



MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Zoning Commission
FROM:  Jennifer Steingasser, Deputy Director, Development Review and Historic Preservation
DATE: May 26, 2014
SUBJECT: ZC 11-15C: Interim University Uses at 1840 7th Street, NW

I. SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning (OP) recommends **approval** of the requested Special Exception, pursuant to § 210.5, § 3035.1 and § 3104.1 to permit interim university office, dining, and food service/catering uses in the existing building at 1840 7th Street, NW with the following condition:

- Interim university office, dining, and food service/catering uses are approved for a period of no more than ten (10) years from the date of approval.

The requested continuation of the office use with its ancillary dining would continue to accommodate much needed space for the university's grant management and would continue to serve only faculty and staff. The requested food service/catering would serve the faculty and staff on the site as well as other facilities on the nearby campus. Adequate parking and loading facilities exist to serve the uses.

The main Howard University campus is located within walking or biking distance, or through the University's shuttle bus service, and as such, traffic to the site would not have a negative impact on the surrounding neighborhood.

II. SITE DESCRIPTION

The property at 1840 7th Street, NW has an area of 34,741.5 square feet and is developed with a 3-story building. To the east of the site is 7th Street and Shaw-Howard University Metrorail Station and other retail, office and residential uses; to the south is S Street; to the west is a 10 foot private alley and residential uses; and to the north is an undeveloped property that is also owned by the University and seems to be used as a parking lot. Surface parking spaces (33) to serve the building are provided to the rear and along the south property line. The property is located in the Greater U Street Historic District and is zoned R-4. The property is not within the boundary of the 2011 Howard University Campus Plan and is just over a block from the south boundary of the campus plan.



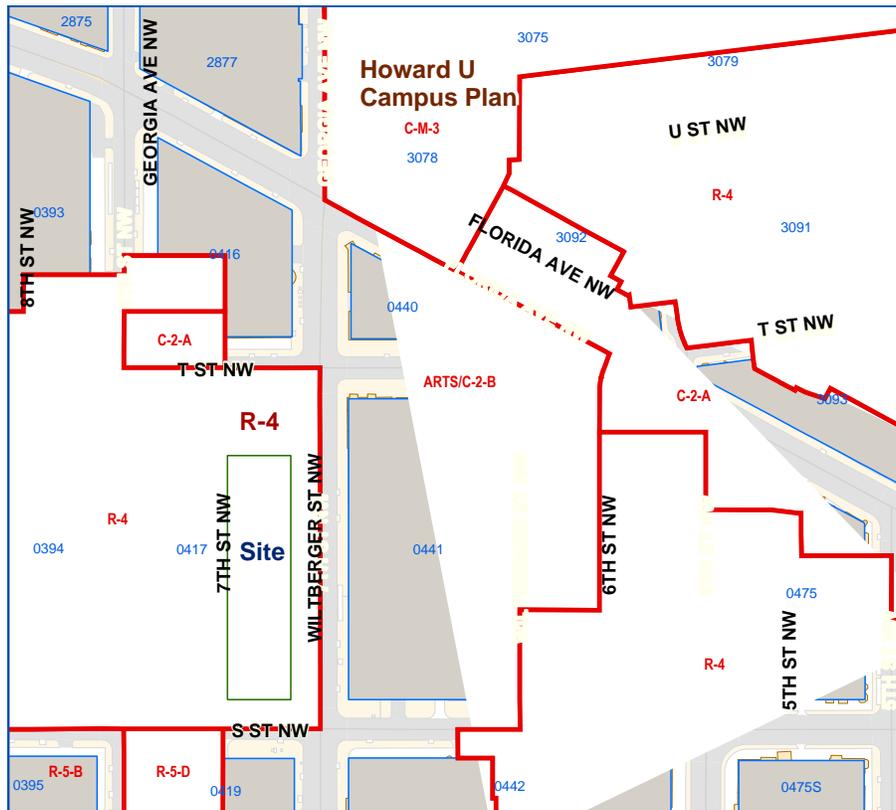
Front of Building



Rear of Building



Site Location and Zoning



III. PROPOSAL

The existing building is currently occupied by university office use. The proposal is to continue to use the building for university offices and to add and dining uses and food service/catering uses for a period of 10 years. No external changes or changes to the building footprint are proposed. The building would have food service/catering uses on the cellar level; office, academic, and dining uses on the second level; and office use on the third level.

The University uses the existing kitchen as an auxiliary support kitchen to prepare "grab and go" food items to be sold on campus in buildings which are not near or served by Dining Services. The University is proposing to use the kitchen to provide catering services to primarily serve the Mordecai Johnson Administration Building; the Andrew Carnegie Building; the Blackburn Center;

the Business School; and the Middle School, all located on the main campus. Other buildings would also be served as requested. The catering service would make approximately 5 to 10 van deliveries per day. Loading would be accessed from the public alley to the west of the site. The occupancy and use of the building would be limited to faculty, staff and students and classes or other student activities will not be conducted in the building. . Howard does not currently have any other locations to provide this proposed food service overflow work area

IV. BACKGROUND

The building was originally constructed as a residential building but after remaining vacant for some time it was reconfigured for office use. On September 9, 2004 the Zoning Commission approved a special exception for grants management offices as an interim use for a period of 5 years. The office use continues currently on the site. In October 2010, the University began to use the existing kitchen as an auxiliary support kitchen to prepare "grab and go" food items to be sold on campus in buildings which are not near or served by Dining Services.

