

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DISTRICT DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION



Transportation Policy and Planning Administration

Memorandum

TO: Jamison L. Weinbaum, Director
DC Office of Zoning

FROM: Karina Ricks *KR*
District Department of Transportation

DATE: March 22, 2010

SUBJECT: ZC case 09-19 (Application of The George Washington University)
2100 Foxhall Road, N.W.

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APPLICATION

Application of The George Washington University (the "Applicant") pursuant to 11 DCMR §§ 3104 and 210, for special exception approval of a new campus plan for the University's Mount Vernon Campus, located at 2100 Foxhall Road, N.W. (Square 1374, Lot 850), as well as further processing of an approved campus plan for the renovation of and addition to Ames Hall. In conjunction with the addition to Ames Hall, the University also requests special exception relief pursuant to Section 411.11 to locate the roof structures on the addition within the required setback from the exterior walls.

RECOMMENDATION IN BRIEF

The District Department of Transportation (DDOT) recommends conditional support of the Applicant's request for a special exception approval of a new campus plan. DDOT has reviewed the Applicant's transportation study that provides some information for the proposed campus plan. The Applicant is providing a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program for the development of four new academic buildings and one new residential building. DDOT wishes to address the Applicant's calculation of traffic counts for the campus plan, George Washington University's Transportation Management Plan, including the shuttle

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bus (Vern Express), and increased pedestrian safety on Whitehaven Parkway for the site to operate better.

DDOT ANALYSIS

The initial project scope to review potential adverse impacts was evaluated by DDOT staff. That scope included intersections in the adjacent neighborhood to the proposed development site. Subsequent meetings with the Applicant revealed the need for two additional intersections for study.

The Applicant has informed DDOT that it plans to significantly limit vehicle access to the existing W Street entrance, located between Foxhall Road and 46th Street N.W. Although the road will be open to emergency service vehicles, DDOT credits the Applicant with closing this access point to private passenger vehicles and instead utilizing the existing Whitehaven Parkway entrance for almost all private passenger vehicles entering the campus. DDOT will need to review the new public space application for the W Street entrance. The Applicant has produced some preliminary plans for the W Street mountable curb that will allow emergency service vehicles to have access. However, DDOT reserves the right to refuse public space permits associated with the W Street and Whitehaven Parkway access points. The Whitehaven Parkway driveway will continue to serve as the primary vehicle entrance for the campus. The Applicant has shown landscaping plans along Whitehaven Parkway that include construction of new pedestrian amenities. The new sidewalk will need to continue for the length of the Applicant's property along Whitehaven for DDOT to approve the public space permit for improvements on Whitehaven.

DDOT understands GW will install an additional five (5) parking spaces to the existing 196 parking spaces located on the campus. This is a commendable action that should not be overlooked. GW Mount Vernon Campus employs sustainable transportation measures. DDOT agrees with GW's Transportation Impact Study that states, "Additionally, GW should conduct parking occupancy counts annually in order to ensure that sufficient parking exists on Campus and prevent spillover on neighborhoods." Appropriate TDM measures will prevent parking spillover and GW should focus less on providing more parking with the annual review.

VEHICLE TRIP COUNTS

DDOT agrees with the slight trip generation increase associated with the 10 year campus plan. The transportation impact study declares, "A total of 80 vehicle-trips entered or exited the campus during the AM peak hour and 52 vehicle-trips entered or exited the campus during the PM peak hour [currently]. Therefore, an additional 58 AM peak hour vehicle trips and 37 PM peak hour vehicle trips would be generated [by the proposed campus plan]." GW should strive to continue to reduce the trip generation numbers with improved TDM measures.

DDOT has requested that GW provide additional trip generation numbers to present a significantly more conservative projection of those who may drive single occupancy vehicles to the Mount Vernon Campus. That forthcoming information will demonstrate the effects the TMP measures have on the trip generation to and from the campus.

The campus serves a number of different programs and activities during summer months (i.e. summer camps, swimming pool and tennis courts used by community). GW has not collected trip generation data and should be held responsible to perform this action. The data should be shared with DDOT Policy and Planning staff, ANC 3D and Palisades Citizens Association to understand if there are neighborhood impacts that may be remedied by the University.

TRANSPORTATION MANAGEMENT PLAN (TMP)

The Vern Express is a vital transportation element for the GW-Mount Vernon Campus to function successfully. The GW sponsored private bus service transports students, faculty, visitors and local residents between the Foggy Bottom Campus and Mount Vernon Campus. The distance is approximately three miles between the university locations. GW has been offering the shuttle service to Foxhall/Palisades residents who live in the Mount Vernon Campus vicinity. DDOT views the Vern Express shuttle service as a success that significantly lowers the private passenger vehicle trips the D.C. street grid would not be able to handle. The Vern Express should continue as a TDM element to convey the students and faculty between the campuses. GW is aware the Vern buses should run on sustainable energy and therefore would be quieter and would have less environmental impact on the Northwest D.C. neighborhoods. The Vern shuttles should also be equipped to allow shuttle riders to bring bicycles. The buses should be furnished with a bicycle rack on the front of them in order for students and faculty to bring bicycles to each campus.

