



BZA CASE NO. 20018
OF
MOUNT SINAI BAPTIST
CHURCH + WASHINGTON
LITERACY CENTER
1646 3RD ST, NW
JUNE 5, 2019

Overview

- Mount Sinai Baptist Church owns the property located at 1646 3rd Street, which is zoned RF-1
- Subject Property is currently improved with a building constructed as a matter-of-right and used as a “Sunday School Building With Administrative Offices” pursuant to its Certificate of Occupancy
- The Washington Literacy Center (“WLC”) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to removing barriers by teaching literacy skills to adults in Washington DC
- The Church desires to lease two floors of the building and a portion of the basement to the WLC

Requested Relief- U § 320.1(b)

- Subtitle U § 320.1(b) permits a community service center in the RF-1 Zone, provided that the organization is “created for the purpose of improving the social or economic well-being of the residents of the neighborhood in which the center is proposed to be located which may include but not be limited to centers for job training, family counseling, consumer cooperatives, and such other facilities as are similar in nature and purpose”
- The WLC meets this definition, as it is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the literacy skills of DC’s adults (specifically in Ward 5 where the Subject Property is located) and providing complementary job-related life skills and employment opportunities
- Accordingly, the Applicant is requesting relief pursuant to U § 320.1(b)

Subject Property- Current Use

- The building was originally constructed as an educational center and has a C of O for a “Sunday School Building With Administrative Offices”
- The Church currently uses a portion of the building as an administrative office (as consistent with its C of O)
- There are 21 parking spaces on the Subject Property
- There are only 4 church employees who currently work at the Subject Property
- The church offices will continue to occupy a portion of the building



Washington Literacy Center and Proposed Use

- The Washington Literacy Center (WLC) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization located in the District of Columbia
- Established in 1963 and incorporated in 1965, WLC has become the premiere adult literacy center in the District
- Its mission is to be the re-entry point into education for adults who struggle to read and to provide complementary job-related life skills and employment opportunities
- These services provide students with the foundational skills required to break their cycle of poverty and provide a pathway to employment or further education
- Washington, DC enjoys one of the highest educational attainment rates in the country, with 50% of the Washington metro region holding a bachelor's degree or higher
- However, almost 90,000 District adults read below a 6th grade level and a significant proportion of DC residents lack basic numeracy, English language, problem solving, and digital literacy skills needed to be successful in their careers and lives

Requirements of U § 320.1(b)- Community Service Center in RF-1 Zone

- Subtitle U § 320.1(b) permits a community service center in the RF-1 Zone, provided that the organization is “created for the purpose of improving the social or economic well-being of the residents of the neighborhood in which the center is proposed to be located which may include but not be limited to centers for job training, family counseling, consumer cooperatives, and such other facilities as are similar in nature and purpose”
- The WLC is dedicated to improving the literacy skills of DC’s adults in order to remove barriers to employment
- The Subject Property is located in Ward 5 which has the third highest illiteracy rate in the city (Ward 7 and 8 rank the highest, respectively)
- For the 2017-18 academic year, the largest number of WLC students resided in Ward 5
- The relief is also subject to certain conditions explained on the following slides

Requirements of U § 320.1(b)- Community Service Center in RF-1 Zone

(1) A community service center shall be located so that it is not likely to become objectionable to neighboring properties because of noise or other objectionable conditions;

- Due to the nature of the use, the WLC is not likely to become objectionable to neighboring properties because of noise or otherwise objectionable conditions
- Subject Property has 21 parking spaces, 10 of which will be set-aside for WLC use; located within ½ mile of the Metro and is unlikely to increase traffic conditions in the neighborhood
- Average class size is relatively small, between 8-10 students with 3-4 classes per day
- Hours of operation are between 8:30AM-5:30PM
- Total of 18 employees, 5 of whom are part-time teachers
- Building already exists and operates as an office used by the church and the intensity of the proposed use will not noticeably increase the number of people visiting the Subject Property
- Proposed hours of operation are consistent with an office and the employees and students will likely be out of the Building by the time nearby residents return home from work

Requirements of U § 320.1(b)- Community Service Center in RF-1 Zone

(2) The use shall be reasonably necessary or convenient to the neighborhood in which it is proposed to be located; and

- The Subject Property is located in Ward 5 which has the third highest illiteracy rate in the city (Ward 7 and 8 rank the highest, respectively)
- For the 2017-18 academic year, the largest number of WLC students resided in Ward 5
- Accordingly, the proposed use is reasonably necessary to the neighborhood in which it is proposed to be located

(3) A community service center shall not be organized for profit, and no part of its net income shall inure to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual.

- The Washington Literacy Center is organized as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and no part of its net income inures to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual

Community Outreach and OP Support

- Applicant attended the Bates Area Civic Association meeting in June and received unanimous support from the community
- Applicant attended the ANC 5E meeting in June
- ANC also unanimously supports the Application and proposed use
- OP is recommending approval
- DDOT has no objection