

BEFORE THE BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT, D. C.

Application No. 12045, of the Young Men's Christian Association of Metropolitan Washington, D. C., (YMCA) pursuant to Sub-section 8207.2 of the Zoning Regulations, for a special exception under Section 4306 to approve roof structures and for a variance from the parking requirements (Sub-section 7202.1) to permit the construction of a new YMCA in the SP District, at the premises 1701 Rhode Island Avenue, N.W., (Square 159, Lots 34-36, 82,801 and 802).

HEARING DATE: October 15, 1975, January 21, 1976, January 27, 1976
and February 11, 1976

DECISION DATE: February 24, 1976

FINDINGS OF FACT:

1. The subject property is located in the SP District.
2. The subject property is vacant and unimproved. It is an irregularly shaped site with 57.5 feet on 17th Street, 175.61 feet on Rhode Island Avenue, 119.25 feet on the west property line and 155.55 feet along the north property line.
3. The public alley along the north property line varies in width from 10 to 25 feet and provides access to the property.
4. The applicant's architect testified and the Board finds that it is not possible to provide the proposed building and required off-street parking on the subject property due to the irregular shape of the lot. The architect testified and the Board finds that if the lot was rectangular in shape the building and 30 parking spaces could be provided.
5. This Board in a prior case involving part of the subject site found the property to be irregular in shape and granted a variance as to the location of off-street parking in BZA No. 9362.
6. The architect also described and the Board finds that there is an added hardship in attempting to place the required parking below the proposed swimming pool. The cost for a normal off-street parking space within a garage structure is between \$6,000.00 and \$8,000.00 per parking space. The cost at this site is in excess of \$20,000.00 per parking space, and also would require a reduction in the recreational facilities to be provided.
7. The swimming pool in the proposed facility is an olympic size pool. Reduction in the size of the pool, unless drastic, would not materially affect the number of parking spaces.

8. The activities and daily operation of the YMCA were described by Thomas B. Hargrave, Jr., General Executive of the Central Branch of the YMCA of the City of Washington. The Board finds that these activities are essentially those of a downtown located, big city YMCA. The Board finds that the YMCA is not in competition with commercial health centers, and that the recreational programs of this YMCA are normal ones of YMCA's.

9. John R. Fletcher, a land economist and marketing consultant with the firm of Gladstone Associates testified as to the study his firm had conducted for the YMCA. This study was based upon a survey made by Gladstone Associates of a sample of the present membership of the YMCA at the 17th and G Streets location. The return rate of the survey was 28 percent out of the 700 handouts and 300 randomly selected mailouts. This study showed and the Board finds that the peak operation of the YMCA occurred before and after the peak office hours. It further showed that 93 percent of the respondents came by means other than automobiles and that 7 percent came by automobiles. The maximum total parking demand at any one time including staff, members and guests was 92 spaces.

10. A survey of the parking facilities within a two block radius of the proposed new YMCA disclosed a total of 3,224 parking spaces. The average number of vacant spaces were: (a) day time - 448; (b) evening until 9:00 p.m. 7 1,449; and (c) weekend - 1,279.

11. The Board finds that there will be a large number of walk-in patrons for the YMCA at the proposed location, particularly from the working population in the area.

12. Evidence also showed that the subject site is well served by 22 existing bus routes and will be within two blocks of the Metro stop at Connecticut Avenue and L Streets, N.W.

13. Irving Panzer, Esq., with a law office at 1735 DeSales Street, N.W., testified and the Board finds that he has occupied offices in this area for over 25 years, and that the area has ample off-street parking.

14. The Board finds that the YMCA is a non-profit organization according to the US Internal Revenue Service.

15. There was opposition to the application, primarily based on the claim that the YMCA is not a private club, that adverse traffic conditions would be created and that the use would cause other detrimental effects.

16. Opponents of the application contend that the applicant does not qualify as a private club. The Board ruled that this question was not properly before the Board and should be the subject of an appeal from the ruling of the Zoning Administrator should the opponents wish to pursue this matter.

17. The Municipal Planning Office by report dated October 10, 1975, supported the granting of this parking variance and special exception for roof structure.

18. The roof structure will contain 3,060 square feet and an F.A.R. of 0.17. The roof structure meets all the requirements as to setback, area occupied on the roof, F.A.R. and material. The roof structure will house mechanical equipment, stairway and elevator penthouses.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW AND OPINION:

The Board concludes that the parking variance requested is an area variance, the granting of which requires the showing of a practical difficulty. The Board concludes that the shape of the lot provides a practical difficulty sufficient to satisfy that burden. The Board concludes that the applicant has carried the burden of not needing parking spaces on site, as demonstrated by the large number of spaces located in the immediate vicinity. The Board also concludes that there will be a large number of walk-in patrons particularly from the working population in the area.

The Board concludes that the issue of whether the YMCA is a private club should only be considered as an appeal of the decision of the Zoning Administrator, such appeal to be properly filed and advertised with the Board. The Board concludes that the YMCA is not in competition with commercial health centers, and that the recreational programs of this YMCA are normal ones of YMCA's. The Board concludes that there is no definition of a YMCA in the Zoning Regulations, but that the attributes of a YMCA most closely fit the normal definition of a private club.

For the purpose of this application, the Board concludes that the applicant has met all of the burdens required of it, and it is therefore Ordered that this application be, GRANTED.

VOTE:

- 3-2 (Leonard L. McCants, Esq., William S. Harps and William F. McIntosh to Grant, Lilla Burt Cummings, Esq., and Walter B. Lewis, Esq. to Deny) on the parking variance.
- 4-1 (Leonard L. McCants, Esq. William S. Harps, William F. McIntosh and Walter B. Lewis, Esq. to Grant, Lilla Burt Cummings, Esq. to Deny) on the roof structure.

