GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF PLANNING

Office of the Director

Memorandum

TO: District of Columbia Zoning Commission

FROM: Andrew Altman, Director
Office of Planning

DATE: September 9, 2004

SUBJECT: Zoning Commission Application #04-20
Special Exception - Howard University

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ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 04-20
EXHIBIT NO. 17

APPLICATION

Application of Howard University - 1840 7th Street, N W , pursuant to 11 DCMR § 3104, 2108, and 210, for special exception approval of an amendment to an approved campus plan, further processing to allow the interim use of a vacant building for grants management offices, and a reduction in the required parking spaces in an R-4 Zone District at 1840 7th Street, N W (Square 417, Lots 42-46, 53, and 822)

OFFICE OF PLANNING RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning recommends approval of the special exception to permit the requested interim office use of the subject property on condition that

- Interim office use as proposed is approved for a period of no more than five (5) years from the date of approval

DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

The subject property, which consists of the Lots 42-46, 53, and 822 in Square 417, includes the entire west frontage of 7th Street, N W from S to T Streets (Attachment 1) Lot 53 is improved with a building designed as a nursing home and is currently unoccupied. This lot is approximately 34,742 square feet Six smaller lots (Lots 42-46 and 822) immediately to the north of the vacant building are also owned by the University and form a nearly square property at the corner of 7th and T Streets, N W. These smaller lots have a combined area of 7,809 square feet for a total site area of 42,551 square feet The existing building will be retrofitted to accommodate the proposed office use The property is located in the Greater U Street Historic District

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The existing structure is a three-story brick building of 50,025 square feet of gross floor area and a 1.43 FAR on Lot 53. Directly across 7th Street from the Property is an entrance to the Shaw-Howard University Metrorail station. To the east of the WMATA property is a vacant warehouse structure (Wonder Bread Building). Farther to the north, fronting on T Street is the historic Howard Theater. Directly to the south is a high-rise apartment building on 7th Street with garden apartments on the western half of the square oriented towards 8th Street and the next block to the west. The prevailing land use west of the subject site is predominantly rowhouse residential which form part of the Shaw neighborhood. To the south of the Metrorail station, at the southeast corner of the intersection of 7th and S Streets, N W is the Howard University Welcome Center. The applicant informed OP that the uses in the Welcome Center might be relocated to the ground floor of the subject building for an active ground floor use, if this application is approved

PROPOSAL and ANALYSIS

Howard University is proposing to use the subject property for its grant management administrative offices. The university owns the property and building but they are not within the area covered by the university's approved campus plan The proposal also includes improvement of the property for a parking lot to accommodate 50 vehicles. The applicant therefore requires special exception approval for a reduction in the number of required parking spaces necessary for the office use.

The subject property is in the R-4 district that permits colleges and universities as a special exception (Section 210). The regulations in Section 210.5 allow a university use outside of the campus plan boundary on a temporary basis if it is within a reasonable distance, is an interim use, the use is determined to be a reasonable university use, and meets the requirements of Section 210 2. The applicant meets these requirements as follows;

SPECIAL EXCEPTION

> *"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 property is located opposite the U Street Metro Station on the northwest corner of 7th and S Streets, N.W. This location is approximately three blocks south of the main entrance of Howard's campus (Attachment 2). Based on submitted drawings, OP surmised that the closest point to the adopted campus boundary is the intersection of U Street, Georgia Avenue, N.W., and Florida Avenues.[1] According to the applicant, the subject property is approximately 1,000 to 1,200 feet south of the campus. In addition, the university operates a shuttle between the main campus and the Metro Station located opposite the property.

[1] See the Howard University Main Campus boundary map in the applicant's *Exhibit D*

"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
OP does not believe that the proposed use would present adverse impacts due to noise. The existing building would be used as administrative offices for the university's grant management function and would not support any classroom functions for the main campus. It is proposed to accommodate approximately 675 faculty and staff members. The activities of the office are independent of the main campus. Therefore, OP believes that the use of the building would generate no more noise than would be expected from an office building

Traffic
According to the applicant, most of the future occupants of the building currently have reserve parking spaces on the main campus. They will continue to utilize the on-campus spaces and walk or take the shuttle bus that travels between the main campus and the Howard University Metro Station to the site The site is proposed to provide up to 50 parking spaces for the office use The information submitted to OP did not contain any information as the location of these parking spaces or how they would be accessed from the site At this time, OP has no information on the District's Department of Transportation (DDOT) assessment of the proposal.

Number of Students
No classes or other daily student activities would be conducted at this location

Other Objectionable Conditions
OP does not believe that the proposed office building will produce any objectionable conditions that would affect the surrounding neighborhood. In fact, the proposed use will add some activity on the site since it has been unoccupied since it was constructed.

COMPLIANCE WITH SECTION 3104

The Office of Planning believes that the proposed use is in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Map since the building's use would accommodate a university function, which is allowed as a special exception.

