

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT



Application No. 14149, of the President and Directors of Georgetown College, pursuant to Sub-section 8207.2 of the Zoning Regulations, for a special exception under Paragraph 3101.46 for further processing under the Georgetown University Campus Plan to permit the construction of a University Center in an R-3 District at premises 3800 Reservoir Road, N.W., (Square 3121, Lot 1).

HEARING DATE: June 27, 1984

DECISION DATE: June 27, 1984 (Bench Decision)

FINDINGS OF FACT:

1. The subject site is located on the south side of Reservoir Road, N.W., between 35th Street on the east and 44th Street on the west. The site is in an R-3 District and is known as premises 3800 Reservoir Road, N.W.

2. The subject site is a large, irregularly shaped parcel which is the location for the campus of Georgetown University. The area of the site is 4,049,521.22 square feet or 92.9642 acres.

3. There is access to and from the site through Reservoir Road on the north and through Canal Road on the south. There is pedestrian access through 35th and 37th Streets on the east.

4. The University occupies approximately three-quarters of the subject square. The Convent of the Visitation occupies the northeast corner of the square. The surrounding neighborhood area is developed primarily with medium density residential uses and is zoned R-3 on the north, east and west of the site. South of the site there is a C-M-1 strip along the Potomac River. The neighborhood area is a part of the Georgetown Historic District.

5. Georgetown University was established in 1789 under a charter granted to it by the Congress of the United States. It is an accredited university and authorized to confer degrees. The University qualifies as an academic institution of higher learning under the Zoning Regulations.

6. The University site is improved with existing classroom buildings, residence facilities, athletic facilities, administration and maintenance facilities. A medical

complex is located at the northern edge of the campus which includes a medical school, a dental school and a university hospital. There is open space at the center of the campus site that is scheduled for phased development under the Georgetown University Campus Plan that was approved by the BZA on December 30, 1983, by Order No. 14021.

7. The applicant requests a special exception under Paragraph 3101.46 of the Zoning Regulations for further processing and implementation of the approved Georgetown University Campus Plan 1983-2000 A.D. and Beyond to permit construction of a University Center in accordance with the approved Campus Plan.

8. The location of the proposed University Center will be in the interior of the campus where it will not be visible from the street. There will be no street access to the proposed structure except for driveways within the University campus.

9. The application achieves one of the approved objectives that the Campus Plan was designed to accomplish, namely the development of university support activities away from the community's residential areas in a central location.

10. The construction of the proposed University Center follows the generalized location set forth in the Campus Plan and is in accord with the letter and intent of the plan.

11. The University Center project involves the construction of a five-story structure with a gross floor area of approximately 300,000 square feet. The building would cover approximately 158,000 square feet of lot area.

12. The proposed University Center will be constructed on top of the recently approved Socio-Energy Podium A which will provide up to 962 parking spaces. Finding of Fact No. 8 in BZA Order No. 14095, dated May 4, 1984, specifically references later construction of the Center.

13. The subject site is south of both Kober-Cogan Hall and the Gorman building, which are part of the Georgetown University Medical Center. On the south side is the University baseball field, and part of the site includes the swale created from fill which provides spectator viewing for baseball games. Adjacent to the west side of the site is the Yates Recreation Facility, and the east side is bordered by Henle Village student housing and Reiss science building.

14. The proposed University Center will bring together the presently scattered social, cultural, and curricular activities at the center of campus life. As the University's "living room," it will be the setting for formal and

informal social gatherings and will foster collegiality among students, faculty and alumni.

15. The new facility will house more than 100 student organizations and clubs and will provide much needed meeting and conference space for student groups as well as the entire University community. The Center will also provide many university services that will enable students and faculty to remain on campus and not generate traffic in the neighborhood. Specifically, the Center will include a post office, bank, bookstore, gift shop, convenience store, pub, lounge and a variety of eating establishments.

16. The proposed University Center is designed to provide overnight accommodations for University guests and visitors who presently must stay off campus. Specifically, these accommodations are designed for alumni, University academic visitors, relatives of patients at the University Hospital, prospective students and their parents, and other University guests. The proposed Center will reduce the traffic in the area that these visitors would have made if they had stayed off campus.

