

MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment
FROM: Maxine Brown-Roberts, Project Manager
 Joel Lawson, Associate Director, Development Review
DATE: February 26, 2013
SUBJECT: BZA 18508 – 2201 Georgia Avenue, NW- Howard University Interdisciplinary Research Building

I. OFFICE OF PLANNING RECOMMENDATION

Howard University (“university” or “applicant”) proposes to construct a new Interdisciplinary Research Building at 2201 Georgia Avenue, NW in the C-M-3 district. To facilitate the building, the university has requested, pursuant to § 3103.1, variance relief from §2101, parking requirements, and § 3104.1, special exception review¹, § 840.3(b) for the roof structure enclosure setbacks as follows:

Variance

§ 2101.1, Parking (41 spaces required, 0 spaces provided)

Special Exception

§ 840.3(b), Roof Structure Enclosure Setback (10 feet required, 0 feet provided)

The Office of Planning (OP) **recommends** approval of the requested variance and special exception.

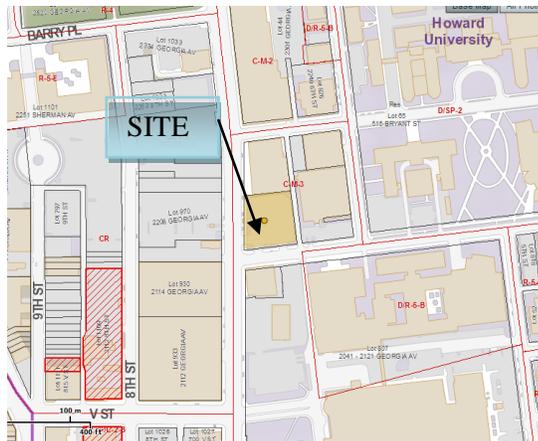
II. LOCATION AND SITE DESCRIPTION:

Address:	2201 Georgia Avenue, NW
Legal Description:	Square 3065, Lot 833
Ward/ANC:	1/1B
Lot Characteristics:	The trapezoidal shaped lot is located at the northeast corner of the intersection of Georgia Avenue and W Street. The lot has an area of 22,975 square feet and the eastern portion of the lot abuts a 15-foot wide alley.
Zoning:	C-M-3 – The Commercial-Light Manufacturing district is intended to provide sites for heavy commercial and light manufacturing activities employing large numbers of people and requiring some heavy machinery under controls that minimize any adverse effect on other nearby, more restrictive districts. Experimental, research, or testing laboratory and university uses are permitted as a matter-of- right.
Existing Development:	The site is currently used as a 46 space surface parking lot
Historic District:	The subject property is not within a historic district.

¹ The application was revised by a February 19, 2013 submission to include the Special Exception for roof structure setback.



<p>Adjacent Properties:</p>	<p>North: The 8-story Howard Center which was formerly a hotel with lower floor retail uses in the C-M-3 zone. South: Across W Street is the 4-story, Medical Arts Building in the C-M-3 zone. East: 1-story Human Genome Project building and a 9-space, surface parking lot in the C-M-3 zone. West: Across Georgia Avenue is a 2/3-story building currently used as a Howard University hospital warehouse; a 2-story Howard University security substation; and a surface parking in the CR zone.</p>
<p>Surrounding Neighborhood Character:</p>	<p>The property is within the boundary of the Howard University Central Campus. Properties in the vicinity of the site to the east of Georgia Avenue are all part of the university campus and are used for various university functions.</p> <p>Properties to the west and fronting on Georgia Avenue are also part of the campus with a majority of the area dedicated to surface parking. A McDonald's restaurant, not owned by the university, is located to the northwest of the site at the intersection of Georgia Avenue and Barry Place. Further west are vacant buildings, parking lots and undeveloped properties.</p>



III. APPLICATION

The property is to be developed with a 90-foot high building to accommodate an 80,670 square feet academic (interdisciplinary research) building. The building will house retail uses fronting on Georgia Avenue, multipurpose rooms, and various other building function uses on the ground floor. The upper floors will house the research facilities.

To accommodate the proposed development, the applicant has requested a variance from the required 41 parking spaces and special exception review for not providing the roof structure setback.

IV. ZONING RELIEF

	C-M-3	PROPOSAL	RELIEF
Height § 840.1	90 ft.	90 ft.	None Required
Floor Area Ratio § 841	6.0	3.6	None Required
Rear Yard § 842	12 ft. minimum	12 ft. and 19 ft. above the 1 st floor	None Required
Side Yard § 843	0 ft.	0 ft.	None Required
Parking ² § 2101.1	<u>Multi-purpose space</u> 1/10 auditorium seats = 15 <u>Teachers</u> 2 spaces/3 teachers = 26 spaces <u>Total</u> : 41 spaces	0	Required
Roof Structure Setback § 840.3(b)	1:1 (10 ft.) setback from exterior walls	Enclosure has no setback instead of 10.0 feet.	Required

V. OFFICE OF PLANNING ANALYSIS

- **Background:**

The 2011 Central Campus Plan for Howard University Campus (ZC Order 11-15) was approved March 2, 2012 and included the proposed redevelopment of the subject site³. As part of the review and approval of the campus plan, campus parking and the transportation network contemplates a reduction in the number of parking spaces and single occupancy vehicles accessing the campus by both faculty and students. Transportation Demand Management (TDM) measures are also to be implemented to encourage greater uses of alternate modes of transportation such as bicycles, Metro bus, Metrorail, and the Howard University shuttle bus service. Although the subject property is within the campus boundary, university uses are a matter-of-right in the C-M-3 district. Further, ZC Order 11-15 (Condition #4) specifies that a request to construct a building or structure in a residential, special

² Section 2106 recommends that if there is an approved Campus Plan, parking shall be provided as set forth in the approved plan. The approved campus plan approved indicated that the site is a potential location for additional campus parking but did not indicate how many.

