GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF PLANNING

Office of the Director

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**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** D.C. Zoning Commission

**FROM:** Andrew Altman
Director

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
Case 02-32
Exhibit 29

**DATE:** November 25, 2002

**SUBJECT:** Zoning Commission Case No. 02-32 (Further Processing as a Special Exception in Accordance with an Existing Campus Plan for Georgetown University to Construct a Performing Arts Center (Lot 1 in Square 1321)

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## APPLICATION

Application of Georgetown University, pursuant to 11 DCMR Section 3104.1 for special exception approval of its proposed Performing Arts Center Under Sections 3104 and 210 of the District of Columbia Zoning Regulations, 11 DCMR (July 1995, as amended).

## SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning recommends approval of this special exception to allow construction of a new performing arts center on the campus of Georgetown University.

## SITE AND AREA DESCRIPTION

Georgetown University is located on the west side of Georgetown. The Georgetown University campus, including the medical complex on the north side of the campus, is generally a traditional university campus with some "urban campus" aspects on the east side. The campus has a total area of 104 acres and is generally bounded by a property line generally following the line of Prospect Street, N.W. on the south, Glover Archbold Park on the west, Reservoir Road, N.W. on the north, the Cloisters housing community and the Convent of the Visitation on the east generally from P Street to Reservoir Road. The traditional portion of the campus is generally bounded by 37th Street south of P Street, N.W. The "urban portion " of the campus, which is developed within the grid of city streets, extends east to 36th and 35th streets, N.W. The gothic towers of Healy Hall, rising above the Potomac Valley, are part of the special landscape of Georgetown and are



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visible from other locations in the city and from Virginia. The Healy Lawn west of 37th Street, framed by Healy Hall, Copley Hall, White Gravenor and the Lauinger Library, is one of the memorable urban spaces of Washington. This open space serves as the symbolic "front yard" of the University. Almost all of the Georgetown University campus is zoned R-3 with a small portion zoned C-1.

The site of the proposed performing arts center is just west of the Healy Lawn and just north of the roadway that leads west from the Lawn between Healy Hall and Copley Hall. The site consists of the existing Ryan Administration Building and adjacent land to the rear (west), now partly used for parking and service. The site can be described as being in the south-central part of the Main Campus, south of the Jesuit Cemetery, north of Healy Hall and the Old North buildings, behind (west) of Copley Hall and to the east of Habin Hall, a dormitory. The site slopes about 20 feet from the elevation at the front of the Ryan Administration Building to the west edge of the site. The site is shown as "Site AA-5" in the approved campus plan.

**APPLICANT'S PROPOSAL**

Georgetown University proposes an innovative design for the new performing arts center that combines adaptive reuse of the Ryan Administrative Building and new construction for the west portion of the performing arts center that relates to and uses the slope of the site. The Ryan Administrative Building was built in 1905 as the University gymnasium and was converted to administrative office space in the 1950s when interior floors were added. The design of the new performing arts center by Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer Associates removes the interior floors in the Ryan Building and inserts the front entrance to the main theater into the Ryan Building. The front part of the Ryan Building therefore becomes lobby space.

The new portion of the performing arts center steps down the hill to the west and includes a higher stage house. The new section is three stories high and 61 feet high at the stage house. The main theater is a 230-seat proscenium theater. A studio theater of 80 to 100 seats is located further west in the new portion of the building and at a lower level. Total theater seats will therefore be a maximum of 330. Other facilities include a scene shop, costume shop, academic offices, public restrooms, rehearsal rooms, student lounge and dressing rooms.

The University's submission outlines a number of reasons why it is important to build a modern performing arts facility and to bring together at one location the various theater arts activities now scattered at various locations around the campus. If the special exception application is approved, the University would like to start construction in mid-2003.

## ANALYSIS

### Conformance with the Campus Plan

Georgetown University submitted a proposed campus plan for the 2000 to 2010 period to the Board of Zoning Adjustment (BZA) on January 31, 2000 (BZA Application No. 16566). After five public hearings, and much discussion, the BZA issued an order approving the plan, effective March 29, 2001. The proposed plan included additions/renovations to existing buildings, including additions/renovations to the Ryan Administrative Building to create a performing arts center. The site for the new performing arts center was shown as "AA-5" on the Ten Year Development Plan-Land Use Plan in the campus plan.