OP notes that although the property is zoned R-4, the Generalized Land Use Map of the Comprehensive Plan calls for mixed-use development of the subject property including low-density commercial and moderate density residential uses. The existing building, at 1 43 FAR and 40 feet in height, is considered low-density commercial. In addition, the proposed "Convention Center Strategic Action Plan" recommends that the subject property be rezoned from R-4 to C-2-C/Arts Properties to the north, east and south along 7th Street are zoned C-2-B/Arts. The allowed 1.5 FAR for office and other commercial uses in C-2-B would accommodate the proposed office use as a matter of right.

The site is specifically referenced in the Uptown Destination District Development Framework Plan This recently completed draft plan for the area on 7th Street between Rhode Island Avenue

and Howard University and on Florida Avenue between 6th and 13th Streets is in the process of formal adoption. It is the result of ten months of collaboration between the City and the local neighborhood and provides a framework for review of development proposals, including the subject application The Plan calls for the site to be a mixed-use development including ground floor retail The proposed office use would provide an opportunity to animate the currently vacant building. The interim use proposed in this application would be compatible with the Plan in the short term provided that a five-year time limit were strictly enforced and that the site was subsequently redeveloped.

PARKING REDUCTION

2108.1 ***The Board of Zoning Adjustment is hereby authorized to reduce the amount of parking spaces required for nonresidential uses under Section 2101.1 in accordance with the requirements of Section 3104 for special exceptions, pursuant to the provisions of this section.***

2108.2 ***The amount of required parking spaces shall not be reduced by more than twenty-five percent (25%); provided, that for a use that is in the category of "All Other Uses" in the table in Section 2101.1, the amount of required parking spaces shall not be reduced by more than fifty percent (50%).***

In this instance, the applicable parking requirement appears to be one space for each 600 square feet of gross floor area and cellar floor area as required for "All Other Uses " Therefore, the subject property of 50,025 square feet of gross floor area would require 84 spaces Submitted plans show 50 spaces or 59 percent of the required spaces Therefore, the application could be considered by the Board for a reduction as follows:

2108.2 ***The Board shall give consideration to the:***

(a) Nature and location of the structure;

The proposed office use would be located in an existing building which fronts on a major thoroughfare through the District The 7th Street/Georgia Avenue corridor is well served by public transportation, including Metrobus and Metrorail (Refer to Site Description) The subject property is directly across from 7th Street from the Howard University/Shaw Metro station

(b) Maximum number of students, employees, guests, customers, or clients who can reasonably be expected to use the proposed building or structure at one time;

According to the applicant, the maximum number of persons expected to occupy the building at any given time is 675. No classrooms or student activity is expected.

(c) Amount of traffic congestion existing or that the building or structure can reasonably be expected to create in the neighborhood;

The proposed use is not likely to create additional congestion beyond typical rush hour periods. As previously stated, the majority of staff already has on-campus parking privileges and would access the proposed location either through walking or shuttle bus service provided by the University. Minimal exit and entry is expected beyond normal office use, including office deliveries during the daytime. No traffic is expected to be generated at night.

(d) Quantity of existing public, commercial, or private parking, other than curb parking, on the property or in the neighborhood that can reasonably be expected to be available when the building or structure is in use; and

According to the applicant, the convenience of the Metrorail station and provision of the shuttle bus service would minimize any need for additional off-street commercial parking. In addition, the provision of on-campus parking for faculty and staff would satisfy a significant part of the parking need for this building and mitigate the necessity to park on neighborhood streets

(e) Proximity to public transportation, particularly Metrorail stations, and the availability of public transportation service in the area or a ride-sharing program approved by the D.C. Department of Transportation.

The availability of Metrorail service directly opposite the subject property and the University's shuttle service to and from the main campus to the station would benefit and accommodate the proposed office use at this site. In addition, the site is located on an efficient Metrobus route, which spans the north-south boundaries of the District.

2108.4 If the applicant relies on a ride-sharing program, the applicant shall demonstrate to the Board that the program shall continue as long as the use continues.

While not a ride-sharing program, the campus's shuttle bus service to and from the Metrorail station is a permanent feature of campus policy. Therefore, it is expected that the interim office use would benefit from this service for the expected time the proposed office use would be in operation.

2108.5 Prior to taking final action on an application, the Board shall refer the application to the D.C. Department of Transportation for review and report.

OP understands that the application has been referred to the District's Department of Transportation

COMMUNITY COMMENTS

The proposed interim use on the site was discussed at part of the Uptown Destination District Development Framework Plan and the proposed interim use was supported The applicant has also informed OP that the ANC-1B recommended approval of the application.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

