

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF PLANNING



Office of the Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Zoning Adjustment

FROM:  Jennifer Steingasser
Deputy Director

DATE: January 12, 2007

SUBJECT: Waiver of Rules for Late Submittal of a Final Report for Zoning Commission Case # 06-38, Howard University

The attached final report for Zoning Commission Case # 06-38, Howard University, is submitted less than seven days prior to the Zoning Commission Public hearing. The Office of Planning respectfully requests that the Board waive its rule and accept the report into the record

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia

CASE NO. 06-38

EXHIBIT NO. 48

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Office of the Director

TO: District of Columbia Zoning Commission

FROM:  Jennifer Steingasser
Deputy Director

DATE: January 12, 2007

SUBJECT: Final Report for Zoning Commission Case No. 06-38 (Howard University Men's Living and Learning Center)
2400 6th Street, NW (Square 3057, Lot 92)

PROPOSAL

Howard University (applicant) requests, pursuant to 11 DCMR, Sections 3104 and 210 a special exception amendment and further processing of the Central Campus Plan to permit the construction of a Men's Residential Living and Learning Center. Further, the applicant seeks a special exception pursuant to Section 411.11 to allow three separate enclosures for its roof top structures which are within the required setbacks. The property is in the R-5-B district.

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

OP supports the special exceptions to amend the campus plan, further processing, and deviations from the roof structure requirements. The proposed living/learning center will provide on campus housing as well as much needed facilities for faculty. The proposed facility is internal to the campus and is not adjacent to any neighborhood properties, and will not generate excessive traffic as stated in the DDOT report. Generally, the application meets the requirements of the special exceptions. OP therefore recommends approval of the special exceptions to amend the campus plan, further processing and for the roof top structures.

SITE and AREA DESCRIPTION

The subject site is located on the eastern side of the campus between Fifth Street, Crampton Auditorium, Childs Hall and Green Memorial Stadium and is 127,395 square feet in area. The site was formerly developed with a building that housed the women's gymnasium but was demolished in July 2001, and has remained undeveloped. (Attachment 1)

PROPOSAL

The application is to construct a new Men's Residential Living and Learning Center for male, undergraduate freshmen. Currently, male students are housed in Drew Hall which was constructed in 1957 and is very outdated and inefficient and is to be vacated in 2008. The proposed 117,465 square foot building embodies a new concept in providing on-campus housing for students by creating a communal living/learning environment intended to enhance the academic and social experience for freshmen students. The residential portion will house 414 male, undergraduate students in single, triple, and quadruple occupancy with apartments for graduate assistants and a community director. The building will be five stories high (50 feet) with the four upper floors devoted to the residences. The lower floors will accommodate faculty offices, classrooms, computer lab, media center, cyber café, convenience store, and a multipurpose room. The building will also include 73 below grade parking spaces and 22 surface spaces for faculty as freshmen residents are not permitted to park on campus.

The materials for the building will be a combination of red brick, cast stone and pre-cast stone, glass and metal panels. The materials, the architectural style, and sloping roofline will be compatible with the character of existing buildings in the area. The integration of glass will give the building a more contemporary feel especially on the façade that faces the McMillan Reservoir. It will also allow users of the building to have clear views over the reservoir. A glass cupola in front of the main entrance will provide a distinctive landmark for the building and allow natural light into the public spaces and offices below. Improvements around the building will include extensive landscaping, repaving and plantings of the driveway between the building and 6th Street, and a new brick retaining wall around the track at Green Stadium (Plan L1 01).

ADOPTED CAMPUS PLAN

The current Howard University Campus Plan, *University City 20/20*, was adopted in 1998 and will expire in 2008 (BZA Order 16330). For the period of the campus plan, the University proposed to construct two new buildings and renovate nine existing buildings. One of the buildings proposed for construction, the Medical Library, has been completed and a number of the buildings scheduled for renovation have been completed. (Attachment 2 – Campus Plan Boundary Map)

ANALYSIS

The proposed development requires an amendment to the campus plan which shows the site developed with a women's gymnasium. That building was not slated for demolition or renovation in the campus plan but was demolished in 2001. The adopted campus plan did not contemplate additional residential housing and in fact stated that *"the occupancy rate for all residence halls is 85% The Office of Residence Life has indicated that there is no immediate need for additional student housing unless enrollment increases significantly"*. Since the approval of the campus plan, the University has identified a need to provide additional housing for undergraduate students, to upgrade existing housing facilities, and modernize its academic facilities. There has been a marked increase in the desire for on-campus housing for a number of reasons including the cost of living in the District and security concerns. The University currently has 4,000 beds for undergraduate students and freshmen who are required to live on campus and who utilize about 35-38 percent of the available housing. The remaining spaces are allotted

by a lottery system to any other students. There is currently a waiting list for undergraduate students to live on campus. The proposal will allow the University to house additional students on-site, specifically, male students who the University is trying to recruit. Neither the student enrollment nor the faculty will increase as part of this application.

