

MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment

FROM: Matthew Jesick, Case Manager
Joel Lawson, Associate Director for Development Review

DATE: July 17, 2012

SUBJECT: BZA Case 18383, Barbara Chambers Children’s Center, 1470 Irving Street, NW

I. RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning (OP) recommends **approval** of the following:

- § 205 – Special exception for the expansion of an existing child development center:
 - Increase maximum enrollment from 150 to 225 children;
 - Increase maximum number of staff from 31 to 47.

Approval is recommended subject to the following conditions, which are the same as previously approved:

1. The hours of operation shall be from 7:00 AM to 10:00 PM, with all persons off the site, including the parking lot, by 10:30 PM.
2. The number of enrolled children shall not exceed 225.
3. The number of staff shall not exceed 47.
4. Outdoor activities shall be supervised and conclude by 8:00 p.m.
5. Trash shall be kept on-site and collected three times a week, and the property shall be kept free of debris.
6. Staff shall monitor the dropping off and picking up of the children.
7. The parking lot shall be lit from sunset to sunrise.

II. LOCATION AND SITE DESCRIPTION

Address	1470 Irving Street, NW
Legal Description	Square 2672, Lot 881
Ward, ANC	1, 1A
Zoning	R-5-B – moderate density apartment and general residential
Existing Development	Three story structure; Playground on south side of property; Parking lot at southeast corner; Existing child development center, permitted previously by special exception; 15’ public alley to the east.

Adjacent Properties	Charter school to the west; Rowhouses and apartments to the southwest and south; Five story apartment building to the east; High school and middle school to the north.
Surrounding Neighborhood Character	Mostly apartments to the west, south and east; Civic uses to the north; Commercial uses (DC USA) to the northeast.

III. APPLICATION-IN-BRIEF

The Barbara Chambers Children’s Center (BCCC) requests an increase in the maximum student enrollment and the maximum number of staff in order to accommodate the growing demand for childcare in the Columbia Heights area. No new construction is proposed.

Background

The BCCC has been in operation since 1968. More recently the Board approved an expansion of the center in 2002 (BZA #16817), and a 10-year time extension in 2008 (BZA #17731). Those two applications established the conditions of approval that are recommended with the current application.

IV. ANALYSIS

205.1 Use as a child/elderly development center or adult day treatment facility 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.

205.2 The center or facility shall be capable of meeting all applicable code and licensing requirements.

The Office of the State Superintendent of Education, Division of Early Childhood Education, Compliance and Integrity Division, Child Care Licensing Unit (OSSE/ECE/CID/CCLU) recommends that the applicant be granted. Their April 26, 2012 memorandum has been submitted to the record.

205.3 The center or facility shall be located and designed to create no objectionable traffic condition and no unsafe condition for picking up and dropping off persons in attendance.

No objectionable traffic or unsafe drop-off conditions would result from the increased enrollment at the BCCC. According to the applicant, about 90% of students are walked to school or take transit. The site is in very close proximity to the Columbia Heights metro and many major bus lines. This means that very few students are being driven to school. In fact, the maximum observed number of vehicles dropping off children, over a two hour window, was 15, or one vehicle every eight minutes.

The applicant has also worked with DDOT to begin to implement a number of mitigation efforts:

1. Staff will be able to participate in WMATA's Smart Benefits program;
2. The school will install a bike rack;
3. The school will implement a drop-off and pick-up program utilizing the parking lot behind the school, rather than Irving Street.

205.4 The center or facility shall provide sufficient off-street parking spaces to meet the reasonable needs of teachers, other employees, and visitors.

The BCCC provides parking at the rear of the property. Parking can be used by both staff and visitors. Most staff walk, bike or take transit to the site.

205.5 The center or facility, including any outdoor play space provided, shall be located and designed so that there will be no objectionable impacts on adjacent or nearby properties due to noise, activity, visual, or other objectionable conditions.

The center has been operating in this location for many years and OP is not aware of any neighborhood concerns about noise or other objectionable conditions. In addition, per the existing conditions for the BCCC, all outdoor activities must be monitored and conclude by 8:00 PM.

205.6 The Board may require special treatment in the way of design, screening of buildings, planting and parking areas, signs, or other requirements as it deems necessary to protect adjacent and nearby properties.

OP does not recommend any special treatment of the design. The application does not propose new signs, screening, plantings or parking areas.

205.7 Any off-site play area shall be located so as not to result in endangerment to the individuals in attendance at center or facility in traveling between the play area and the center or facility itself.

No off-site play area is used now or proposed in the future.

205.8 The Board may approve more than one (1) child/elderly development center or adult day treatment facility in a square or within one thousand feet (1,000 ft.) of another child/elderly development center or adult day treatment facility only when the Board finds that the cumulative effect of these facilities will not have an adverse impact on the neighborhood due to traffic, noise, operations, or other similar factors.

According to GIS records, there are a number of child development centers in the immediate neighborhood. Most of the other centers have co-existed with the Barbara Chambers Center for

many years. OP is aware of no neighborhood concerns about having these centers located close to each other. In a recent case (#18309), the Board approved a new child development center (CDC) at 1474 Columbia Road. OP continues to believe, as stated in the report for that case, that there would be no adverse impacts because of the proximity of the CDCs; Noise impacts will be negligible, and traffic impacts would be dispersed because many streets in the area are one-way and distribute the limited auto traffic generated by these uses. The other CDCs have co-existed in the same neighborhood for several years.

205.9 Before taking final action on an application for use as a child/elderly development center or adult day treatment facility, the Board shall submit the application to the D.C. Departments of Transportation and Human Services, the D.C. Office on Aging, and the D.C. Office of Planning for review and written reports.

The application was submitted to the appropriate agencies.

205.10 The referral to the D.C. Department of Human Services shall request advice as to whether the proposed center or facility can meet all licensing requirements set forth in the applicable laws of the District of Columbia.

The Office of the State Superintendent of Education, Division of Early Childhood Education, Compliance and Integrity Division, Child Care Licensing Unit (OSSE/ECE/CID/CCLU) recommends that the applicant be granted. Their April 26, 2012 memorandum has been submitted to the record.

V. COMMENTS OF OTHER DISTRICT AGENCIES

OP understands that the District Department of Transportation will submit comments under separate cover. As noted above, OSSE has already supplied comments recommending approval of the application.

VI. COMMUNITY COMMENTS

In a letter dated June 13, 2012, ANC 1A reported that it voted to support the application. The ANC cited the very high ratio of students who walk or use transit to arrive at the center, a dedicated parking lot, and long drop-off and pick-up time periods as reasons for minimal traffic impacts.

VII. ATTACHMENT

1. Vicinity Map

Attachment 1 Vicinity Map

