



MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment

FROM: Jennifer Steingasser, Deputy Director Development Review & Historic Preservation

DATE: June 1, 2010

SUBJECT: BZA Case 18048- Request for Special Exception Relief at 2683 Douglass Road, SE.
Washington Middle School for Girls

I. SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning (OP) recommends **approval** of special exception relief pursuant to § 206 for the operation of the Washington Middle School for Girls (WMSG) at 2683 Douglass Road, SE subject to the conditions outlined at the conclusion of this report.

II. AREA AND SITE DESCRIPTION

Address	2683 Douglass Road, SE
Legal Description	Square 5872 Lot 0143
Ward	8 (ANC 8A06)
Existing Development	Developed as a 3-story apartment building complex, known as Washington View. However the building at 2683 Douglass Road is currently occupied by the school.
Zoning	The R-5 districts are general residence districts designed to permit flexibility of design by permitting in a single district, except as provided in §§ 350 through 361, all types of urban residential development if they conform to the height, density, and area requirements established for these districts under chapter 4 of this title. The R-5 districts shall also permit the construction of those institutional and semi-public buildings that would be compatible with adjoining residential uses and that are excluded from the more restrictive residence districts.
Historic District	N/A
Adjacent Properties	The apartment complex occupies its own square and has no immediate abutting properties. Across Douglas Road to the east are apartment complexes and recently constructed row dwellings. A Kipp Academy is located to the south at the intersection of Douglass Place and Douglass Road, along with recently built row homes.
Surrounding Neighborhood Character:	Semi-detached homes, row house residences and apartment complexes along Stanton Road in the R-3 district.





Zoning Map and Aerial

III. APPLICATION-IN-BRIEF

The applicant is seeking relief to operate its existing private school with a maximum of 40 children, grades 4 to 5 and 4 staff. The private Catholic school, which was originally located at a neighborhood church, has been in operation at this site since 2001. The school currently operates out of the Washington View Apartment complex and occupies the 2nd and 3rd floors of the apartment building located at the corner of Douglass Road and Sayles Place. An extended-day teen program occupies the lower level of building during the evening hours between 5:00 pm and 7:30 pm. No residents occupy this building. A three-story brick apartment building (#2681) abuts the school’s building and its use remains residential..

A 45-space surface parking lot serves both the residential and school building. Pursuant to the parking requirements of § 2101 (2 spaces for every 3 teachers and employees) 2 spaces would be required. The applicant states that 25 spaces have been reserved for the school’s use by the property’s management. The remaining 20 spaces are utilized by the 8 apartment residences at 2681 Douglass Road.

IV. REQUESTED RELIEF and ANALYSIS

- 352 *SPECIAL EXCEPTIONS: GENERAL (R-5)*
- 352.1 *Any use or structure permitted as a special exception in R-4 Districts under §§ 332.1 and 333 through 335 shall be permitted as a special exception in an R-5 District if approved by the Board of Zoning Adjustment under § 3104.*

Private schools are permitted as a special exception in R-4 districts and therefore also allowed by special exception in R-5 districts, pursuant to the special exception requirements of Section 206.

Section 206 is reviewed as follows:

206.1 *Use as a public school that does not meet the requirements of chapter 4 of this title or as a private school, but not including a trade school, and residences for teachers and staff of a private school, shall be permitted as a special exception in an R-1 District if approved by the Board of Zoning Adjustment under § 3104, subject to the provisions of this section.*

This is a private school for girls, grades 4 and 5.

206.2 *The private school shall be located so that it is not likely to become objectionable to adjoining and nearby property because of noise, traffic, number of students, or otherwise objectionable conditions.*

The school is located on the lowest elevation of the property and abuts a small wooded area to the west of the apartment complex. The school currently has 35 students and its hours of operation are between 7am and 7pm.

The property's management is informed when students would use outdoor areas on the apartment ground and two faculty members are present to supervise outdoor recess and physical education. The school has been granted access to THEARC gymnasium at 1901 Mississippi Avenue (1.4 miles away) and arrangements are being made to provide shuttle transportation to this facility for weekly physical education classes. No information has been reported regarding noise due to outdoor activities.

With respect to traffic generation, of the 4 staff persons, three drive to work, and utilize the 25-space surface parking lot assigned to the school. Thirty (30) out of 35 girls live in the southeast quadrant of the District and the majority use public transportation or walk.

Staff arrivals at 7:00 am and student arrivals at 7:30 am are monitored within the parking lot area by contracted Metropolitan DC police officers. Students are escorted at dismissal time (5:00 pm) for pick-up and to a bus stop located on Stanton Road.

The teen program, which operates on the lower level of the building, starts at 7:30 pm, so there is minimum conflict between arrival times for this program and dismissal times for the school.

OP is not aware of complaints regarding adverse impacts to neighboring property due to number of students, noise, or traffic due to arrival and dismissal times.

206.3 *Ample parking space, but not less than that required in chapter 21 of this title, shall be provided to accommodate the students, teachers, and visitors likely to come to the site by automobile.*

Section 2101 of the Zoning Regulations requires 2 spaces for each 3 teachers and other employees. There is sufficient on-site parking to accommodate staff and visitors to the school and the parking requirement for the 8 apartment units abutting the school building would not be affected, as 20 spaces remain assigned to these residential units. No staff increases are being requested at this time.

OP encourages future staff, employees and parents to use public transportation or carpool. A policy and procedures manual should be distributed to parents prior to the start of the academic year regarding parking, pick-up and drop-off. This information should also be posted on the school's website, if applicable.

SPECIAL EXCEPTION

Special Exception Relief - §3104

The general standards by which the BZA should review special exceptions are set forth in Section 3104.1 and listed below.

(a) Will the special exception be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and Maps?

Private schools are permitted by special exception in the R-5 districts. The Washington Middle School for Girls has been in operation in this building since 2001. The special exception request would allow a maximum of 40 students and 4 staff and use of the school is not proposed to change. No construction or changes to the external building or the outdoor areas have been proposed to accommodate the school. As such, the requested special exception will remain in harmony with the purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations.

(b) Will the special exception tend to adversely affect the use of neighboring property in accordance with the Zoning Regulations and Maps?

The school use within the apartment complex has not significantly increased the intensity of use or reduced green space and yard areas. The use would remain compliant with its off-street parking requirement, as the existing parking arrangement provides excess parking to accommodate staff persons and visitors to the school, if necessary. There is also available on-street parking during and after school hours in the immediate vicinity of the school’s building. Outdoor activities are supervised by staff and are conducted in agreement with the residential management.

Approval of the requested special exception should not have an adverse effect on neighboring property due to traffic, noise, and other objectionable conditions.

V. COMMENTS OF OTHER DISTRICT AGENCIES

No comments were received to date from other agencies.

VI. COMMUNITY COMMENTS

The applicant’s request was reviewed by the Advisory Neighborhood Commission 8A (ANC) at the ANC’s regularly scheduled meeting in May 2010. ANC 8A voted unanimously to approve the application.

VII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning recommends **approval** of the requested relief pursuant to § 206 to permit the establishment of the private school, subject to the following conditions:

- Approval shall be for a period of five years from the date of the Board’s approval.
- The maximum number of students shall not exceed 40 for children in grades 4 and 5, and the maximum number of staff shall not exceed 4.
- The school shall operate between 7 am and 7pm, Monday through Friday.
- Outdoor activity must be supervised by staff.
- The applicant will distribute a policy manual to parents and staff prior to the start of the academic year regarding parking, pick-up and drop-off. This information should encourage staff and parents to use public transportation or carpool and shall also be posted on the school’s website, if applicable.