

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT



Application No. 13272, of Georgetown University Community Health Plan, Inc., pursuant to Sub-section 8207.2 of the Zoning Regulations, for a special exception under Sub-section 7205.3 to permit open accessory parking spaces to be located in other than the rear yard of a proposed clinic for humans in an R-5-A District at the premises 725 Buchanan Street, N.E., (Square 3894, Lot 18).

HEARING DATE: June 18, 1980  
DECISION DATE: July 2, 1980

FINDINGS OF FACT:

1. The subject site is a six area tract fronting on Buchanan Street, N.E. with one side abutting Eighth Street extended. It is within three blocks of Providence Hospital. It is known as premises 725 Buchanan Street, N.E. and is in an R-5-A District.

2. The applicant is incorporated in the District of Columbia as a non-profit corporation. The Georgetown University Community Health Plan, Inc. was planned and developed by the Department of Family and Community Medicine of the Georgetown University School of Medicine. It is a distinct corporation from the University but the University controls the Board of the applicant.

3. The Georgetown University Community Health Plan, Inc. (GUCHP) is a federally qualified Health Maintenance Organization under the provisions of Title XIII of the Public Health Services Act. The Health Plan presently operates five medical centers in the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. area, Northeast Washington, Kensington and Gaithersburg, Maryland, and Reston and Springfield, Virginia, where a full range of health care services are provided or arranged for by a staff of salaried physicians and other health professionals.

4. The services to be provided are basically as follows: Primary Care Services (Internal Medicine, Family Practice, Pediatrics, Obstetrics/Gynecology and Mental Health), and laboratory and x-ray services. When the services of a specialist are required, the patient is referred by the Health Plan physician to contracted specialists who maintain private offices in close proximity to the medical center. As enrollment in the Center increases and as a result of the new center providing additional space, additional specialty services will be provided in-center.

Routine inpatient hospital care is provided at Providence Hospital. In this manner, patients are hospitalized close to their homes, and the Health Plan realizes appropriate use of existing community resources. Tertiary and superspecialty services are provided at the Georgetown University Hospital.

5. The Health Plan is currently marketed to private sector employer groups, D.C. Medicaid beneficiaries, the "near or working poor" residing in the District of Columbia under the Family Health Center Program, and to federal employees through the Federal Employees Health Benefit Plan (FEHBP). Enrollment into the program is strictly on a voluntary basis.

6. The applicant proposes to construct a two-story steel frame structure at the subject site to carry on its medical program for some 25,000 patients. The applicant outgrew its last site at Edgewood Terrace where it treated 12,500 patients. The subject project consists of approximately 35,000 square feet of new building construction and related site development. Approximately one-half of the six acre site is being used for the development of the subject Center. The other half is being retained for any future expansion of the Center.

7. The applicant proposes to place the parking spaces that are accessory to the subject structure in the front of the structure rather than the rear yard. The applicant seeks a special exception.

8. The applicant testified, in support of the special exception, as follows:

- a. Since the raw site was a heavily wooded tract, extensive measures were taken in site design to assure the preservation of trees to enhance the completed project, as well as to respect neighborhood concerns for appearance and environmental impact. Many of the decisions affecting the placement of the building on the site reflect the overwhelming concern on the part of the owners as well as the neighbors to save as many of the indigenous trees on the site, as possible. Most of these trees are native oak with diameters in excess of eighteen inches and provide not only a tranquil setting for the building but preserve many of the original characteristics of the site as well as neighborhood.

