

**BEFORE THE ZONING COMMISSION  
OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

**Application of the Johns Hopkins University  
Modification without Hearing**

**Z.C. Case No. \_\_\_\_  
ANC 2B**

**I. Summary of Requested Action**

This is an application (“**Application**”) of the Johns Hopkins University (the “**Applicant**” or “**JHU**”) for approval of a modification without hearing to the university use at 1717 Massachusetts Avenue NW (Square 157, Lot 850) (“**Property**” or “**1717 Mass**”) approved in Board of Zoning Adjustment Order No. 16526 (the “**Order**”).<sup>1</sup> With this Application, the Applicant proposes to remove one of the conditions of approval in the Order (the “**Modification**”).

The Applicant submits this Application pursuant to Subtitle Z § 703 of the District of Columbia Zoning Regulations. Included with this request is a copy of the Order (Exhibit A).

**II. Property, Background, and Approval**

The Property is located in the Dupont Circle neighborhood and within the boundaries of Advisory Neighborhood Commission (“**ANC**”) 2B. It is also located in the MU-2/DC Zone District. The Property contains approximately 20,017 square feet of land area and is improved with an eight-story building containing university offices and classrooms, and underground parking (“**Building**”). The Property is located mid-

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<sup>1</sup> At the time the Order was issued, the BZA had jurisdiction over college/university use. This Application is being filed with the Zoning Commission since it now has jurisdiction over college/university use.

block and is bounded by Massachusetts Avenue to the south; a multifamily residential building to the north; a multifamily residential building to the east; and a multifamily residential building to the west.

In 2000, pursuant to the Order, the Board of Zoning Adjustment (“**BZA**”) approved a special exception allow the conversion and use of the Building as university classrooms and office space. The Order has three conditions of approval, including Condition #1 that states the following: “The programs offered are primarily evening and weekend graduate courses, not day courses.”

JHU continuously owned, occupied, and used the Building for university classrooms and office space in accordance with the Order since its approval. JHU also previously owned and occupied two other nearby buildings – 1619 Massachusetts Ave. NW and 1740 Massachusetts Ave. NW – for its Washington, DC academic programs.

In 2023, JHU shifted all its Washington, DC academic programs from the Dupont Circle neighborhood, including from the Building, to a new location at 555 Pennsylvania Avenue NW. JHU has been actively marketing the Building for sale as required under an agreement with the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development to sell 1619, 1740, and 1717 Massachusetts Ave, NW after JHU’s relocation of academic activities to 555 Pennsylvania Ave. NW. Most of the potentially interested purchasers have been potential owner/occupants, including other colleges and universities.

However, despite interest in the Building from other colleges and universities, these potential purchasers have been concerned with the unusually restrictive Condition #1 in the Order. This condition significantly restricts any college or university from using the Building during daytime hours during the week for classes, and without the ability to offer any non-graduate courses. This condition significantly constrains regular academic operations and class offerings, and it renders the Building functionally useless for most any other college or university. Accordingly, few college or university potential purchasers are interested in buying a building that would significantly limit their operations and offerings in this way. The result has been that every interested college or university thus far has declined to proceed with a purchase of the Building.

### **III. Requested Modification and Satisfaction of the Standards for Approving a Modification without Hearing**

#### ***A. Proposed Modification***

As stated above, the requested modification without hearing is to allow the Building to be used and occupied by a college or university that can offer a regular schedule of classes and a diverse selection of programs. Accordingly, the Applicant requests that Condition #1 in the Order be removed entirely.

#### ***B. Satisfaction of Modification without Hearing Standards***

Subtitle Z § 703 establishes the standards and requirements for a modification without hearing. A modification without hearing is “a modification in which impact

may be understood without witness testimony, including, but not limited to a proposed change to a condition in the final order...” (Subtitle Z § 703.6.)

As described above, the proposed Modification to remove Condition #1 falls squarely within the standards for a modification without hearing. The impacts of this proposed limited Modification can be understood without the need for testimony.

Condition #1 in the Order puts the Building at a significant market disadvantage when potential college/university purchasers could find other comparable buildings in Downtown Washington – and in close proximity just a few blocks south of Massachusetts Avenue – without any such restrictions. Condition #1 has rendered the Building largely unsellable for educational use when it otherwise could be used for one of the few industries (college/university) that is looking to locate or expand in downtown Washington. Removing Condition #1 will allow the Building to fairly compete in the market for college/university purchasers.

Fortunately, the proposed Modification will accommodate the Building being sold and used as entitled without any adverse or unanticipated impacts. The BZA already evaluated and approved the university use in the Building, but the proposed Modification will allow for another college or university to operate in the Building commensurately with the typical operations of most colleges and universities. Importantly, as described above, the Building was one of three neighborhood buildings that JHU used for university academic programs, including classrooms and offices. Condition #1 was previously agreeable to JHU only because JHU could

otherwise conduct unrestricted classes in the nearby 1619 and 1740 Massachusetts Ave. NW buildings, but both buildings subsequently have been sold. One of those buildings that operated with daytime classes and multiple programs – 1740 Massachusetts Ave. – was sold for a use other than higher education, resulting in the loss of one building in the neighborhood being used by a university. Thus, by removing Condition #1 to allow the Building to be used by a college or university without time and program restrictions, there would not be net additional or cumulative impacts in the neighborhood because of the reduction already of one building used for unrestricted university use. In other words, allowing the Building to operate as a college or university without the restrictions of Condition #1 will not result in impacts that are greater or different than when JHU was previously operating from the three neighborhood buildings.

Having been occupied and operated by a university, the Building is already well suited to accommodate another college/university use, even without the restrictions of Condition #1. The Building provides adequate parking in an underground garage, is close to multiple public transit options, and already accommodates the internal spaces for offices and classrooms. Thus, the proposed Modification will not result in adverse impacts on traffic, parking, noise, or other neighborhood conditions.

#### **IV. Service on Parties and Community Engagement**

The only party to the BZA Case No. 16526 was the affected ANC 2B, which is concurrently being served with this Application in satisfaction of Subtitle Z § 703.10.

## **V. Conclusion**

The proposed Modification to remove the time and program restriction in Condition #1 is consistent with original approval for university classrooms and office in the Building. However, without the Modification, JHU is significantly disadvantaged in its ability to sell the Building to another college or university. JHU's experience with potential buyers thus far has demonstrated the burden that this unnecessary limitation creates. Removing Condition #1 in the Order could allow the Building to be sold to another college/university in a reasonable amount of time and to a buyer for which the impacts are already understood. Use of the modification without hearing process described in Subtitle Z § 703 is appropriate for this Application. Therefore, the Applicant respectfully requests that the Commission consider and approve this modification without hearing at its next available public meeting.

Please feel free to contact the undersigned if you have any questions or comments regarding this Application.

Respectfully submitted,  
GOULSTON & STORRS PC

\_\_\_\_/s/\_\_\_\_\_  
Cary R. Kadlecek

### Certificate of Service

The undersigned hereby certifies that the foregoing documents were delivered by electronic mail to the following addresses on October 14, 2025.

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