There is a Zipcar car sharing vehicle located on the Mount Vernon Campus that GW notes is a TMP measure. DDOT agrees the Zipcar is a component of the overall TDM plan. The Applicant needs to furnish the vehicle usage data to DDOT to clarify how often the vehicle may be rented by faculty and students. It has been suggested the Applicant should pay for a car sharing membership for all students and faculty located at the Mount Vernon Campus. The paid membership would increase car sharing usage and lower the personal vehicle trips.

While carpooling to the campus is another means to reduce vehicle trips, it is a concept that is not easily enforceable for this location. The carpool participants may not drive to the location in a collective effort *each* day. DDOT's findings show it is difficult to collect reliable carpool data and its effect on trip reduction. GW reports in the November 2009 Transportation Impact Study, "In order to encourage carpooling, thereby reducing single-occupant vehicle trips, GW initiated a carpool incentive program effective January 1, 2009. Under the program, employees who register as a carpool are eligible for a reduced parking fee at the Mount Vernon Campus

(p. 10).” However, the Applicant provides no data reflecting the number of carpool participants.

The Applicant suggests the bicycle parking on the campus shall continue to increase with the campus plan. GW should install covered bicycle parking for students and faculty on the campus. Each of the new buildings in the campus plan will need to follow DDOT standards for bicycle parking. The residential dormitory building should incorporate interior bicycle parking that will allow students to have better accessibility to bicycle parking. The four new academic buildings will need visitor bicycle parking near all entrance points for students to easily park bicycles.

A unique feature the Mount Vernon Campus offers to its students and faculty is the use of its shopping cart loan program. Students and faculty may visit the University Police Department (UPD) Gatehouse to borrow a shopping cart for close-by pedestrian trips to retail locations, on MacArthur Boulevard. The cart loan is a free program that has been in place for the last couple of years at the Mount Vernon Campus. DDOT commends the Applicant for this novel amenity that encourages students to walk through the neighborhood to purchase groceries.

The Zoning Commission should adopt the GW Mount Vernon Campus TMP into the order if the campus plan case is approved. The TMP measures are the following:

- The Vern Express shuttle service shall remain the primary means of transport between the Foggy Bottom Campus and Mount Vernon Campus. The Applicant should furnish the 24 passenger vehicles with bicycle racks for passengers to travel with their bicycles between each campus. The Vern Express shuttle buses should run on sustainable energy and inform DDOT Policy and Planning staff of its efforts to change its existing bus fleet.
- A car sharing vehicle shall remain on the campus and GW shall be responsible to share the usage data of the vehicle with DDOT-Policy and Planning staff on an annual basis. GW will share the cost benefit of paying for car sharing memberships for all of its residential students and faculty at the Mount Vernon Campus. The university should work with Zipcar to review whether there is the demand for another car sharing vehicle on the campus.
- The existing carpooling program should remain intact and the current practice should be reviewed for effectiveness. A carpool survey should be generated on an annual basis and those results should be shared with DDOT Policy and Planning staff.
- The bicycle parking for each of the five new buildings in the campus plan should comply with District of Columbia Municipal Regulations that state, “The number of bicycle parking spaces provided shall be at least equal to five percent of the number of automobile parking spaces provided.” Based on existing bicycle usage on the campus, the Applicant will need to install a number of bicycle parking spaces through the campus. GW Mount Vernon will need to comply with The Bicycle Commuter and Parking Expansion Act of 2007 that states, “A residential building owner shall provide

at least one secure bicycle parking space for each 3 residential units for all new residential buildings and substantially rehabilitated buildings with 8 or more units.”

- The continued use of the existing shopping cart loan program that encourages students and faculty to walk to close-by retail areas for shopping.
- GW should set aside an 8'x40' area for a future bikesharing location on its campus. The location should be easily accessible to the neighborhood residents.

GW visited DDOT on February 2, 2010 to discuss a number of public space and transportation elements associated with the campus plan application. DDOT applauds GW's willing participation to consider the various potential impacts and concerns. The successful plan review meeting provided DDOT the opportunity to have a number of questions answered and it assisted with DDOT's position to support GW's campus plan. A pedestrian safety concern arose from that meeting and the University appears to be taking the necessary steps to address it. In its March 11, 2010 letter to the Zoning Commission, GW states, "In response to a request from DDOT, the University has agreed to implement a sidewalk and adjacent landscaping along Whitehaven Parkway from the entrance to the Secondary Access Road to the western border of the campus."

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

If the Commission votes to approve the application, DDOT strongly recommends the Commission require the previously mentioned TMP measures for the Applicant to receive the requested special exceptions.

GW should provide DDOT data on the following items occurring at the Mount Vernon Campus:

- All summer programs (summer camps, swimming pool and tennis court usage, etc.) at the campus and the number of vehicle trips generated by those programs.
- A carpool survey to those carpool participants to measure its effectiveness.
- Car sharing usage by Mount Vernon Campus students, faculty and staff and investigating whether another car sharing vehicle is appropriate.

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