BZA Order 16566 approving the Georgetown University campus plan included a number of conditions, including two conditions (11 and 12) that relate to events held at the Arts Center and are intended primarily to reduce traffic impacts. They are:

> 11. The Applicant shall avoid scheduling events that attract large number of visitors to the campus during peak traffic times of 7 a.m. to 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. The Applicant shall employ campus personnel as necessary to direct visitors to campus parking areas and to ensure smooth flow of traffic into and out of the campus.
>
> a) All weekday evening performances at the Performing Arts Center expected to draw more than 100 visitors shall begin no earlier than 7:00 p.m.
>
> 12. The Performing Arts Center, Harbin Field, and McDonough Arena shall be used for purposes related to the University or the community, and not for non-University events whose primary purpose is revenue generation.

The performing arts center is the first project presented for further processing in accord with the new 2001-2010 campus plan.

Condition 19 of BZA Order No. 16566 provides that no special exceptions application shall be granted unless the University proves it has consistently remained in substantial compliance with Conditions 1-18 of the Order. Georgetown University has submitted a "Review and Certification of Compliance with Campus Plan Conditions" and asserts that the University is in compliance with Conditions 1-18.

### Urban Design

The design of the Performing Arts Center, both in the renovation of the Ryan Administrative Building, and of the new part of the building, and the relationship of the building to the site, is of high quality. The above grade floors in the Ryan Building will be removed and the front part of the open space in the building, up to the original girders,

will become the lobby of the main theater in the building. This large lobby space will be lit so it will glow from within at night, making full use of the large windows at the front of the Ryan Building. This will provide an interesting building feature just off the Healy Lawn.

The new part of the Performing Arts Center will be designed to relate to the forms of the Ryan Building in terms of the brick of the façade and the use of large window areas. Because of the sloping site, the apparent size of the new part of the building is decreased.

**Transportation**

Transportation impacts are expected to be limited. Even if both theaters were operating at the same time, and all the seats were filled, the total attendance would be 330. The University expects 75% or more of the audience for these productions to be Georgetown University students, who would mainly walk to the performing arts center from nearby dormitories or nearby residences in the community. Some of the non-university audience members would likely come from nearby residential neighborhoods, and would walk to the center. Even if they all came by car (say 80 other audience members) there would likely be no more than 40 vehicles (assuming an average of at least two persons per vehicle). Parking spaces at the University lots and garages are available at off-peak hours. The University will abide by the condition that any event expected to draw more than 100 visitors would begin at 7:00 p.m. or later. Guides will also be available to direct traffic.

The University expects that traffic and overspill parking impacts on neighborhoods surrounding the campus would be limited, and that assumption seems reasonable.

**Conformance with Special Exception Requirements**

Special exception requirements for Colleges and Universities are outlined in Section 210 of the Zoning Regulations.

Section 210.1 of the Zoning Regulations provides for use as a college or university, including a dormitory, on a campus of a college or university, as a special exception in an R-1 District if approved by the Zoning Commission under Section 3104, subject to the provisions outlined in that section. Section 352.2 allows for such uses to be permitted as a special exception in an R-3 District.

Section 210.2 indicates that "each proposed structure 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.

This requirement is especially important because various issues relating to adverse impacts of the University on adjacent neighborhoods have been the critical issue in the last review of the campus plan.

In its statement, the University has outlined several reasons why the performing arts center will not be objectionable. These can be summarized as follows:

- Almost all the programs that will take place in the new Center already take place somewhere on campus, many during the day. These activities will simply be consolidated on campus.
- The performing arts center will be located in the interior of the campus, away from adjacent residential areas.
- Patrons arriving by car will be limited and will, if necessary, be guided to parking locations (see previous discussion on transportation)
- Events expected to draw over 100 visitors will begin at 7:00 p.m. or later (see previous discussion on transportation).
- Events at the Center will be related to the University or the community
- During construction, dirt and rock to be excavated is limited because of the sloping site. The University will require the contractor to follow a trucking routing plan.

The Office of Planning essentially agrees with these evaluations and believes that the performing arts center will not be objectionable to the adjacent community. Indeed, for the portion of the community interested in the dramatic arts, the Center will be a new amenity.

Section 210.3 provides that the bulk requirements normally applicable in the residential district may be increased, provided that the total bulk of all buildings and structures on campus shall not exceed the gross floor area prescribed for the R-5-B District (1.8 FAR).

