

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF PLANNING



Office of the Director

Memorandum

TO: District of Columbia Zoning Commission

FROM: *HLS for*
Harriet Tregoning, Director
Office of Planning

DATE: March 16, 2007

SUBJECT: Final Report for BNA Washington (CESC 1229-1231 TRS Inc & CESC 1127 LLC)
ZC #06-35
Consolidated Planned Unit Development and Map Amendment

APPLICATION

CESC 1229-1231 TRS Inc & CESC 1127 LLC filed an application for a Consolidated Planned Unit Development (PUD) to expand three existing office buildings and convert two to residential use. The site is Square 24, Lots 109 & 883.

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning recommends approval of the application.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

The site is within the West End neighborhood. The project is located on the east side of 25th Street N.W. midway between M and N Street. The site currently contains two six-story and one seven-story office buildings. On either side of the site on 25th Street are office buildings. There are existing residential units on top of the northern building. To the west and north is the Rock Creek Park. The properties are visible from Georgetown on the west side of the park. To the south and east are medium to high density office and residential uses. The subject square and squares to the east are zoned CR. The south side of M Street is mostly zoned C-2-C with a small R-5-B section. Francis Junior High School lies approximately one block from the site along N Street.

Prior to 1974 this area of the West End was zoned C-M-2. The Zoning Commission rezoned the area in 1974 in order to encourage a mixed-use/residential neighborhood which would retain some of its existing features. The result has been a shift in the development pattern from mid-rise office buildings to a mix of residential, office, hotel, retail, and other uses that is continued by this project.