³ Identified in the Campus Development Plan, pages 192 and 193. (Exhibit D of the applicant’s submission)

purpose or mixed use zones are subject to further processing. Properties in the C-M-3 district were not included.

- **Variance relief for parking:**

- i. Uniqueness Resulting in a Practical Difficulty**

The property is unique due to exceptional situations that results in a practical difficulty in providing the required parking. First, the property suffers from a high water table. The Geotechnical Report provided by the applicant shows water levels at a high of 16 feet below grade. If below grade parking was to be provided it would be at a substantial cost to prevent flooding of the garage. Secondly, the research to be done in this building is highly sensitive to vibrations. The property's proximity to Georgia Avenue already requires that stabilizers be installed to minimize vibrations from the large, heavy vehicles which travel along Georgia Avenue. If parking were to be placed below the building, there would be the added vibrations from directly below the building which could affect the research that will be done in the building. Third, the Howard University Campus Plan, 2011 shows the elimination of the existing parking lot and also a commitment to the reduction of parking spaces across the campus. The Illustrative Map showing proposed parking locations indicates that the site is shown as a potential location for parking. However, there was no indication of how many parking spaces could be on this site and the high water table limits the provision of this parking. These characteristics results in practical difficulties in providing the required parking.

- ii. No Substantial Detriment to the Public Good**

The proposed building is to allow the consolidation and replacement of other science buildings with a modern facility and will not bring additional faculty and staff to the campus. In addition, those students and faculty who drive to the campus have assigned parking spaces and therefore will not create any additional demand for parking. The proposed building would be four (4) blocks from the Shaw/Howard University Metro Metrorail station and various bus routes travel along Georgia Avenue in addition to the Howard University Shuttle Bus service. The University has also committed to various TDM measures to facilitate walking, biking, and the use of public transportation as part of the Campus Plan which are intended to reduce the demand for on-site parking. These issues will be further addressed in the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) report. With these alternate modes of transportation and TDM measures it is not envisioned that the reduction in parking will be a detriment to the public good and the residents of the area surrounding the University.

- iii. No Substantial Harm to the Zoning Regulations**

Alternative means of transportation such as bike, bus and Metrorail in addition to other buildings with public parking will mitigate the proposed reduction in parking spaces. Not providing the required setback would not negatively impact the light and air of residents of the adjacent residential building and therefore, granting the variance would not cause substantial harm to the Zoning Regulations.

- **Special Exception relief for roof structure setbacks:**

411.11 Where impracticable because of operating difficulties, size of building lot, or other conditions relating to the building or surrounding area that would tend to make full compliance unduly restrictive, prohibitively costly, or unreasonable, the Board of Zoning Adjustment shall be empowered to approve, as a special exception under § 3104, the location, design, number, and all other aspects of such structure

regulated under §§ 411.3 through 411.6, even if such structures do not meet the normal setback requirements of . . . § 840.3 . . .

Roof Structure not meeting the Required Setback: The roof accommodates an elevator, stair and vestibule in one enclosure, the atmospheric room in a second enclosure and three vent stacks. All are then enclosed by a 10-foot high wall along the roof's edge on all sides with no setback. This enclosure is required to have a 1:1 (10-foot) setback (§ 840.3(b)).

The location of the elevator, stairs, atmospheric room, and vent stacks are all a function of the internal configuration, layout and design of the building as submitted in the application's submission. The middle portion of the building is narrower than the rest of the building and therefore the roof space is reduced. The roof structure enclosure will be of the same material as the building and will therefore be indistinguishable from the remainder of the building as shown on the exterior design elevations.

However, while the roof structure enclosure is not setback from the wall of the building, it is set back 55.33 feet from the property line along Georgia Avenue, 12 feet from the property line adjacent to the rear alley, 9-feet from the property line along W Street, with no setback along the northern property which has a party line with the adjacent building that is also owned by the university. Therefore, while the structure does not meet the setbacks from the outer walls of the roof, there is a significant setback from the property line.

The proposal will be in harmony with the intent of the Zoning Regulations as it will shield and/or minimize the structures from view. The visibility of the volume of the structures would be minimized and will not adversely affect the use of neighboring property in accordance with the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps.

VI. AGENCY COMMENTS

The District Department of Transportation (DDOT) report will be submitted under separate cover.

VII. COMMUNITY COMMENTS

At its public meeting on February 7, 2013, Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) 1B voted to recommend approval of the requested parking variance. The special exception will be reviewed at the March 7th, 2013 meeting.