17. The Center will also serve as a performance and rehearsal center for the University's many performing arts activities and events. There will be an approximately 1,000 seat auditorium/theater and an approximately 150 seat blackbox theater. Shifting of events to the Center will draw traffic away from the residential neighborhoods.

18. The University Center is essential to the University's plan to centralize student and faculty services and activities. Presently, the services that are available are scattered throughout the campus, many of which are located in inappropriate or inconvenient locations. Centralizing the activities will reduce the number of trips generated both on and off campus. On campus deliveries will also become more efficient. Overall, the Center will enhance the quality of life on campus.

19. Paragraph 3101.46 of the Zoning Regulations provides that a college or university which is an academic institution of higher learning, including a college or university hospital, dormitory, fraternity or sorority house proposed to be located on the campus of a college or university, is permitted as a special exception in a residential district, provided that:

- A. Such use is so located that it is not likely to become objectionable to neighboring property because of noise, traffic, number of students, or other objectionable conditions;
- B. In R-1, R-2, R-3, R-4, R-5, R-5-A and R-5-B

Districts, the maximum bulk requirements normally applicable in such district may be increased for specific buildings or structures provided the total bulk of all buildings and structures on the campus shall not exceed the gross floor area prescribed for the R-5-B District;

- C. The applicant shall submit to the Board a plan for developing the campus as a whole, showing the location, height, and bulk, where appropriate, of all present and proposed improvements, including but not limited to buildings, parking and loading facilities, screening, signs, streets, and public utility facilities, and a description of all activities conducted or to be conducted therein, and of the capacity of all present and proposed campus development;
- D. Within a reasonable distance of the college or university campus, the Board may also permit the interim use of land or improved property with any use which the Board may determine is a proper college or university function; and
- E. Before taking final action on an application for such use, the Board shall have submitted the application to the District of Columbia Office of Planning and the District of Columbia Department of Public Works for review and report.

20. The structure will not be objectionable because of noise. The project is well within the campus boundaries and therefore, is not adjacent to any non-university owned properties or buildings. The facility will be constructed of materials that provide sound insulation.

21. The University Center will not be objectionable to neighboring properties because of traffic. Since most of the University Center's activities will be geared toward students, staff, faculty and guests already on campus for other purposes, a minimal addition of peak hour vehicular trips is expected to be generated. There will be adequate parking spaces reserved for the Center in the new Socio-Energy Podium A underground facility which will serve the activities expected to occur at the Center, thereby assuring that parking will not spill over into the neighborhood. The closing of the Main Gate entrance at 37th and O Streets will result in less traffic, including delivery trucks and GUTS buses, traveling through the neighborhood east of the campus. With construction of the University Center and the closing of the Main Gate at 37th and O Streets along with the new South Entrance design there will be 158 fewer vehicle trips in the AM peak hour and 207 fewer vehicle trips in the PM peak hour, traveling through the

neighborhoods to the east of the University. In addition, there will be approximately 1,600 fewer vehicle trips on a daily basis.

22. The University is continuing to develop and implement remedial traffic and parking proposals to limit the effect of the University on traffic and parking, in compliance with conditions "d" and "e" of BZA Order No. 14021, dated December 30, 1983. Proposals currently under consideration include:

- A. Escalate parking charges as new structural facilities come on line;
- B. As public transportation services improve to serve non-university areas, reduce Zip code areas that are eligible for parking permits;
- C. Research to produce more efficient types of buses; and,
- D. Reduce staff and faculty parking by encouraging alternative forms of transportation.

23. There will be no increase in student enrollment as a result of this application.

24. According to the Zoning Regulations, the total bulk of all buildings and structures on a campus in an R-3 District shall not exceed a floor area ratio (FAR) of 1.8. The proposed structure indicates a maximum ultimate development of 0.945 FAR, well below the maximum allowed.

25. The applicant has previously filed with the Board in Application No. 14021 the University's long range plans for developing the campus as a whole, showing the location, height and bulk, parking and loading facilities, athletic and other recreational facilities, and a description of all activities to be conducted therein, and the capacity of all present and proposed campus development.