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia

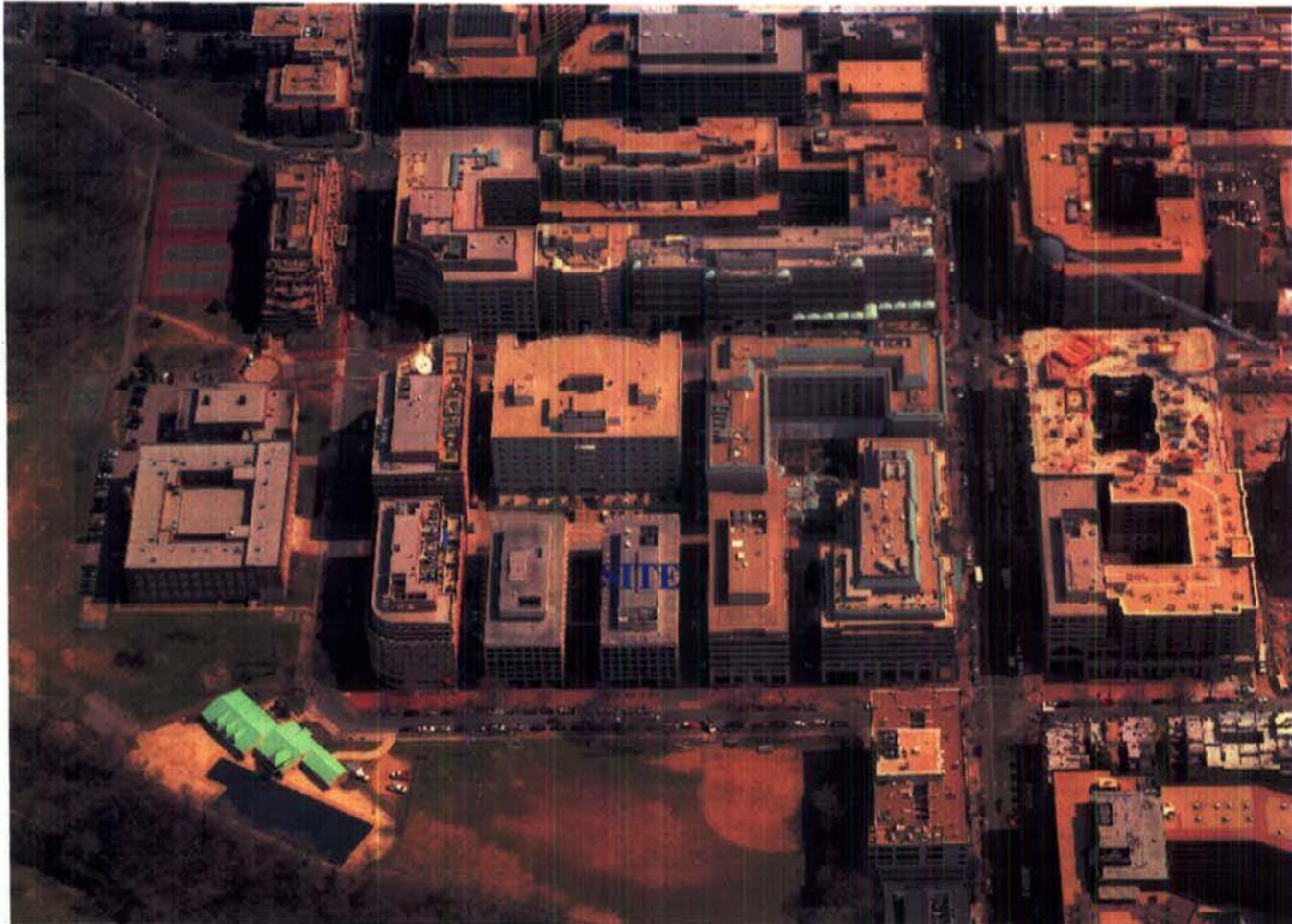


Figure 1: Aerial View

PROPOSAL

The proposal is to add on to all three existing buildings to a total height of 110' for each. The two northern buildings are proposed to be combined into one U-shaped residential structure. The southern building would remain office use. The residential building would contain between 275-295 residential units, including 7,667 square feet of affordable housing. This affordable housing represents the IZ program requirements for the new residential square footage on the top floors. The proposed office building will total approximately 143,000 square feet of office use. Total FAR for the three structures would be approximately 6.1 and the lot occupancy is proposed at 70%.

A total of 334 underground parking spaces would be accessed from 25th Street. 222 spaces are for the residential and 112 spaces are for the office building. Loading would be accessed from the existing private alley in the center of the square. The roof of the residential building would contain both recreation space and green roof elements.



Figure 2: Site Area

ZONING

The site lies in the CR zone. The applicant is requesting height and FAR flexibility within the permitted PUD guidelines for this zone. In addition, the applicant is seeking several other areas of relief from the CR district requirements that result from the conversion of and addition to these buildings.

Zoning Tabulation

	Existing	CR PUD	Proposed
Minimum lot area	75,317	15,000	75,317
FAR	290,455 sf	602,536 sf	459,163 sf total 315,830 sf residential 143,333 sf commercial
Height	68'-85'	110'	110'
Lot Occupancy	70%	70%	75% residential
Rear Yard	14.5'	27.5'	28.5'
Parking	334 commercial	80 residential 79 commercial	222 residential 112 commercial
Recreation Space	N/A	47,375 sf	15,792 sf
Loading	Office: 2-30 ft berth 2-100 sf platform 1-20 ft space Residential: N/A	Office: 2-30 ft berth 2-100 sf platform 1-20 ft space Residential: 1-55 ft berth 1-20 ft space 1-200 sf platform	Office: 2-30 ft berth 2-100 sf platform 1-20 ft space Residential: 1-45 ft berth 1-200 sf platform

FLEXIBILITY

Height

The applicants are seeking height up to the maximum allowed under the CR PUD guidelines. All three existing buildings are proposed to be extended to 110'. OP has discussed with the applicant the extension of the trellis from the penthouse across portions of the roof and explained concerns discussed by the Commission over the Height Act and general design repetition of this architectural element.

FAR

The matter of right FAR for the CR district is 6.0. Through the PUD process, the CR district allows FAR of 8.0, of which 4.0 may be non-residential uses. The proposal is for a 6.1 total FAR with approximately 1.9 FAR of non-residential uses.

Recreation Space

The CR district has a requirement for private recreation space for the residents of the building equal to 15% of the gross floor area dedicated to residential purposes. The project proposes recreation space at 5% of the residential area.

