

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF PLANNING



MEMORANDUM

TO: Zoning Commission of the District of Columbia ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia

FROM: Jennifer Steingasser *JS*
Deputy Director

DATE: June 20, 2008

SUBJECT: Z.C. CASE NO. 08-10 – Request filed by Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman, LLP
for a special exception for further processing for Catholic University of America at
620 Michigan Avenue, N.E.

CASE NO. 08-10
EXHIBIT NO. 12

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APPLICATION

This applicant requests further processing of an approved campus plan to permit the construction of residence hall for undergraduate student housing.

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning recommends **APPROVAL** of the application as submitted by the applicant.

BACKGROUND

Zoning Commission Order 02-20, effective May 23, 2003, approved the "Campus Plan 2002" subject to the following conditions:

1. *Approval of the Campus Plan shall be until May 22, 2012.*
2. *The approved Campus Plan boundaries shall be as set forth in the 2002 Plan. There shall be no change to the Campus Plan boundaries approved in connection with the 1992 Plan.*
3. *The maximum enrollment shall be 7,500 full-time equivalent (FTE) students based on the fall enrollment numbers. The full-time equivalent student enrollment shall be calculated as follows:*
 - a. *Undergraduate student FTE: the total number of semester credit hours awarded to undergraduate students divided by 15 semester hours.*
 - b. *Graduate student FTE: the total number of semester credit hours awarded to graduate students divided by 9 semester hours.*
 - c. *Total FTE: the sum of the undergraduate and graduate student FTEs.*
4. *The number of faculty and staff shall not exceed 1,710 during the 10-year period of the plan.*
5. *A maximum of 2,340 parking spaces shall be provided over the 10-year period of the plan.*

6. *A maximum density of 0.44 FAR or a gross floor area of 2,729,175 square feet shall be permitted by the year 2012.*
7. *The areas of the South Campus where buildings may be demolished shall be graded and landscaped in a professional manner in a park-like setting (e.g., seeded) within six months of demolition of any or all buildings.*
8. *One hundred percent of the traditional, full-time undergraduate, non-commuter freshman and sophomores are required to live on campus.*
9. *CUA shall provide a yearly report to the Zoning Commission documenting enrollment numbers, the number of beds available, and the number of beds utilized by undergraduates and graduates.*
10. *CUA must submit to the HPO and the Zoning Commission a historic preservation element to the Campus Plan within one year of the effective date of this Order. Until the element is submitted to the Commission, CUA will not demolish any structures other than Salve Regina and St. Bonaventure Halls.*

Zoning Commission Order 04-10, effective August 4, 2004, approved 26 temporary housing units in the center of the campus, an 8 building student housing complex to house approximately 96 students.

Zoning Commission Order 04-25, effective August 5, 2005, approved a map amendment to change the status of the West Campus from unzoned to the R-5-A District.

Zoning Commission Order 04-25A, effective July 26, 2005, approved a campus plan amendment to 2002 Campus Plan to add the West Campus to the Campus Plan, to permit:

- A pavilion for outdoor performances and event field;
- An unpaved cross country track;
- An environmental research area;
- Two areas of spiritual repose;
- A maintenance, truck and material storage structure;
- A renovated gate house; and
- Temporary housing units.

The order also approved a further processing request to the 2002 Campus Plan to permit the establishment of those uses, subject to the following conditions:

1. *The applicant shall incorporate an evaluation of the historic resources on the Property into its current historic resources inventory that was developed as part of the 2002 Campus Plan;*
2. *The conditions of Z.C. Case 02-20, the approval of the 2002 Campus Plan remain in force, with the exception of Conditions No. 2. and 5;*
3. *Condition No. 2 of the 2002 Campus Plan shall be amended as set forth by this application to include Parcel 121/29 in Square 3663;*
4. *Condition No. 6 of the 2002 Campus Plan shall be amended to permit a maximum gross floor area of 2,748,265 square feet by the year 2012;*
5. *The temporary housing units may be constructed for use in the Fall of 2006 and may remain in place for a total of three (3) academic years only; and*

6. *The hours of operation for the performance pavilion shall be limited to 10:00 a.m. through 10:00 p.m. daily.*

