Zoning Commission under § 3104, subject to the provisions of this section."

This application is for the use of the subject property as an academic institution of higher learning, including dormitories.

"210.2 Use as a college or university shall be located so that it is not likely to become objectionable to neighboring property because of noise, traffic, number of students, or other objectionable conditions."

Noise and objectionable conditions

There will be no change to the operation of the Center and no change is expected to the level of noise or other objectionable conditions.

Traffic

With a proposed increase of approximately one percent to the number of potential users, OP does not anticipate any noticeable traffic impacts from this proposal. No DDOT report has been received

Number of Students

The university does not propose to change the number of students allowed on campus as limited by the existing campus plan.

“210.3 In R-1, R-2, R-3, R-4, R-5-A, and R-5-B Districts, the maximum bulk requirements normally applicable in the Districts may be increased for specific buildings or structures; provided, that the total bulk of all buildings and structures on the campus shall not exceed the gross floor area prescribed for the R-5-B District. In all other Residence Districts, similar bulk increases may also be permitted; provided that the total bulk of all buildings and structures on the campus shall not exceed the gross floor area prescribed for the R-5-D District. Because of permissive increases as applicable to normal bulk requirements in the low-density districts regulated by this title, it is the intent of this subsection to prevent unreasonable campus expansion into improved low-density districts.”

No change is proposed to any building on campus. The FAR numbers will remain unchanged.

“210.4 As a prerequisite to requesting a special exception for each college or university use, the applicant shall have submitted to the Commission for its approval a plan for developing the campus as a whole, showing the location, height, and bulk, where appropriate, of all present and proposed improvements, including but not limited to the following:

- (a) Buildings and parking and loading facilities;*
- (b) Screening, signs, streets, and public utility facilities;*
- (c) Athletic and other recreational facilities; and*
- (d) A description of all activities conducted or to be conducted on the campus, and of the capacity of all present and proposed campus development.”*

There are no changes proposed to the existing building.

“210.5 Within a reasonable distance of the college or university campus, and subject to compliance with § 210.2, the Commission may also permit the interim use of land or improved property with any use that the Commission may determine is a proper college or university function.”

The subject application does not propose any off-campus interim use of land or improved property.

“210.6 When a major new building that has been proposed in a campus plan is instead moved off-campus, the previously designated site shall not be designated for, or devoted to, a different major new building unless the Commission has approved an amendment to the campus plan applicable to the site; provided, that for this purpose a major new building is defined as one specifically identified in the campus plan.”

The subject application does not propose to move off-campus any major new building that had been proposed in a campus plan.

“210.7 In reviewing and deciding a campus plan application or new building construction pursuant to a campus plan, the Commission shall consider, to the extent they are relevant, the policies of the District Elements of the Comprehensive Plan.”

OP believes that the proposed plan amendment and further processing advances the educational goals of the District and thus of the Comprehensive Plan.

“210.8 As an integral part of the application requesting approval of new building construction pursuant to a campus plan, the college or university shall certify and document that the proposed building or amendment is within the floor area ratio (FAR) limit for the campus as a whole, based upon the computation included in the most recently approved campus plan and the FARs of any other buildings constructed or demolished since the campus plan was approved.”

No new building construction is proposed.

COMMUNITY COMMENTS

At its regularly scheduled meeting on October 17, 2007, ANC 2A voted to support the application to modify the categories of users for the Lerner Center. This letter was submitted to the Zoning Commission on November 6, 2007.

CONCLUSION

The Office of Planning has reviewed the proposed further processing and modification for George Washington University Lerner Health and Wellness Center and finds that it is generally in conformance with Section 210 of the Zoning Regulations. The Office of Planning recommends approval of the proposed campus plan.