

Before the Board of Zoning Adjustment, D. C.

Application No. 12308 of the Catholic University of America, pursuant to Sub-section 8207.2 of the Zoning Regulations, for a special exception under paragraph 3101.46 of the Zoning Regulations to amend the previously approved Campus Plan by excluding Lots 811, 814 and 72 and Parcel 135/62 in Square 3810 and Lots 804, 802, and 14 and Parcels 135/70, 135/57, 135/69, 135/59, and 135/60 in Square 3894, known as the Varnum Campus to include Lots 813 and 809 of Square 3821 in the Master Plan and for approval of the existing university uses on the Varnum Campus as interim uses.

HEARING DATE: February 22, 1977

DECISION DATE: March 8, 1977

FINDINGS OF FACT:

1. In Application No. 12002 the Board of Zoning Adjustment approved a Campus Plan for the Catholic University of America together with the specific construction of the Boys Town Center as special exceptions. In this application, the Catholic University of America seeks approval to amend the Campus Plan by deleting from the Campus Plan the so-called Varnum Campus and for approval of the existing University uses therein as interim uses as provided in Section 3101.46(d) of the Zoning Regulations. The University also proposes to include within the effect of the Campus Plan Lots 813 and 809 in Square 3821. The Campus Plan amendment is shown and described in the booklet submitted to the Board entitled "The Catholic University of America Master Plan Amendment" published May 17, 1976, and the maps included therein. Applicant's Exhibit 1. No new uses or buildings are proposed.

2. The land within the existing campus boundaries is zoned in its entirety R-5-A except for Square 3654, which is zoned R-4. Surrounding zoning includes R-5-A, R-4, C-M-1 east of the B & O Railroad tracks and C-1 zoning near the intersection of Michigan Avenue and Brookland Avenue. All the property proposed to be included or excluded in the Campus Plan by this application are zoned R-5-A.

3. The Varnum Campus properties which are the subject of this application were first acquired by Catholic University in approximately 1911. At that time the Varnum Campus properties included not only the properties presently owned by Catholic University but also those areas now owned and occupied by Providence Hospital, the Kennedy Institute, and various Catholic Orders. The total land acquired in the original transaction consisted of more than 50 acres of farmland.

4. Through the years the Catholic University has sold or given up by some special arrangement two-thirds of its Varnum holdings. As the University experienced a decline in enrollment growth, the utilization of the Varnum Campus declined. Today, although it is officially part of the University, the Varnum Campus represents less than 10 percent of the total land area of the University.

5. Catholic University presently utilizes approximately 55 percent of the property it owns on the Varnum Campus; 39 percent is actively in use while 17 percent remains inactive. The remaining 45 percent of the properties the University owns are leased or let by special arrangement for other, similar institutional-type uses.

6. The Varnum Campus lies approximately one-half mile to the northeast from the center of the Main Campus and is physically separated therefrom by the B & O and Metro tracks. This physical separation forces students who do not drive to walk more than a mile to classrooms or other facilities on the Main Campus and creates security risks with respect to those students. On the other hand, those students who do drive bring unnecessary automobile traffic onto the Main Campus. Private campus bus transportation is available between the Campuses but the small number of students at the Varnum Campus makes an increase in that service impractical.

7. The removal of the Varnum Campus from the planning boundaries is in harmony with the goals of the approved Campus Plan and its basic view of the Varnum Campus, as expressed in the following from the Master Plan:

"Further development of the Varnum Campus, from both a planning and economic standpoint, would be inappropriate considering its distant location from the Main Campus, its generally good building condition and its adjacency to a major residential neighborhood."

The Master Plan 1975-2000, The Catholic University of America, at p. 32.

8. This amendment to the approved Campus Plan meets the requirements of Section 3101.4(a) of the Zoning Regulations in that the uses of the proposed Campus Plan as amended are not

likely to become objectionable to neighboring property because of noise, traffic, number of students or other objectionable conditions. As shown on the Proposed Campus Boundaries Plan, amended May 3, 1976, included as a part of Exhibit 1, the removal of the Varnum Campus from the planning boundaries will result in the consolidation of the Catholic University-owned properties. The University's properties will become more compact and contiguous with removal of the Varnum Campus. The removal of the Varnum Campus also results in the further elimination of possible conflicts with the adjoining neighborhoods by reducing the intrusion into existing established residential areas. Elimination of the Varnum Campus will also bring benefits with respect to vehicular circulation, pedestrian circulation, student housing and parking.

9. The projected density resulting from the amendment to the Campus Plan will provide a scale consistent with the neighborhood and the approved Master Plan. The permitted bulk in an R-5-A District is 0.9 except that universities are permitted a greater F.A.R. (up to 1.8 for the campus as a whole) when approved by the Board. At the time of the original approval of the Campus Plan, the University's existing density consisted of an F.A.R. of approximately 0.23. The approved Campus Plan provided an F.A.R. for all projected new facilities of 0.38. Since the approval of the Campus Plan, the University has acquired five acres of unimproved property at the northeast corner of the main campus in a land exchange with Marist Society. The elimination of the Varnum Campus and its buildings from the Campus Plan plus the addition of the Marist property will produce an overall F.A.R. of 0.39. This figure is 0.01 F.A.R. more than that approved by the Board in the Campus Plan and represents an extremely small increase in density resulting from the changes in land area.

10. The applicant has complied with Section 3101.46(c) in that all information specified therein is provided through the booklet entitled "The Catholic University of America Master Plan Amendment". Applicant's Exhibit 1.

11. During the phasing out period of the Varnum Campus, the following are the interim uses of the Varnum properties as described in Exhibit 1 at pages 16 and 17:

Shields Hall as student housing for an expected period of seven years.

Adrian Hall as student housing for an expected period of five years.

Brady Hall as archives storage for an expected period of five years.

Varnum Dining Hall as a dining hall for an expected period of seven years.

12. This application, in accordance with Section 3101.46(e), was referred to the National Capital Planning Commission, the Department of Transportation and was also referred to the Municipal Planning Office. The reports of these agencies are all favorable to the grant of this application.

13. The University indicated that it has coordinated this plan with the Upper Northeast Coordinating Council. There was no opposition in the record or at the public hearing.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW AND OPINION:

The Board is of the opinion that the University has met the requirements of Sections 3101.46 and 8207.2 with regard to its amendments to the approved Campus Plan. The grant of this application will be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and Maps and will not tend to affect adversely the use of neighboring properties in accordance with the Zoning Regulations and Maps because it will enable the University to make better use of the land in a consolidated manner and to draw together various sectors of the Campus into a cohesive framework. Therefore, it is hereby ORDERED that the above application be GRANTED as requested subject to the following CONDITIONS:

1. The University boundaries are approved as set forth in Exhibit 1 to the statement of the applicant.
2. The Master Plan Amendments are approved as generally set forth in the booklet entitled "The Catholic University of America Master Plan Amendment" published May 17, 1976, at pgs. 14 through 17.

VOTE:

3-0 (Leonard L. McCants, Esq., William F. McIntosh and
Lilla Burt Cummings, Esq.)

BY ORDER OF THE D. C. BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT

ATTESTED By:



ARTHUR B. HATTON

Executive Secretary

FINAL DATE OF ORDER: 4-13-77

THAT THE ORDER OF THE BOARD IS VALID FOR A PERIOD OF SIX MONTHS ONLY UNLESS APPLICATION FOR A BUILDING AND/OR OCCUPANCY PERMIT IS FILED WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WITHIN A PERIOD OF SIX MONTHS AFTER THE EFFECTIVE DATE OF THIS ORDER.