

# THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY – THURSTON HALL RENOVATIONS

## SUPPLEMENTAL STATEMENT IN SUPPORT

### Z.C. CASE NOS. 06-11Q, 06-12Q, 06-11R, & 01-17E

The following narrative outlines the status of the proposed applications to renovate Thurston Hall (“Project”) and accommodate the temporary relocation of students during the renovation of the residence hall (“Temporary Housing Plan”). Briefly

- The University has worked with Advisory Neighborhood Commission (“ANC”) 2A, the Foggy Bottom Association (“FBA”), and the West End Citizens’ Association (“WECA”), and other neighborhood stakeholders to develop a mutually-acceptable plan for the temporary relocation of students during the renovation process. The Temporary Housing Plan is shown on Exhibit A, the proposed conditions of approval reflecting the agreement with the ANC are attached as Exhibit B,<sup>1</sup> and the agreement itself is attached as Exhibit C.
- The University has worked with CFA, HPRB, OP, and DDOT to refine the design of the proposed renovation. The revised design has received concept approval from CFA and HPRB, as shown on the letters attached as Exhibit D and Exhibit E. Revised plans reflecting the current design are attached as Exhibit F.

The University looks forward to presenting the applications to the Zoning Commission at the December 2, 2019 public hearing.

#### **I. BUILDING DESIGN**

The University proposes to extensively renovate and reconfigure the existing 1,080-bed Thurston Hall into a modern student residence with approximately 825 beds as well as a dining venue and enhanced student gathering and study spaces. Central to this proposal is the University’s plan to create a three- to five-story notch out of the south end of the building to increase daylight into the central courtyard and cover the courtyard and notch with a canopy that will allow for three-season use of the outdoor space.

#### ***A. Updates to Building Design***

As shown on the revised plans attached as Exhibit F, the University has adjusted the design of the notch to respond to comments by HPRB and CFA. Although the University still plans to remove three stories in the notch at the southern exterior wall of the building, the University will

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<sup>1</sup> The proposed conditions of approval also incorporate the conditions that will temporarily replace conditions in the existing zoning orders as well as the project development and flexibility conditions typical for Zoning Commission approval.

rebuild the façade of the lowest story to give the appearance of a two-story removal, which HPRB judged to be proportionately better to the overall structure. In addition, the University has further developed the design of the steel structure that will infill the open part of the notch. The frame will be clad in a mix of glass fiber reinforced concrete and metal with a pattern that evokes the old façade but provides ample transparency for light and air to enter into the central court yard.

In response to a request from CFA staff, the canopy at the rear of the property has been pulled back so that the canopy (but not the supportive frame) is set back 1:1 from the edge of the building façade. The University has also further developed the elevations for the exterior walls of the building that face the interior courtyard, under the canopy. These elevations are included in the revised plans.

The University has refined the sustainable design goals and features of the renovated building. The renovation includes approximately 2,500 square feet of green roof on the building roof and approximately 2,000 square feet devoted to solar panels on the penthouse roof.

Finally, the University has further developed the public realm surrounding the building. The revised design retains the essence of the historic context of a residential building sitting within a landscaped surround, but creates an active pedestrian gathering area at the main entrance to the residential hall and also integrates required stairs and areaways for egress from the renovated basement level. The alterations in public space reflect changes made in response to comments from staff at both federal and District agencies.

### ***B. Areas of Zoning Flexibility***

As detailed in the University's initial filing for further processing approval, the renovation requires special exception approval for further processing to approve the penthouse and canopy structures as well as relief from the lot occupancy and penthouse requirements. The lot occupancy relief is necessary to accommodate the area that will be covered by the canopy, which will increase the occupied portion of the lot from 73% to 84%, though the building footprint itself will remain at 73%.

The penthouse flexibility is needed to accommodate the cooling towers and the canopy. As shown on the Revised Plans, the cooling towers are currently located in the southwest corner of the building, and they do not comply with the setback requirements. The University will replace the cooling towers with new equipment that will be sited so that the equipment itself complies with the setback requirement. However, if the University were to enclose the 19-foot tall cooling towers with a screen wall of equal height, that wall would not comply with the setback requirements because of the distance that is needed between the equipment and the screen wall for air circulation. Therefore, the University proposes to maintain a lower screen height around the cooling towers that complies with the setback requirement but requires relief from the enclosure height requirement.