Zoning Commission Order 06-39, effective January 31, 2007, approved a campus plan amendment to permit three residence halls in the northeast corner of the campus totaling 325,000 square feet of gross floor area, and a further processing to the Amended 2002 Campus Plan to permit:

- Construction of a new residence hall;
- Relief from the rooftop structure requirements; and
- An extension of the use of temporary housing units on the University's Main Campus through 2012

subject to the following conditions:

1. *The conditions of Z.C. Case No. 02-20, the approval of the 2002 Campus Plan, remain in force, as amended and supplemented by the conditions of Z.C. Case No. 04-25.*
2. *Condition number 5 of Z.C. Case No. 04-25 shall be amended to permit the use of the temporary housing units through the year 2012.*

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant requests special exception approval for further processing under the approved Campus Plan to construct a second residence hall near the intersection of Taylor Street and John McCormack Road. The proposed building is to consist of 120,000 square feet, have a height of 7 stories and 89 feet, and will contain 382 beds. It will also include an office and living space for the resident director.

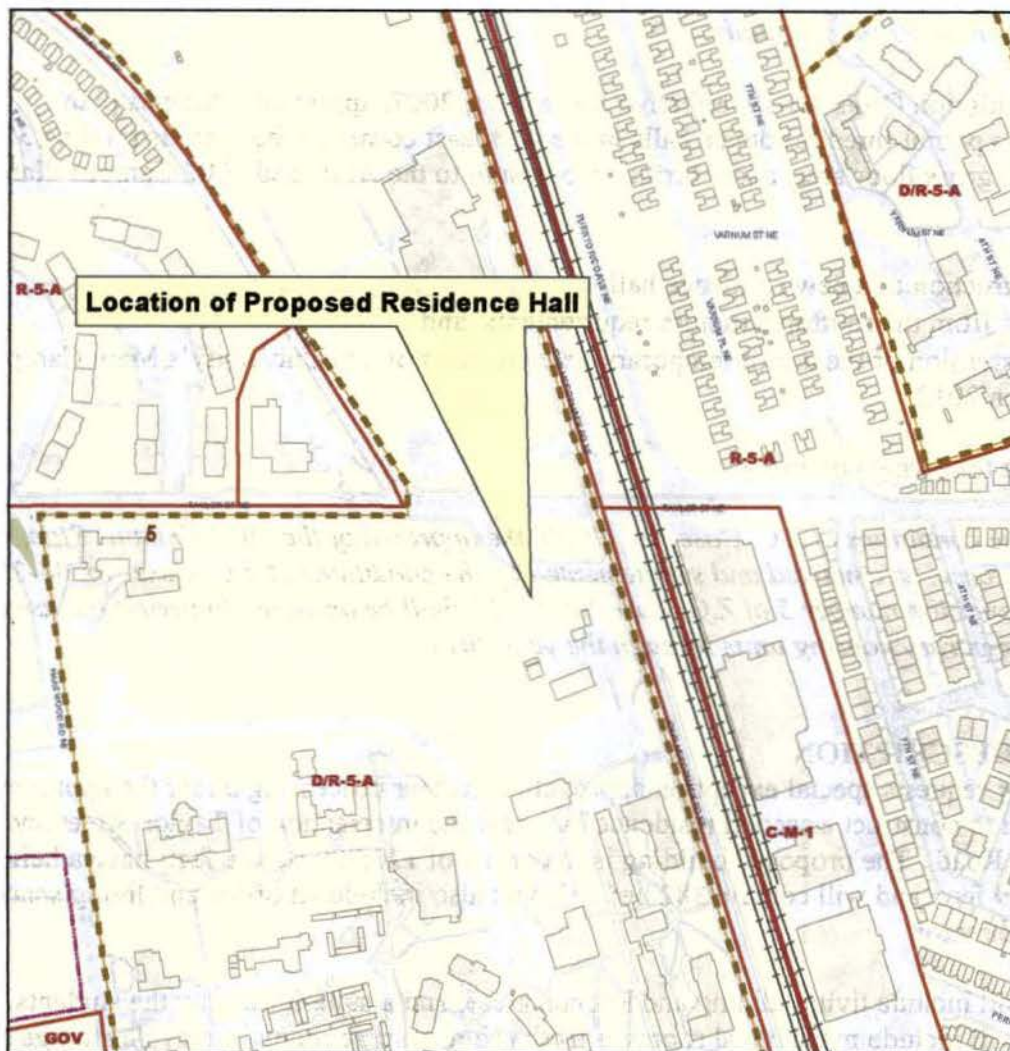
Each floor will include living, dining and kitchen areas, and a suite for use by the students. The lower level will include mechanical rooms, a trash room, storage rooms, a bicycle storage room, laundry facilities and a lounge.