The application indicates that the existing gross floor area of all buildings and structures on the campus is 4,906, 634 square feet, or 1.12 FAR. The addition of the 19,298 gross square feet proposed for the new performing arts center, the total will be 4,925,932 square feet, or 1.13 FAR. This is considerably below the 1.8 FAR limit and is also well below the 1.14 FAR that would be obtained if all the new projects proposed in the campus plan were built by 2010.

Section 210.4 requires the applicant to prepare a campus plan. A campus plan for the 2000-2010 period was submitted to the BZA by Georgetown University on January 31,2000. BZA Order 16566, effective March 29, 2001, approved the campus plan.

Section 210.5 deals with interim use of land or improved property within a reasonable distance or a university campus. This provision does not apply to this application.

Section 210.6 deals with a major new building moving off a campus and is not applicable to this application.

Section 210.7 requires the Commission to consider to the extent they relevant, the policies of the District Elements of the Comprehensive Plan. The Office of Planning has

indicted the importance of Comprehensive Plan policies in its reports to the Board of Zoning Adjustment on the Georgetown University Campus Plan. The Office of Planning's summary of relevant Comprehensive Plan policies from OP's June 12, 2000 report to the BZA is partly repeated below (italicized for identification).

*The Comprehensive Plan, especially the Ward 2 Plan, contains a number of references directly or indirectly to Georgetown University and adjacent and adjacent neighborhoods. Sec. 102 in Chapter 1 of the Comprehensive Plan includes general references to improving neighborhoods, and also mentions the role of institutions in neighborhoods. Chapter 2, Economic Development, includes a number of sections relating to economic development actions, including interaction between universities and the business community (Sec. 203.2(d).*

*Sec. 1340.3 of the Ward 2 Plan notes that George Washington University and Georgetown University are located in Ward 2 and notes that "The development plans of these universities should not adversely impact surrounding adjacent residential areas..."*

The major concern in relationship to the Comprehensive Plan is the potential adverse impact of Georgetown University on the adjacent residential areas. In this case, especially with the conditions outlined in the BZA Order, the Office of Planning believes that any impacts will be minimal (see previous discussion under Section 210.2, above.

Section 210.8 requires that as an integral part of an application requesting approval of new building construction, the university shall certify and document that the proposed building is within the floor area ratio (FAR) limit for the campus as a whole.

Georgetown University has indicated that the total FAR of campus buildings, including the new performing arts center, will be 1.13, well below the 1.8 FAR limit. See discussion related to Section 210.3 above.

Section 210.9 provides that before taking final action on an application, the Commission shall submit the application to the D.C. Office of Planning and the D.C. Department of Public Works for review and written report. That has been done and this is the report of the Office of Planning.

Section 3104.1 provides that the Board (of Zoning Adjustment) is authorized to grant special exceptions, where, in the judgment of the Board, those special exceptions will be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps and will not tend to affect adversely the use of neighboring property. In accord with section 3104.4, the authorization to grant special exceptions for a campus development plan, and the further processing of an approved campus development plan to permit the construction and use of a specific building or structure, has been assumed by the Zoning Commission.

For the reasons outlined above, the Office of Planning believes that the University's special exception application to permit construction of a new performing arts center, meets the special exception tests.

## ANC AND COMMUNITY GROUPS

Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2E has discussed this proposal and, at their October 29, 2002 meeting, voted to recommend approval of the proposed Georgetown University performing arts center. The Office of Planning has been told that ANC-2E may add some language to the resolution at their December 3, 2002 meeting to provide more explicit links to conditions on hours of operation, limitation on non-university use, and planning for construction traffic.