Section 210 of the Zoning Regulations allows college or university use as a special exception and this authority carries over to the R-5 district. The following shows how the proposed amendment and further processing of the living/learning center meets the requirements of Section 210.

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.

The campus plan for Howard University was adopted in 1998 and the proposal is to amend the plan to allow living/learning center that will serve only the faculty and students of the university.

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.

The applicant states that there will be no increase in student enrollment, faculty or staff associated with this new living/learning center. The proposed living/learning center is within the boundary of the central campus and does not abut any residential areas. The living/learning center will not generate excessive noise that would impact properties and uses adjacent to the university. The building will have 73 underground parking spaces and 22 surface spaces to serve faculty who have offices in the building. The University has a policy of not providing parking to freshmen students. This policy is clearly outlined and articulated to students. To serve the students, the University has a shuttle bus that will make stops at the living/learning center and other on- and off-site campus facilities.

The building has two vehicular access points off 4th Street NW. One will provide access to the underground parking. The second entrance will be to the loading docks at the rear of the building (Plans L1 01), and includes additional space for trucks to turn around and parking for trucks that transport equipment, food, etc. to serve events at Green Stadium and the Blackburn Center. However, the applicant has not addressed the logistics of moving the equipment and food between the parking area and the facilities, made difficult by a large difference in grade and retaining walls.

The Department of Transportation (DDOT) report states that the vehicular traffic generated by the project can be accommodated with little or no impact on the surrounding transportation network. The applicant states that the student enrollment will not be increased above that approved by the 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.

The subject property is within the R-5-B district which allows a FAR of up to 1.8. The building will have a FAR of 0.92. The campus plan approved a maximum FAR of 2.75 and currently the overall FAR is 1.38. The proposed building will increase the FAR to 1.41 which is well within the maximum FAR allowed.

- 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.*

The current campus plan approved in 1998, outlines all the uses existing and envisioned by the University including the need for additional classrooms and faculty space, but did not anticipate the need for additional housing. The plan was approved for an overall FAR of 2.75, but was developed at 1.38 FAR. Since then, two new buildings have been constructed, and others renovated or demolished. These activities have resulted in a current FAR of 1.38. The proposed living/learning center will increase the FAR to 1.41. The proposal is to amend the adopted campus plan to accommodate the living/learning center.

- 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 proposed living/life center is within the main campus and will not be an interim use.

- 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.*

No use was previously approved for this building site.

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.

The District of Columbia Comprehensive Plan, 2006, Educational Facilities Element outlines the following policies.

“Policy EDU-3 3.4: Student Housing

Continue to encourage the provision of on-campus student housing in order to reduce college and university impacts on the housing stock in adjacent neighborhoods. . . . ”

The University requires that all freshmen reside on campus. This policy reduces the number of students who seek housing in the adjacent neighborhoods. The proposed new residential building supports this University and Comprehensive Plan policy.

“Policy EDU-3 3 5: Transportation Impacts of College and Universities

Support ongoing efforts by colleges and universities to mitigate their traffic and parking impacts by promoting ridesharing, carpooling, shuttle service, bicycling, and other transportation demand management measures. The provision of adequate on-site parking for institutional uses also should be encouraged ”

The parking spaces provided will only be available to faculty and visitors to the site as freshmen students are not permitted to have cars on campus. The University provides shuttle bus services between facilities on campus as well as outside of the campus.

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.

The OP requested a detailed documentation of the buildings that have been built, renovated and demolished since the adoption of the campus plan in 1998. However, this had not yet been provided by the applicant. The adopted campus plan approved a maximum FAR of 2.75, but development was at 1.39 FAR. The campus plan anticipated the development of the Health Science library and Learning Center and Interdisciplinary/Technology Center and a number of renovations and adaptive reuse which would bring the FAR to 1.35. The applicant states that the Health Science library and Learning Center and Interdisciplinary/Technology Center have been constructed, and four other structures demolished, including the women's gymnasium. In 2003 the Zoning Commission adopted a plan to construct a new Bethune Hall dormitory for female undergraduates, but this building has not been constructed. The FAR of the campus currently stands at 1.38.