ZONING REGULATIONS

Section 210 of the Zoning Regulations, Colleges and Universities, sets forth the criteria required for approval of university uses within residential zone districts.

- 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 subject application requests special exception approval by the Zoning Commission to permit the construction of a dormitory on the campus of Catholic University, located within a residential zone district.



Zoning and Vicinity Map

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 proposal to construct a residence hall will not result in an increase in the number of students or an increase in faculty and staff. It is located at corner of Taylor Street and John McCormack Road, across from the CSX and Metrorail tracks to the east. To the north, across Taylor Street are athletic facilities for the campus. To the south and west is the remainder of the Catholic University campus. Therefore, the use is not likely to become objectionable to neighboring property.

- 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 application proposes only a minor increase in FAR. A 120,000 square foot increase in gross floor area will increase the FAR from 0.34 to 0.36, which is less than the maximum FAR permitted of 0.44 by the Campus Plan.

- 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 2002 Campus Plan, last amended in 2007 pursuant to Zoning Commission Order 06-39, includes a plan for all present and proposed improvements. The last amendment to the plan permitted the construction of 325,000 square feet of dormitory space, to be divided among three new residence halls to be constructed in the northeastern corner of the campus. The subject application is to construct a 120,000 square foot residence hall in the northeastern corner of the campus, consistent with the Campus Plan.

- 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 interim use of land located off-campus.

- 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 major new buildings are proposed to be moved off-campus as a result of this application.

- 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 subject application is for the construction of a residence hall, pursuant to the approved Campus Plan. The request is consistent with the following policies of the Educational Facilities Element of the 2006 Comprehensive Plan as follows:

Policy EDU-3.3.2: Balancing University Growth and Neighborhood Needs

Encourage the growth and development of local colleges and universities in a manner that recognizes the role these institutions play in contributing to the District's character, culture, economy, and is also consistent with and supports community improvement and neighborhood conservation objectives. Discourage university actions that would adversely affect the character or quality of life in surrounding residential areas.

Policy EDU-3.3.4: Student Housing

Encourage the provision of on-campus student housing in order to reduce college and university impacts on the housing stock in adjacent neighborhoods. Consider measures to address the demand for student housing generated by non-District institutions with local branches.

The proposed addition of 120,000 square feet of gross floor area of on-campus student housing is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan in that it will allow for the growth and development of a local university, maintain the low density residential neighborhood and will contribute toward maintaining Catholic University as an institutional use in Ward 5 with a carefully controlled infill development.

- 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 subject application contains documentation of the existing and proposed FARs for the campus as a whole. The existing FAR is 0.34 and the proposed FAR is 0.36, less than the maximum 0.44 permitted.

The 2007 amendment to the Campus Plan permitted the addition of 325,000 square feet of dormitory space within three residence halls. The first residence hall, which was approved for further processing under ZC Order 06-39, is currently under construction and consists of approximately 125,000 square feet of gross floor area. This second building consists of approximately 120,000 square feet of gross floor area. Combined, these two residence halls total 245,000 square feet of floor area, within the parameters set for all three buildings combined.

210.9 *Before taking final action on an application for use as a college or university, the Commission shall submit the application to the D.C. Office of Planning and the D.C. Department of Transportation for review and written reports.*

The subject application was referred to the Office of Planning and the Department of Transportation for review and written reports. The Department of Transportation informed the Office of Planning by telephone that they have no comments.

The proposed residence hall is in conformance with the requirements of Section 210 of the Zoning Regulations, as described above.

COMMUNITY COMMENTS

ANC 5C10 Single Member District Commissioner Timothy Day informed the Office of Planning by telephone on June 11, 2008, that there were no issues with the subject application.

AGENCY COMMENTS

DDOT informed the Office of Planning by telephone on June 20, 2008 that they had no comments on the subject application.

RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning recommends **APPROVAL** of the application as submitted by the applicant.