## OTHER AGENCY COMMENTS

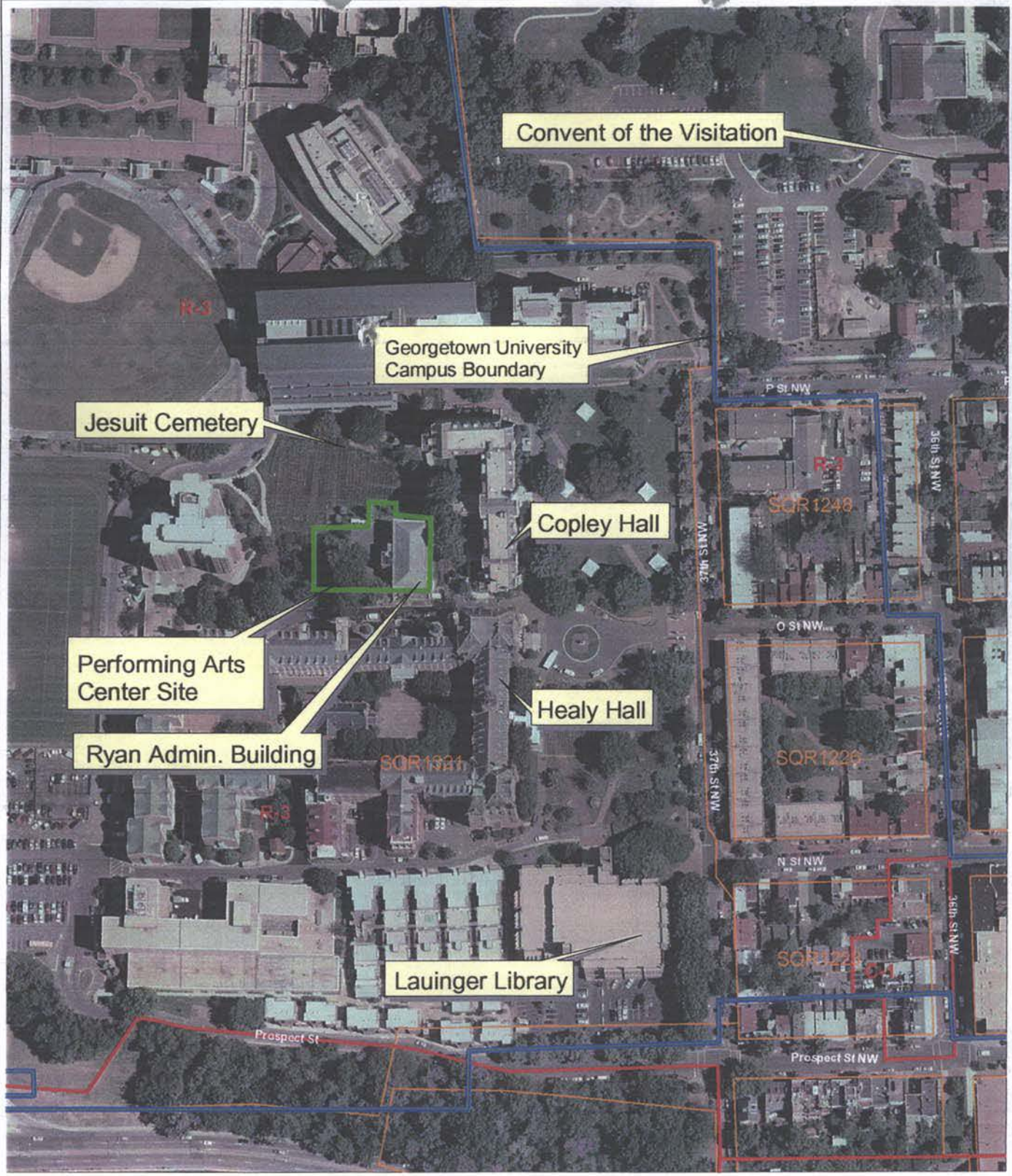
Georgetown University is in the Georgetown Historic District and therefore subject to design review by the Old Georgetown Board (appointed by the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts) and the Commission of Fine Arts. Plans for the performing arts center were presented to the Old Georgetown Board on July 8, 2002 and to the Commission of Fine Arts on July 18. The Commission approved the revised concept design for the project on that date, as noted in an August 5, 2002 letter from the Commission to Georgetown University. Additional design development and concept review was approved November 21, 2002 by the Commission of Fine Arts.

## RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning recommends approval of the requested special exception for Georgetown University to construct a new performing arts center. The Office of Planning suggests that the order reference Conditions 11 and 12 of the BZA Order approving the campus plan and require the University to submit a construction traffic management plan in conjunction with this project. The University in its hearing statement has indicated it will meet these conditions.

Attachment

AA/jf




Feature Key

- Zoning Boundaries
- Square Index

Zoning Commission

Case No. 02-32

GU Performing Arts Center

DC Office of Planning

November 25, 2002

Scale 1:2386

25 0 25 50 75 Feet

Attachment 1