

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT



Application No. 14417 of The American University, pursuant to Sub-section 8207.2 of the Zoning Regulations, for a special exception under Paragraph 3101.46 for further processing of an approved campus plan to construct a dormitory with parking garage beneath in an R-5-A District at premises 4400 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., (Square 1600, Lot 1).

HEARING DATE: May 14, 1986

DECISION DATE: May 14, 1986 (Bench Decision)

FINDINGS OF FACT:

1. The American University is bounded by Massachusetts Avenue, N.W. to the north, Nebraska Avenue, N.W. to the east, Rockwood Parkway, N.W. to the west. A portion of the campus also extends to the north side of Massachusetts Avenue, N.W. The University's address is 4400 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.

2. The subject site is located in an R-5-A Zone District.

3. The American University was established by a Special Act of the Congress of the United States approved February 24, 1893. It is an accredited university authorized to confer degrees, and qualifies as a university as defined in the Zoning Regulations.

4. The American University Campus Plan was approved September 3, 1974 by the Board of Zoning Adjustment in BZA Application NO. 11646. New construction undertaken by the University under the approved Campus Plan has included a sports and convocation complex, parking garage and adjunct services facility (BZA Application No. 14185), Phase I of the Library Learning Resource Center (BZA Application No. 12228) and a satellite ground terminal (BZA Application No. 13095). The University has also amended the Campus Plan to include Nebraska Hall, the former Baptist Home, for use as a dormitory and adjunct student health services facility (BZA Application No. 13680) and to include a parking facility at 3501 Nebraska Avenue, N.W. (BZA Application No. 14250).

5. Phase II of the 1974 Campus Plan specifically envisioned the construction of a new residential wing at the

Letts-Anderson Dormitory. This new wing, identified in the 1974 Campus Plan as "Dormitory J", is the subject of this application.

6. The subject site is located near the center of the University campus. The proposed dormitory will be adjacent to, and will connect with, the existing Letts-Anderson Dormitory, a seven-story building with a capacity of 1,406 students. The location of the dormitory is consistent with that which was approved in the 1974 Campus Plan.

7. The University faces a critical shortage of on-campus housing. While the University's total enrollment has decreased in recent years, the percentage of students desiring University housing has increased substantially. The University's acquisition of the Glover-Tunlaw dormitory, Nebraska Hall and the Immaculata facility has not met this demand for student housing, and that the construction of a new dormitory on campus is needed.

8. The financing for the construction of the dormitory will be provided from the proceeds of "The American University Revenue Bond Act of 1985 (Series A)", D.C. Law 6-78, signed into law on February 7, 1986.

9. The University's tentative construction schedule plans for completion of the dormitory by August 1987. The University must have the dormitory ready for occupancy prior to the commencement of the fall semester, or face the loss of the use of the dormitory for the entire school year.

10. The increase in on-campus housing that will result from the construction of the proposed dormitory will reduce the University community's need to use existing neighborhood apartment units for student housing.

11. The dormitory will house approximately 396 students and 4 resident advisors. The dormitory will be six stories in height, with a total gross floor area of 94,520 square feet. A two level parking garage with capacity for 152 automobiles will be located beneath the dormitory. Additional outdoor parking will be provided for 33 automobiles along the perimeter of the proposed dormitory.

12. The dormitory will be "Y-shaped", so as to provide maximum window area for the bedrooms, and will connect with the existing Letts-Anderson dormitory. A student lounge will be located on a terrace between the two wings of the proposed dormitory. The additional floor area created by the proposed dormitory is well within the limits for the campus as a whole. Including the proposed dormitory, the FAR of the campus would be 0.58, which is within the 1.8 FAR permitted.

13. The proposed dormitory complies in every respect with the development parameters set forth in the 1974 Campus Plan.

14. The proposed dormitory complies with all applicable Zoning Regulations, in that the dormitory will not create objectionable conditions in the neighborhood, the gross floor area will not exceed the gross floor area ratio prescribed for R-5-B Districts and the parking provided in the dormitory exceeds the amount required under the Zoning Regulations.

15. By providing on-campus housing for University students, the proposed dormitory will reduce the total number of vehicles currently travelling to and from the University campus. The parking spaces to be provided as part of the dormitory will adequately accommodate the needs of the residents of the proposed dormitory.

16. The University will provide interim parking within the campus during construction of the dormitory. Parking for the private automobiles of the construction crew will also be provided on the University campus.