ROOF STRUCTURES

The applicant has requested special exception relief under Section 411.11 to permit roof structures that do not meet the requirements of Sections 400.7 (setback) and Section 411.3 (number of enclosures)

- 400.7 If housing for mechanical equipment or a stairway or elevator penthouse is provided on the roof of a building or structure, it shall be erected or enlarged as follows*
- (b) It shall be set back from all exterior walls a distance at least equal to its height above the roof upon which it is located, and*
- 411.3 All penthouses and mechanical equipment shall be placed in one (1) enclosure, and shall harmonize with the main structure in architectural character, material, and color*

The building as proposed will have three roof top structures; a cooling tower, an elevator over run, and a stair enclosure (Plan A-117). Due to the design of the building, it is not feasible or practical to have one enclosure around all the structures. The building has a “U” shaped design to integrate it with adjacent structures and to minimize open, green spaces and views. The cooling tower has to be located at one end of the building while the elevator has to be located so that the residential lobby area is separated from the main lobby of the building. To lessen the effect of the three separate enclosures, the applicant has proposed a sixteen-foot screen that will appear as a sloped roof around the building to screen the individual enclosures.

The elevator override and stair enclosure do not meet the 1.1 setback requirement. The elevator override which has a height of 15 feet is setback approximately eight feet and the stair enclosure which is ten feet high has a setback of 1 foot. The stairs, which are to be used when the elevators are out of service, are close to the elevator and because of the long, narrow corridors, it would be difficult to locate them within the required setback area and still provide easy access to the outdoors. In order to maximize space on the academic floor and to separate the access to the residential portion of the building, the elevator is placed in a corner of the building.

The requested rooftop structure relief would not be detrimental to the intent of the Regulations and will improve the functioning of the building to better serve the residents and faculty who will use the building. The adjacent buildings surrounding the site are all Howard University buildings. The screen will improve the overall appearance of the building by concealing the views of the structures from ground level providing a roof form in character with other surrounding buildings on the campus.

COMMUNITY COMMENTS

The applicant has met with ANC 1B on a number of occasions. At its October 5, 2006 meeting, the ANC recommended approval of the proposal. On November 21, 2006, ANC-5C also voted to recommend approval of the proposal. The application is supported by the Bloomingdale Civic Association, Inc. and the Pleasant Plains Civic Association.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

OP supports the special exceptions to amend the campus plan, further processing, and deviations from the roof structure requirements. The proposed living/learning center will provide on campus housing as well as much needed facilities for faculty. The proposed facility is internal to the campus and is not adjacent to any neighborhood properties, and will not generate excessive traffic as stated in the DDOT report. Generally, the application meets the requirements of the special exceptions. OP therefore recommends **approval** of the special exceptions to amend the campus plan, further processing and for the roof top structures.