26. The University is not request any interim use of land.

27. A University spokesman testified that the proposed project will provide opportunities for minority business participation during construction and will generate new jobs for District residents upon completion.

28. The project architect testified that the project is subject to the review of the Commission of Fine Arts and therefore, the final exterior facade may be adjusted to respond to the Commission's recommendations.

29. The Office of Planning, by report dated June 18, 1984, recommended that this application be approved. The Office of Planning reported that the proposed University Center conforms to the recently approved Campus Plan. The facility is to be located near the center of the campus, away from any non-university residential buildings. The Office of Planning was further of the opinion that not only will the Center not cause an increase in student enrollment, it will serve to centralize student, faculty and overnight visitor services in an efficient on-campus location which will reduce the number of pedestrian and automobile trips through the adjacent residential communities, continuing the trend toward the creation of a self-contained campus. The Board concurs with the reasoning and the recommendations of the Office of Planning.

30. The D.C. Department of Public Works (DPW), by memorandum dated May 15, 1984, reported that it endorsed the concept of the original proposal in the Campus Plan. The DPW was of the opinion that the University Center will enhance this concept by providing a central focus for campus activity where traffic which is attracted to the new facility can be localized and controlled. The DPW did not expect any significant increase in university traffic as a result of the Center's construction. Since the activities of the Center are geared toward students who are already on the campus for other purposes, few additional peak hour trips are expected to be generated. The DPW further recommended that bicycle parking spaces should be included as part of the University Center development. The DPW noted that the closest bicycle parking stations are at the Reiss science building and the Henle Village residential complex. The DPW was of the opinion that a good supply of bicycle parking spaces should be provided at the University Center to enhance its attractiveness and to support the Campus Plan objective of reducing automobile travel to the campus. The Board concurs with the reasoning and the recommendations of the Department of Public Works.

31. Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2E, by memorandum dated June 6, 1984, reported that it urged the Board of Zoning Adjustment to approve Application No. 14149 for the proposed new University Center. The ANC was of the opinion that the University and the community have worked hard to find solutions to common problems. The ANC noted that the community concurs with the University that the establishment of a University Center in the geographic center of the campus is an important step in relieving the negative impacts that the University has on the surrounding community. The ANC further noted that the University will be moving some of its activities that generate heavy truck and bus traffic away from the residential streets of Georgetown and will be closing the vehicular entrance located at 37th

and O Streets. The Board concurs with the reasoning and the recommendations of the ANC.

32. There was no opposition to the application.

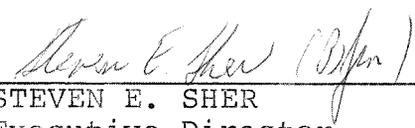
CONCLUSIONS OF LAW AND OPINION:

Based on the findings of fact and the evidence of record, the Board concludes that the applicant is seeking a special exception to permit the construction of a University Center in an R-3 District, pursuant to a BZA approved Campus Plan. The granting of this special exception requires that the applicant demonstrate compliance with the requirements of Paragraph 3101.46 and Sub-section 8207.2 of the Zoning Regulations. The Board concludes that the applicant has met its burden of proof. The applicant has demonstrated a plan to control noise, traffic, number of students, or other objectionable conditions. The Board concludes that the use is so located as not to become objectionable to neighboring property. The total bulk of all buildings and structures on the campus does not exceed the gross floor area prescribed for the R-5-B District. The applicant has submitted a plan for developing the campus as a whole. The Office of Planning and the Department of Public Works have reported favorably on the application. The Board further concludes that the granting of this special exception 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 property in accordance with said Zoning Regulations and maps. The Board concludes that it has accorded to the ANC the "great weight" to which it is entitled. Accordingly, it is hereby ORDERED that the application is GRANTED.

VOTE: 3-0 (William F. McIntosh, Walter B. Lewis and Charles R. Norris to grant; Douglas J. Patton and Carrie L. Thornhill 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: \_\_\_\_\_

27 AUG 1984

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 CONSUMER AND REGULATORY AFFAIRS.

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