17. The OP by reported dated May 6, 1986 recommended conditional approval of the application. It was the opinion of the OP that the proposal was consistent with the approved University campus plan. The OP suggested that the approval be subject to two conditions:

- A. The existing university parking polices remain in effect and (b) the DPW had no objections.

18. The Department of Public Works by memorandum dated May 6, 1986 reported that the proposed project will have no adverse traffic impact on surrounding neighborhood streets. The DPW reported that the proposal will have a positive impact from a transportation standpoint. The 60 to 80 vehicle trips being generated by the 396 students now living off-campus would be eliminated. The DPW noted that the site is presently used as a parking lot containing 115 parking spaces. This project would supply 185 spaces for a net gain of 70 spaces over the existing lot. By providing housing for students now living off campus, the proposed dormitory would help to ease the present traffic and parking conditions on streets surrounding the University campus. The represents benefits to the surrounding neighborhoods. The DPW further noted that there will be no new curb cuts for access and circulation associated with the new project. The primary access to the site will be from Massachusetts Avenue at the existing Glover Gate.

The Department recognized the positive steps taken by the American University to reduce traffic and parking impacts on the area surrounding the campus. Included among these steps were

- A. The increase in the number of parking spaces on campus through the redesign and expansion of the Nebraska lot and the construction of new facilities,
- B. The installation of a shuttle bus between the campus and the Tenley Town metrorail station. The Board concurs with the reasoning and recommendation of the Department of Public Works.

19. ANC-3D by letter dated May 5, 1986 recommended approved of the application.

The ANC reported that increased campus housing will reduce the traffic impact of the University on the surrounding neighborhoods and increased campus parking availability will contribute to the alleviation of off-street parking problems. The Commission also wished to indicate its understanding that construction vehicles would be restricted to use of the Massachusetts Avenue gate when entering or exiting campus. At April 22, 1986, meeting, however, having been informed that some of these vehicles would not be able to pass through that entry, the commission unanimously voted to inform the Board that it would be satisfied if such vehicles were required to use the Massachusetts Avenue gate if possible and otherwise to use the Nebraska Avenue gate, but not the Rockwood Parkway access. The Board concurs with the reasoning and recommendation of the ANC.

20. The Spring Valley Wesley Heights Citizen's Association by letter dated April 10, 1986, reported that it had no objection to the application. The Association reported that since October 1985, a group of citizens had had several discussions with University officials about the proposed dormitory. On October 29, 1985, the Association submitted a memorandum to the University requesting elaboration on five issues. Having received the University's oral response, the Association was satisfied that the dormitory would reduce commuting and associated congestion and spillover parking on neighborhood residential streets, that the proposed parking garage is adequate to accommodate the dorm residents and replace existing parking that the dorm will eliminate, and that sufficient additional temporary parking will be made available elsewhere on the campus to compensate for spaces lost during the simultaneous construction of the new dorm and the new sports center nearby.

21. By letter dated April 23, 1986, the Westover Place Homeowners Association evidenced their support of the application on the grounds that after a review of the

subject plans the Association was of the opinion that the proposal would have no adverse impact on their community as a result if noise, traffic and other objectionable conditions.

22. There was no opposition to the application.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW AND OPINION:

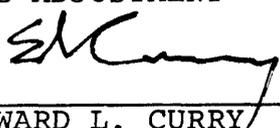
Based on the record, the Board concludes that the applicant is seeking a special exception, the granting of which requires proof that the applicant has met the requirements of Paragraph 3101.46 of the Zoning Regulations and that the relief requested can be granted as in harmony with the general purposes and intent of the Regulations and will not tend to adversely affect neighboring property. The Board concludes that the applicant has met its burden of proof. The proposed use, as conditioned below in the grant of this application, is not likely to become objectionable to neighboring property because of noise, traffic, number of students or other objectionable conditions. The provision of additional on-campus housing will reduce the need for students to seek housing in the neighborhood, and will thus result in a reduction of traffic to and from the University campus. As a result, the use will not have an adverse effect on neighboring property.

The Board further concludes that it has accorded the ANC its "great weight" to which it is entitled. Accordingly, it is ORDERED that the application is GRANTED SUBJECT to the CONDITION that construction shall be in Accordance with Plans Marked as Exhibit No. 27B of the record.

VOTE: 5-0 (Lindsley Williams, Paula L. Jewell, Charles R. Norris, William F. McIntosh and Carrie L. Thornhill to grant.

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

ATTESTED BY:


EDWARD L. CURRY
Acting Executive Director

FINAL DATE OF ORDER: JUN 17 1986

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."

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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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