As noted above, the canopy extent has been reduced so that the canopy itself now complies with the setback requirement. However, the supportive structure for the canopy extends above the height of the canopy, into the required setback area. The University continues to request relief from the setback requirement from this portion of the canopy, as setting back the canopy so that the entire structure is set back would expose too much of the upper terraces to precipitation and defeat the purpose of the canopy. The University also continues to request approval for the height of the canopy as a fourth, separate height from the screen wall height, habitable penthouse height, and mechanical penthouse / equipment height.

A full evaluation of the application's compliance with the standards for approval for these areas of relief is included in Exhibit 3 of the record in Case No. 06-11R.

## **II. TEMPORARY HOUSING PLAN**

The University intends to start construction of the renovation by Summer 2020. Construction is expected to be complete in time for the renovated Thurston Hall to reopen to students by Fall 2022. Thurston Hall currently provides beds for approximately 1,080 first-year students. To accommodate the loss of these beds during renovation, the University has worked with ANC 2A, FBA, and WECA to prepare a Temporary Housing Plan that identifies steps the University will take to minimize any adverse impact on the surrounding community related to student housing during the renovation. This plan ensures that first-year and second-year students will remain housed on campus while continuing to address undergraduate student housing demand through a combination of (1) a planned undergraduate enrollment decrease, (2) existing on-campus beds, and (3) the use of two off-campus properties to accommodate third- and fourth-year students during this period.

- Undergraduate Enrollment Decrease: The University is undergoing a strategic planning process that includes, among other components, a planned reduction to its undergraduate student population. As a result, the University has voluntarily reduced the size of its incoming undergraduate class in Fall 2019, with additional reductions anticipated during the time that Thurston is being renovated. This reduces the number of Thurston beds that need to be temporarily replaced.
- Existing On-Campus Beds: First-year students that would otherwise have been housed in Thurston will be accommodated in other on-campus residence halls, and second-year students will similarly be accommodated in on-campus facilities, which maintains the University's Campus Plan commitment that the university shall require all full-time Foggy Bottom freshmen and sophomore students to reside in housing located within the campus plan boundary. ***This requires flexibility for GW to house second-year students in the residence hall at 1959 E Street, which will require a temporary adjustment to a condition of approval to the 1959 E Street PUD.***

- Temporary Off-Campus Beds: The re-accommodation of Thurston students in other on-campus residence halls will reduce the number of on-campus beds available to third-year and fourth-year students. Accordingly, the University proposes to use The Aston and One Washington Circle to accommodate nearly 550 third- and fourth-year students on a temporary basis. *The use of The Aston for undergraduate housing requires a temporary adjustment to a condition of approval of the Campus Plan/PUD. In addition, the University will clarify its ability to use One Washington Circle to accommodate undergraduate students during this temporary period.*

The University's campus plan commitment is to provide beds on-campus for 70% of the first 8,000 Foggy Bottom full-time undergraduates, plus 1 bed for each full-time undergraduate above that amount. Including the temporary off-campus accommodations, the University anticipates that it will be able to continue to meet this requirement during the two-year renovation of Thurston. However, the University requests flexibility from this requirement by up to 99 beds in case for some reason the full number of beds cannot be provided (for example, if emergency repairs require some beds in an existing residence hall to be taken offline, or if unexpected higher yield results in a slight increase in enrollment above planned projections). *The use of off-campus accommodations to satisfy the housing requirement as well as the 99-bed flexibility from the total bed requirement also requires a temporary adjustment to a condition of approval of the Campus Plan/PUD.*

#### ***A. Modification to Conditions of the Campus Plan / PUD Order***

In order to accommodate the Temporary Housing Plan, the University requires relief from the following two conditions of Z.C. Order No. 06-11/06-12 (the Campus Plan / PUD Order) and proposes the below temporary conditions. Please note that proposed conditions have been adjusted from the University's initial filing to reflect the agreement with ANC 2A:

- **Current Condition P-8(b)**: Effective August 31, 2007, the University shall not house undergraduate students in The Aston (1129 New Hampshire Avenue, N.W.).
- **Temporary Condition 1** (changes shown in **bold** text): **During the Temporary Housing Plan Effective August 31, 2007**, the University shall not house **undergraduate first- or second-year** students in The Aston (1129 New Hampshire Avenue, N.W.), **but the University may house undergraduate third-year and fourth-year students in the Aston.**
- **Current Condition C-6**: For the duration of the Plan, the University shall make available on-campus beds for full-time Foggy Bottom undergraduate students equivalent to 70% of the full-time Foggy Bottom undergraduate student population up

to an enrollment of 8,000, plus one bed per full-time Foggy Bottom undergraduate student over 8,000.

- **Temporary Condition 2** (changes shown in **bold** text): **During the Temporary Housing Plan ~~For the duration of the Plan~~, the University shall make available ~~on-campus~~ beds either on campus or in The Aston or One Washington Circle for full-time Foggy Bottom undergraduate students equivalent to 70% of the full-time Foggy Bottom undergraduate student population up to an enrollment of 8,000, plus one bed per full-time Foggy Bottom undergraduate student over 8,000; notwithstanding the foregoing, during the period of the Temporary Housing Plan, the University shall have flexibility to reduce the above requirement by up to 99 beds without such a reduction being considered a violation of the condition.**

In addition, for the avoidance of doubt, the University seeks to confirm that the accommodation of undergraduate students at One Washington Circle is not inconsistent with Condition P-1 of the Order, which states that the “University shall not purchase, either directly or as a contract-purchaser, or enter into a master lease agreement or similar transaction for additional residentially-zoned properties outside of the Campus Plan boundaries in the Foggy Bottom/West End area.”

- **Temporary Condition 3**: **For the avoidance of doubt, the University’s use of One Washington Circle to accommodate third- and fourth-year students as a part of the Temporary Housing Plan does not violate Condition P-1 of the Z.C. Order No. 06-11/06-12.**

#### ***B. Modification to Conditions of the 1959 E Street PUD Order***

In order to accommodate the Temporary Housing Plan, the University requires relief from the following condition and proposes the below temporary condition:

- **Current Condition 8**: The University shall restrict residential occupancy in the project to juniors, seniors, graduate students, and students enrolled in an honors program.
- **Temporary Condition 8** (changes shown in **bold** text): The University shall restrict residential occupancy in the project to **sophomores**, juniors, seniors, graduate students, and students enrolled in an honors program.

#### ***C. Duration of the Temporary Housing Plan***

The relief described above is requested only during the two-year period during which Thurston Hall is anticipated to be renovated (academic year Fall 2020 – Spring 2021, and Fall

2021 – Spring 2022). Beginning in Fall 2022, the above relief will terminate, and the associated condition will return to effect.

### **III. COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

As discussed in the September 27, 2019 prehearing submission, the University has been engaged in discussions with community stakeholders since last spring regarding the proposed applications. Through extensive dialogue, including at two special community meetings held by ANC 2A, discussions at regularly scheduled ANC and Campus Plan Advisory Committee meetings, and other discussions with neighborhood leaders, the University and ANC 2A have reached an agreement. As shown in the Voluntary Neighborhood Agreement included in this filing as Exhibit C, the University has agreed to certain limitations and conditions for the Thurston Hall renovation and Temporary Housing Plan. Among other conditions, the Voluntary Neighborhood Agreement (1) requires the University to complete the Thurston Hall renovations and end the Temporary Housing Plan within twenty-four (24) months, (2) provides a financial penalty to the University in the event the University does not comply with the timeline, and (3) limits the number of students housed at the Aston and One Washington Circle and sets forth measures that will be taken by the University to address the safety, security, and quality of life in and around these temporary undergraduate residence halls. The University has integrated the proposed conditions from the Voluntary Neighborhood Agreement into its proposed conditions of approval that are attached as Exhibit B.