- b. Other considerations affecting the location of the building and ultimately the placement of the off-street parking were based on a multiple of factors that had to do with aesthetics, building design, and patient and staff movement. The site is flat along Buchanan Street and slopes relatively uniformly at a grade of ten percent to a point approximately in the center of the site. The sloping site necessitates a building configuration that allows for a two-level entry into the building. The front entry is at an elevation similar to that of the parking thereby allowing patient parking on a relatively flat area located in the front of the building close to Buchanan Street and access to the building on approximately the same elevation. As the site rises and the building is tucked neatly into the existing terrain second level entry allows for staff entrance to the second floor without the use of additional elevators or ramps which create significant increases in cost. By adapting the original topography to the building design less destruction of existing terrain and trees is required. Therefore, the final design allows for retention of classic oak trees in such a manner as to serve two basic purposes. The first purpose is that of economy of construction as well as economy of energy. By retaining a significant number of existing trees maximum passive solar energy measures can be used, i.e. shade created by existing trees, reduction of wind factors, etc.
- c. The second factor while seemingly less important can be of a significant contribution in the long run; and that is aesthetics. The trees not only provide a comfortable setting for those using the facility but also tend to soften the effect of the building on a primarily residential area.
- d. Another very important factor is an attempt to keep the building at a distance far enough away from Buchanan Street so that it will not have an imposing effect on the neighborhood by fronting directly on the street and in close proximity to the neighborhood. By placing the facility approximately 130 feet from the property line this allows for a maximum use of green space as well as a landscaping capability to further soften the effect of the facility on the neighborhood.

- e. The flat portion of the site exists in the very front along the Buchanan Street property line. Therefore, the off-street parking provided exists on that portion of the property which most naturally accepts a parking situation. In addition, soils analysis and soils borings have indicated a high potential water table in the northeast corner of the site, therefore, making it unsuitable or less desirable for location of the structure. Presently, plans call for the facility to be operated during normal working hours and daylight times. However, future plans may necessitate limited operation during the night as well as the weekends. Therefore, to insure maximum visibility for police and security personnel monitoring the operations and activities in the parking areas it was felt that parking in the front of the building is most advantageous. Conversely, it seemed very unwise to locate a heavily used area behind the facility and make the job of security difficult if not impossible. Extensive landscaping measures will be taken to insure a partial visual obstruction of car bumpers. The Board concurs with the reasoning advanced by the applicant.

9. The applicant testified that he had discussed the proposed project with residents of the surrounding dwellings. There was no opposition to the application at the public hearing or of record.

10. Advisory Neighborhood Commission - 5A made no recommendation on the application.

11. The Board expressed concern as to what provisions were being made to continue the health care of the 12,500 patients who used the old site at Edgewood Terrace. The Board requested the applicant to address this issue and submit evidence to the record. The record was left open after the closing of the public hearing for such submissions.

12. Prior to the decision date of the application, the applicant submitted a report, June 23, 1980, marked as Exhibit No. 16 of the record, in which the applicant satisfactorily addressed the concerns of the Board.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

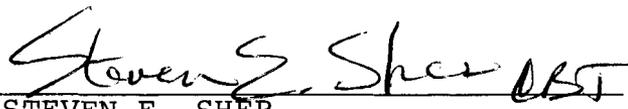
Based on the record, the Board concludes that the applicant is seeking a special exception, the granting of which requires a showing that the applicant has complied with the requirements of Sub-section 7205.3 of the Zoning Regulations. Based on Finding No. 8, the Board concludes that the applicant has met the requirements. The Board further concludes that the application can be granted as in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and will not tend to affect adversely the use of neighboring property.

Accordingly, it is ORDERED that the application is GRANTED.

VOTE: 4-0 (Charles R. Norris, William F. McIntosh, Connie Fortune and Leonard L. McCants to GRANT; Ruby B. McZier not voting, not having heard the case).

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

ATTESTED BY:

  
STEVEN E. SHER  
Executive Director

FINAL DATE OF ORDER: 25 AUG 1980

UNDER SUB-SECTION 8204.3 OF THE ZONING REGULATIONS "NO DECISION OR ORDER OF THE BOARD SHALL TAKE EFFECT UNTIL TEN DAYS AFTER HAVING BECOME FINAL PURSUANT TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL RULES OF PRACTICE AND PROCEDURE BEFORE THE BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT."

THIS ORDER OF THE BOARD IS VALID FOR A PERIOD OF SIX MONTHS AFTER THE EFFECTIVE DATE OF THIS ORDER, UNLESS WITHIN SUCH PERIOD AN APPLICATION FOR A BUILDING PERMIT OR CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY IS FILED WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF LICENSES, INVESTIGATIONS, AND INSPECTIONS.