Court Requirements

The closed court on the north side of the residential building is nonconforming due to the closure of the public alleys on this square. The increased height will extend this non-conformity and require additional relief.

Roof Structures

The applicant has requested minor relief from the roof structure requirements, specifically the requirements for a single roof structure, roof structures of a single height, and a one-to-one setback from exterior walls. The building has multiple roof structures at varying heights and setbacks in an attempt to maximize space on the roof for recreation and green elements.

Parking Requirements

Due to the existing column structure in the building, the drive aisles will narrow at points to less than the required 20 feet in width. In addition, certain parking spaces between columns will be less than the required nine feet in width as shown on the parking level plan.

Loading

The applicant is seeking relief from the loading requirements for the residential building. The required 55' loading berth is proposed at 45' and the applicant requests relief from providing the 20' loading space. In their report, DDOT noted that the existing alley can accommodate large trucks for loading and that the existing loading facilities can be managed by a facilities manager.

Rear Yard

The applicant is proposing first floor terraces on the rear of the building which would decrease the rear yard setback to 15' from a requirement of 27.5'.

Side Yard

The building will be maintaining and extending the existing side yards which are non-conforming at only 6" on the north side of the residential building and 4' 9" on the south side of the office building. The office building has a previous variance approval for the side yard.

Multiple Buildings on a Single Lot

The applicant proposes one record lot for the entire project requiring relief from Section 2517 to allow the office and residential building to be located on the same lot. This allows for the existing lots to be combined into a single lot and prevents further areas of relief for lot occupancy and rear yard.

OP has reviewed each of these areas of relief and found that, with the exception of the additional height and FAR requested, the relief is the result of the existing conditions on the lot and do not create any further difficulty for the buildings or the surrounding area. The side yard, rear yard, and parking cannot be changed from the existing situation. There is no space for additional loading or an expanded court on the ground level. The roof structures are designed to be as invisible as possible from the street and do not meet all of the technical requirements of the regulations. Finally, the residential recreation space requirements have been repealed by the Commission, but included as relief here until the order is released.

The application does not increase or exacerbate any existing non-conformity nor affect the intent or integrity of the Zoning Regulations. OP recommends approval of the requested areas of relief.

PUD EVALUATION STANDARDS

The purpose and standards for Planned Unit Developments are outlined in 11 DCMR, Chapter 24. Section 2400.1 states that a PUD is “designed to encourage high quality developments that provide

public benefits.” The proposed development will be constructed in a neighborhood that is currently anticipating the development of more housing. In order to maximize the use of the site consistent with the zoning regulations and be compatible with the surrounding community, the applicant is requesting that the proposal be reviewed as a consolidated PUD. This will allow the utilization of the flexibility stated in Section 2400.2.

The overall goal is to permit flexibility of development ands other incentives, such as increased building height and density; provided, that the project offers a commendable number of quality public benefits and that it protects and advances the public health, safety, welfare, and convenience.”

The proposed development brings with it a number of qualities that will benefit this neighborhood. The development will add over 250 new residential units through the conversion of existing office space. It will enliven this area near the park and on a square containing mainly office uses that is currently under used after dark. In addition, the buildings will provide parking beyond the zoning requirements at above a one to one ratio to prevent additional parking impacts on the surrounding neighborhood. Finally, the renovation of the buildings will result in newly remodeled and improved architecture.

Section 2403 further outlines the standards under which the application is evaluated.

2403.3 *The impact of the project on the surrounding area and the operation of city services and facilities shall not be found to be unacceptable, but shall instead be found to be either favorable, capable of being mitigated, or acceptable given the quality of public benefits in the project.*

The development of the site will have a positive impact on the continued improvement of the area. City services such as water and sewer are currently available on the site in sufficient capacity for the development.

PUBLIC BENEFITS AND AMENITIES

Since the setdown meeting, the applicant has further defined the project amenity package and expects to file letters from the beneficiary organizations prior to the hearing. The community benefits offered by the applicant are generally commensurate with the additional height and other flexibility requested.

