

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF PLANNING



ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia

Office of the Director

CASE NO. 94-01A

EXHIBIT NO. 19

MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Zoning Commission

FROM: *JLS*
Ellen McCarthy, Director OP

DATE: March 3, 2006

SUBJECT: Zoning Commission Case No. *94-01A* ~~89-234C~~
Modification Request

APPLICATION

1331 L Street NW, L.P. (the applicant) has submitted a request for a minor modification to the Planned Unit Development case 89-234C. The modification relates only to the design of the building.

The applicant explains the history of the PUD and the final design details in the submitted statement.

RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning **recommends approval of the requested modification.**

SITE AND AREA DESCRIPTION

The subject site is a mid-block lot in the 1300 block of L Street, NW. The adjoining lots are developed with building of varying height- 22 feet up to 128 feet. It is located immediately adjacent to the central business district just southeast of Thomas Circle, in Square 247. The square is bound by 14th Street, NW, to the west, 13th Street to the east, L Street to the south and Massachusetts Avenue to the north. The site is located along the southern half of the square, just south of Green Court.

ZONING

The site was rezoned from HR/SP-2 to a consolidated PUD with related map amendment to C-4 in 1991. Parcels within the square facing 14th Street are also zoned C-4 as is square 248, directly across L Street to the south. The PUD was extended in 1997 by Order 684-C for an additional ten years with a noted expiration of December 30, 2010 (expiration at that time was December 1999).

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For that extension request the applicant stressed “continued unfavorable economic conditions” and stated that they were “prepared to build the office building as soon as it is financially prudent to do so.” The Order noted that “[T]he Commission believes that an extension of time, as requested by the applicant is not unreasonable, that the rationale for granting approval of the PUD has not changed, and that no adverse consequences will result from approving the request.” A new owner is now willing to begin construction and build the office building and is requesting the Zoning Commission approve the modified design.

Condition 14 of the original Order 684 requires that prior to a building permit being issued the applicant must submit exterior material samples to the Commission for final approval and that no additional public hearing need be held for the Commission to approve the materials. In reviewing the original design and current modern office standards, the applicant has decided to modify the design to a more modern and competitive building.

Design

The overall height, size, and massing have not been changed from the original PUD but the design has been updated to a modern contemporary style. Since setdown the applicant has further refined the design.

Rear and Side Alley Treatment

Special emphasis has been placed at the ground level, alley and rear court. The street front retail space clearly addresses L Street and through the relocation of the office lobby the retail spaces are more usable. The side alley is fifteen feet wide and accesses Green Court. There are three commercial buildings that front only on Green Court. The proposed modified design responds to this unique situation by extending windows and lighting down the alley and around the court, creating an increased sense of safety and visibility for business patrons that was not emphasized in the original design.

Tower

The tower element has been proposed for the western end of the building. Since the setdown, the tower has been lowered by two feet and narrowed by two feet-six inches. The narrowing and lowering of the tower element has resulted in a more graceful element that draws orientation to 14th Street and provides identification to this mid-block location. The tower should not be visible from the surrounding streets and neighborhood, because as the applicant notes, the lot is not at a street intersection, does not front on a public space, park or reservation, and the square already has two taller buildings, most notably 1101 14th Street to the west and 1301 L Street to the east of this lot.

The applicant has also stated that there will be no light box or distinguishing lighting element on the tower or rooftop beyond what is required by Construction Code for safety. The tower will be distinguished by materials and design articulation.

Trellis

The trellis provides a vertical architectural element that OP believes gives the building distinction. These vertical roof elements are not uncommon in Washington and make the roof space more pleasant for casual use by building occupants. OP supports the trellis on this building and believes that the use of rooftops for non-commercial uses by the building occupants is to a certain degree a product and benefit of the Height Act. There is an opportunity for occupants to be outside but not on the street, and for views around the city and onto the streets.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Comprehensive Plan Generalized Land Use Map identifies Square 247 for a mix of high-density residential and high-density commercial.

The proposal is not inconsistent with many elements of the Comprehensive Plan and specifically it is consistent with Chapter 9- Downtown Plan Elements.

Major themes within the Comprehensive Plan relevant to this development are:

- 1) Stabilizing and improving the District's neighborhoods, and;
- 2) Preserving and Promoting Cultural and Natural Amenities
- 3) Respecting and improving the physical character of the district;
- 4) Increasing the Quantity and Quality of Employment Opportunities in the District
- 5) Promoting Enhanced Public Safety

Chapter 9, The Downtown Element of the Comprehensive Plan addresses the specific goals and policies for the downtown and private office space:

900.5 Demand for private office space in Downtown will increase as development in areas to the west is completed and market conditions improve. Office development will bring jobs and reinforce the regional importance of the Downtown. Office development Downtown shall be used to leverage the production of housing Downtown or affordable housing throughout the District of Columbia, including Downtown:

- (a) A general target of thirty-five million one hundred thousand square feet (35.1 million ft.²) of office space has been established, a significant increase from a base of thirteen million nine hundred thousand square feet (13.9 million ft.²). Office development Downtown shall be used to leverage the production of housing Downtown or affordable housing throughout the District of Columbia, including Downtown;
- (b) Because market forces tend to favor office development over other uses, office development must be directed to ensure that the land use targets for

retail, hotel, residential, and arts and cultural space are met. Office development Downtown shall be used to leverage the production of housing Downtown or affordable housing throughout the District of Columbia, including Downtown; and

- (c) Offices should be located throughout Downtown, with concentrations around Franklin and Judiciary Squares and in Downtown East (bound by 3rd and North Capitol Streets, and by Constitution, Louisiana, and Massachusetts Avenues, N.W.). Office development Downtown shall be used to leverage the production of housing Downtown or affordable housing throughout the District of Columbia, including Downtown.

905 PRIVATE OFFICE LAND USE

905.1 The Downtown private office land use objective is to obtain major new office development in Downtown, consistent with other land use and design objectives.

905.2 The policies established in support of the Downtown private office land use objective are as follows:

- (a) Guide office space to appropriate locations including priority office areas, such as Franklin Square, Downtown East, and Judiciary Square;
- (b) Use office market forces as devices to obtain other critical land uses, such as retail, hotel, residential, and arts uses; and
- (c) Direct and apportion office development as necessary to obtain the desired mix of other land uses in mixed-use areas.

This PUD and the requested modifications continue to be consistent with these Comprehensive Plan objectives by creating a new modern office building and enhancing the safety and appearance of the adjacent alleys and the businesses located in them by extending the retail window and lighting along the alleys.

The amenities of the PUD included a significant \$3,000,000 contribution to the Salvation Army PUD for off-site residential housing and a \$500,000 contribution for housing within ANC 2F. The applicant has stated in their submission that the 3 million dollars was presented to the Salvation Army in 1996 and the \$500,000 was invested in 20 Logan Circle for an 11-unit apartment building in 1997.

1331 L Street, NW PUD Modification
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June 1, 2006

OP believes that the design modification responds extremely well to its mid-block setting with exceptional emphasis at the street and alley level. OP also believes that the attention to detail regarding the tower, its lighting, and the roof treatment respond equally well to the concerns raised by of the Zoning Commission. Therefore, the Office of Planning recommends approval.