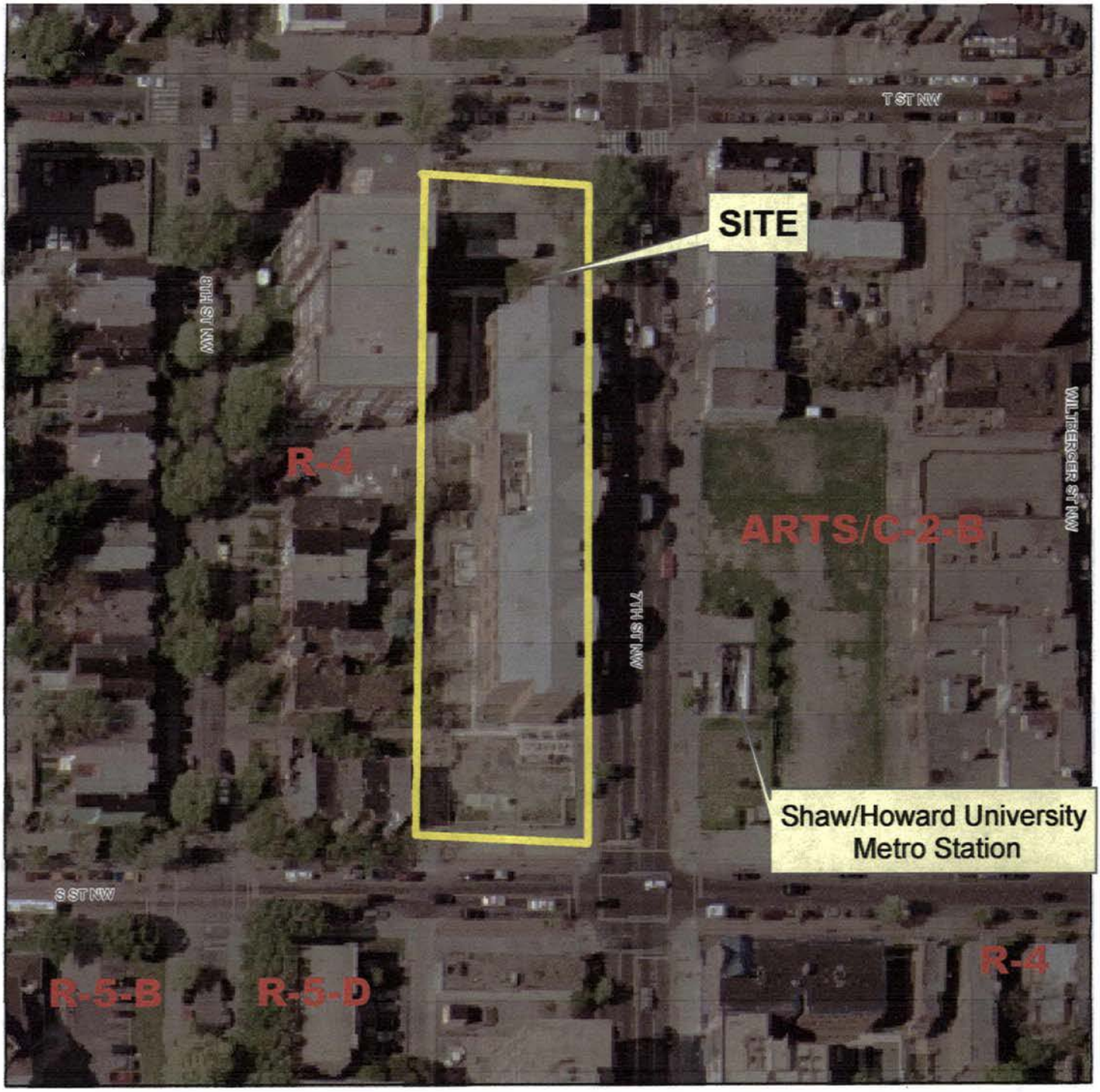
The requested office use would accommodate much needed office space required by the university's grant management The use would allow a building that is currently unoccupied to become functional in the community Since the use would serve existing faculty and staff, who are already provided with reserved parking the proposed number of parking on the site would be sufficient to accommodate visitors and delivery services. The main campus is located within walking distance or through shuttle bus service, and as such, traffic to the site would not have a negative impact on the surrounding neighborhood The Office of Planning finds that the request is in conformance with the requirements of Section 210 of the Zoning Regulations The Office of Planning recommends the proposed campus plan amendment and parking reduction request for the subject site be **APPROVED** with the following condition:

- Interim office use as proposed is approved for a period of no more than five (5) years from the date of approval

ATTACHMENT:

1 Site Location
2. Campus Plan Boundary

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Feet

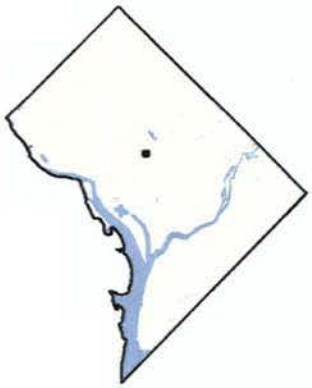
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District of Columbia
Anthony A. Williams, Mayor

Office of Planning ~ September 7, 2004

This map was created for planning purposes from a variety of sources. It is neither a survey nor a legal document. Information provided by other agencies should be verified with them where appropriate.

Site Location
ZC Application #04-20
Howard University
1840-50 7th Street, NW



Attachement 1



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Feet

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Campus Plan Boundary
ZC Application #04-20
Howard University
1840-50 7th Street, NW



Attachement 2