V. OP ANALYSIS

§ 210.5 allows for interim use of land off campus as follows:

210.5 Within a reasonable distance of the college or university campus, and subject to compliance with § 210.2, the Commission may also permit the interim use of land or improved property with any use that the Commission may determine is a proper college or university function.

The subject property is located opposite the Shaw/Howard University Metro Station on the northwest corner of 7th and S Streets, N.W. The site is approximately three blocks south of the main entrance of Howard's campus. The closest point to the adopted campus boundary is the intersection of U Street, Georgia Avenue and Florida Avenues, just over a block to the north of the site. The university operates a shuttle between the main campus and the Metro Station located opposite the property.

210.2 Use as a college or university shall be located so that it is not likely to become objectionable to neighboring property because of noise, traffic, number of students, or other objectionable conditions.

Noise

The existing office and dining use would continue on the upper floors and the introduction of the food service/catering service would be in the cellar. The applicant states that there would be approximately 5-10 delivery trips per day. The delivery would be via small vans to minimize potential noise issues. The residential buildings to the west of the site are separated by building setbacks and a 10-foot wide alley. The catering would not involve customers coming to the site and therefore OP believes that the use of the building would generate minimal noise.

Traffic and Parking

The primary occupants of the building will be faculty, staff and food service/catering workers and not students. The property is across from a Metro Station and the applicant states that, currently, a high percentage of the office workers arrive by public transit, by bicycle, on foot, or by using the

shuttle bus that travels between the main campus and the Metro Station to the site. It is expected that the food service/catering staff would also utilize these modes of transportation to access the site. On-site parking requirements would be met through 33 surface spaces to the rear and south of the building. The food service/catering vans would introduce additional trips to and from the site, as 5 to 10 deliveries per day are anticipated. The District’s Department of Transportation (DDOT) will provide further comments on traffic and parking under separate cover.

Number of Students

No classes or other daily student activities would be conducted at this location.

Other Objectionable Conditions

The uses in the building should not produce any objectionable conditions such as trash. The applicant states that trash will be retained within the building on the cellar level until it is collected for disposal.

Compliance with § 3104

The proposed use is in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Map since the building’s use would accommodate a university function, which is allowed as a special exception. As demonstrated above, the proposal would meet the requirements § 210.5.

VI. COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



Future Land Use Map



Generalized Land Use Map

The Generalized Land Use Map recommends the site as being within a Main Street Mixed Use Corridor. Although the property is currently zoned R-4, the Future Land Use Map designates the site for mixed moderate density commercial and medium density residential use development of the subject property. The proposal is not inconsistent with these designations.

The site is within the Mid-City Area Element and *Policy MC-2.1.4: Howard University* recommends:

Encourage and strongly support continued relationship-building between Howard University and the adjacent residential neighborhoods. Work with Howard University in the abatement of any outstanding community issues such as the redevelopment of vacant property, façade/building enhancements, and buffering issues associated with campus expansion. Stimulate joint development opportunities with the University that benefit students and surrounding residents. 2011.8

The proposed interim uses would keep the building occupied and provide a service to the university which cannot be accommodated within the campus until such time as the property is redeveloped.

The site is also specifically referenced in the *The Duke Plan*¹ which recommends that the building on the subject property be demolished and allow for a mixed use development with a density up to 6.0 FAR and 65 feet in height².

In the ZC 04-20 application for interim use on the site, OP stated that the proposed interim use would be compatible with the Plan in the short term provided that a five-year time limit were strictly enforced and that the site was subsequently redeveloped. However, no redevelopment has taken place. Many of the sites in this area are being redeveloped with mixed uses having active ground floor uses and the redevelopment of this site is still encouraged, with more intense and active uses to better utilize its proximity to the Metro Station. OP encourages the applicant to provide a redevelopment plan for the site as envisioned by the Comprehensive Plan and the Duke Plan to continue the revitalization of the corridor. OP is aware that the University is actively pursuing partners for the redevelopment of the site and therefore supports the request for the 10-year interim use.

VII. COMMENTS OF OTHER DISTRICT AGENCIES

The District Department of Transportation will submit a report under separate cover.

VIII. COMMUNITY COMMENTS

The site is within ANC-1B, which recommended approval of the proposed interim use. In addition, the proposal was reviewed by the Westminster Neighborhood Association, the Georgia Avenue Community Development Task Force, and other community organizations and all are in support of the proposed interim uses on the site.

¹ The Council of the District of Columbia approved *The Duke Plan* on June 21, 2005 through Resolution 16-0209

² *The Duke Plan*, 4. Zoning, F., page 37