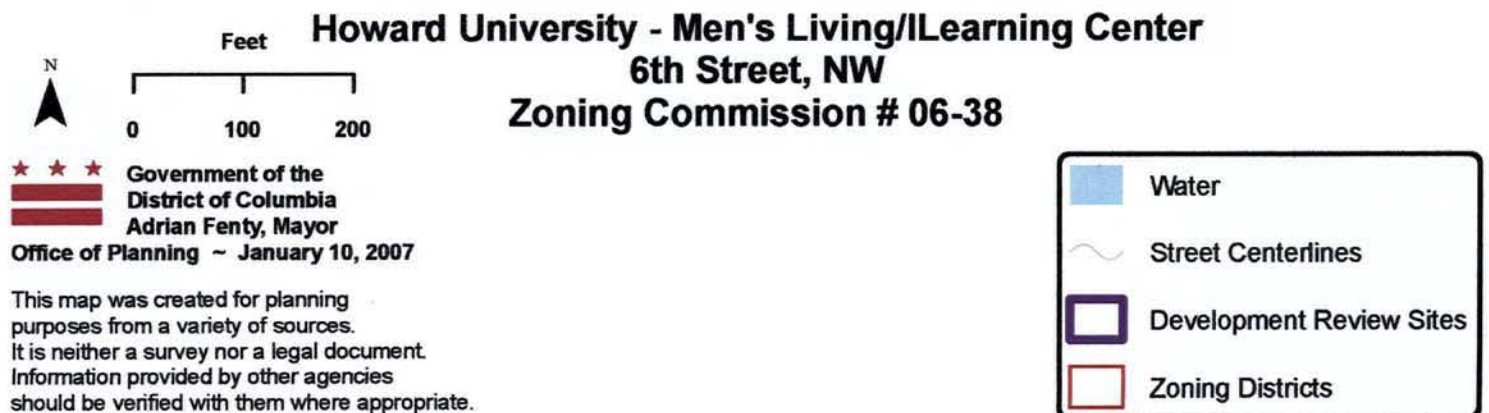
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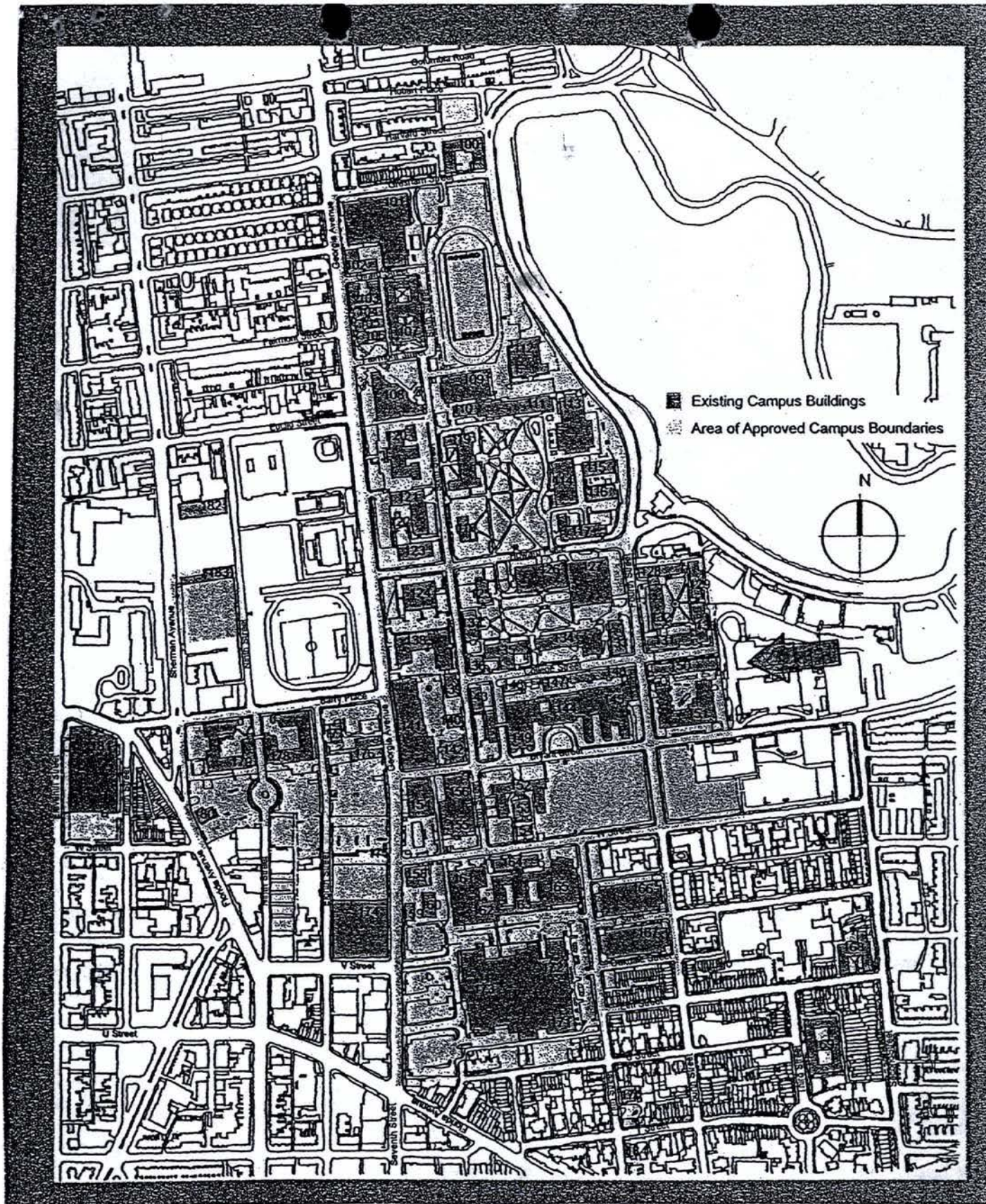
1. Site location
2. Campus Plan Boundaries Map

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Campus Plan Boundaries Map