2403.9 *Public benefits and project amenities of the proposed PUD may be exhibited and documented in any of the following or additional categories:*

- (a) Urban design, architecture, landscaping, or creation or preservation of open spaces;*
- (b) Site planning, and efficient and economical land utilization;*
- (c) Effective and safe vehicular and pedestrian access, transportation management measures, connections to public transit service, and other measures to mitigate adverse traffic impacts;*
- (d) Employment and training opportunities;*
- (f) Housing and affordable housing;*

- (h) *Environmental benefits, such as stormwater runoff controls and preservation of open space or trees;*
- (i) *Uses of special value to the neighborhood or the District of Columbia as a whole;*

The applicant has offered the following amenity package:

1. Creation of housing units through the conversion of the existing office buildings at 1229 and 1231 to residential use, including affordable units consistent with inclusionary zoning requirements.
2. \$200,000 toward streetscape improvements along both sides of 25th Street. This includes replacement of Francis Field fence with ornamental metal fence, sidewalk paving, planting strips, and new tree boxes.
3. \$150,000 contribution toward facilities improvements at Francis Field which will be outlined further at the public hearing by the Friends of Francis Field.
4. \$150,000 contribution toward technological and facilities improvements to Francis Junior High School that will be further defined at the public hearing.
5. Commitment to 20 LEED points on the residential building and 16 LEED points on the office building.

OP considers these benefits to be generally commensurate with the relief being requested. Each of the contributions will be more significantly defined to specify exact projects and set dollar amounts prior to the public hearing. The applicant expects to have confirmation from Francis Junior High School and Friends of Francis Field regarding exact expenditures for amenity money.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AND PUBLIC POLICIES

Both the existing and new draft Generalized Land Use Maps recommend the subject site for a mix of high density residential and medium density commercial uses. The proposed development would be consistent with the use and density of both categories. The proposed development would further the goal of strengthening residential neighborhoods and remain consistent with land use and policies of the Comprehensive Plan.

The PUD is also consistent with other sections of the Comprehensive Plan including the following Major Themes of the Plan:

- Section 102 - Stabilizing and Improving District Neighborhoods,
- Section 106 – Respecting and Improving the Physical Character of the District
- Section 107 - Preserving and Ensuring Community Input

The Housing Element of the Comprehensive Plan outlines objectives to support residential development and the provision of affordable housing. Policies established in support of housing objective include:

202.2 (a) Encourage the private sector to provide new housing to meet the needs of present and future District residents at locations consistent with District land-use policies and objectives;

The proposal will provide significant investment in the area. Between 275-295 new residential units are being provided through the redevelopment with approximately 3% of those as affordable units.

Sections of the Ward 2 Plan offer objectives that are furthered by the proposed development. Section 1327 proposes actions in support of residential land use, while Section 1329 encourages the development of office buildings. The proposal offers support of both of these goals by first converting two underused sites to residential use, providing support and enhancement of the existing West End neighborhood, and second improving the quality of office use in the remaining building on the site.

The elements of the Draft 2006 Comprehensive Plan also provide support for the project. The general elements of the Near Northwest Area call for the retention of existing housing and support the provision of new residential. Specific to the Foggy Bottom/West End area, Policy NNW-2.5.4 calls for support of West End park areas and would be furthered by this project.

Physically, the proposed development will complement the character of the area. The property is located where existing city infrastructure is already in place and is easily accessible.

AGENCY REFERRALS AND COMMENTS

On October 16, 2006, DDOT filed a report stating that they have no objections to this project. To date, OP has received no other agency referrals or comments on this project.

COMMUNITY COMMENTS

At its regular February 2007 meeting, ANC 2A voted to oppose the PUD application largely in opposition to the amenity package. Since that meeting, the applicant has increased the size of the amenity package and continued to work with the ANC to reach approval. OP expects that the ANC may take further action on the proposal prior to the public hearing.

RECOMMENDATION

OP believes that this project will enliven this office-intensive block of the neighborhood by converting office use to residential. We feel that the location is an appropriate place for this conversion due to the parkland and recreation center immediately across the street from the site. OP believes that the proposed PUD is not inconsistent with the elements of the Comprehensive Plan and recommends approval of the application.