

MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment
FROM: Stephen J. Mordfin, AICP, Case Manager
 Joel Lawson, Associate Director Development Review
DATE: November 6, 2012
SUBJECT: BZA Case 18435, 4105 Brandywine Street, N.W., to permit an expansion to Friendship Hospital for Animals

I. OFFICE OF PLANNING RECOMMENDATION

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

- § 771, Floor Area Ratio (1.5 nonresidential permitted, 2.49 proposed);
- § 774, Rear Yard (15 feet required, none proposed);
- § 2101, Off-Street Parking (39 spaces required, 10 spaces proposed); and
- § 2201, Loading (1-30-foot loading berth and 1 100 SF platform required, none proposed).

OP recommends approval of the following special exception relief:

- § 411.5, Roof Structures (one height permitted, two proposed).

Subject to the following conditions:

1. The applicant establishes a Transportation Demand Program that includes the following:
 - a. Pays 100 percent of the costs for Capital Bikeshare to any employee that requests it.
 - b. Operates valet parking either within public space at the front of the building on Brandywine Street, as permitted by DDOT, or within its garage. This space may also be used by the applicant for loading.
 - c. Designates one employee as a Site Transportation Coordinator (STC) to provide employees and clients with information on alternative modes of transportation.
 - d. Subsidizes fifty percent of employee transit fares.
 - e. Provides monetary benefits comparable to the transit subsidies for employees participating in Commuter Connections and Guaranteed Ride Home programs.
 - f. Provides five bicycle parking spaces within the building.

II. LOCATION AND SITE DESCRIPTION

| | |
|-------------------|------------------------------|
| Address | 4105 Brandywine Street, N.W. |
| Legal Description | Square 1732, Lot 822 |
| Ward | 3 |



| | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Lot Characteristics | Rectangular lot sloping downward from east to west with side alley access |
| Zoning | C-2-A – medium density community business center commercial district |
| Existing Development | Veterinary hospital, permitted in this zone. |
| Adjacent Properties | North and East: Vacant commercial buildings proposed for 5-story mixed use building as a PUD (ZC 10-23) South: Across Brandywine Street, two-story office building West: Across the public alley, two-story one-family detached dwelling |
| Surrounding Neighborhood Character | Commercial and residential uses on Wisconsin Avenue, with lower density residential to the west and commercial uses to the east. |

III. APPLICATION IN BRIEF

The applicant proposes to expand the existing veterinary hospital building, constructed in 1960, with second floor and rear additions to modernize the facility. It is the only 24-hour emergency animal hospital in the District of Columbia. Specialty and primary care services and a surgical facility would be provided on the new second floor, while 24-hour emergency care would continue to be provided on the first floor. The rear addition would serve to provide for elevator and stair access to the second floor, as well as additional treatment areas on each level. The basement would continue to provide ten off-street parking spaces and employee areas and administrative offices. The parking would be shifted slightly to allow for the addition of elevator service to the basement. Five bicycle parking spaces would be provided, in excess of the two required. A “Traffic Impact and Parking Study,” submitted by the applicant and dated October 17, 2012, concluded that the *“proposal is not likely to become objectionable to surrounding properties and the local area.”*

The proposed building addition is primarily to permit the addition of state-of-the-art facilities. The number of staff or the number of animals treated per hour would not change for either primary or emergency care. The only increase would be for specialty care, increasing from three to six veterinarians during the 9:00 am to 5:00 pm shift, with each veterinarian seeing five animals per day.

In agreement with the ANC, the applicant proposes to facilitate patient arrivals to the hospital and apply to DDOT to create a “No Parking” zone at the front of the building on Brandywine Street for short term stopping only. This would allow for the pick-up and drop-off of animals, should no parking be available on-site. The applicant also proposes to provide valet parking for those that request it, and lease four off-street parking spaces for the operation of this service. The valet service would be located within public space and the applicant would negotiate with DDOT for the lease of such space. Alternatively, the applicant proposes to locate the valet service from its garage, should the lease of public space prove to be cost prohibitive or not necessary. If the space to the front of the building in Brandywine Street is leased, the applicant proposes to also utilize this space for loading.

A 2,684 square foot green roof, including a 686 square foot service walkway, would be located along the edge of the roof, with mechanical equipment in the center. At the rear of the building would be a 665 square foot dog walk area. The remainder of the roof would be painted white.

IV. ZONING REQUIREMENTS and REQUESTED RELIEF

| C-2-A Zone | Regulation | Existing | Proposed | Relief |
|------------------------|--|-----------------------|------------------------|---------------|
| Height § 770 | 50-foot max. | 20.5 feet | 34.67 feet | None required |
| Floor Area Ratio § 771 | 1.5 max. nonresidential 2.5 max. total | 1.3 nonresidential | 2.49 nonresidential | Required |
| Lot Occupancy § 772 | 100% max. | 87% | 100% | None required |
| Rear Yard § 774 | 15-foot min. | 15 feet | None | Required |
| Side Yard § 775 | None | None | None | None required |
| Parking § 2101 | 39 spaces min. | 10 spaces | 10 spaces | Required |
| Loading § 2201 | 1 30-foot berth 1 100-SF platform | None None | None None | Required |

V. OFFICE OF PLANNING ANALYSIS

a. Variance Relief from § 771, Floor Area Ratio (FAR)

i. Exceptional Situation Resulting in a Practical Difficulty

The site slopes downward severely from east to west, exposing the western elevation of the basement. The Brandywine Street orientation of the lot results in the slope impacting this site differently than other commercial lots in the square, for which most of the main level street elevation is at-grade with Wisconsin Avenue. The main level of the subject property is partially at-grade and partially above-grade, resulting in a portion of the basement to be more than four feet above grade counting toward FAR. Construction of a second below grade level to accommodate uses that are in the existing basement level, such as parking, would not be feasible and would result in need to construct two basement levels for a two-story building, which would be a practical difficulty.

ii. No Substantial Detriment to the Public Good

An FAR of 2.49 would permit the applicant to construct a second floor above the existing structure, with a two-story façade facing Brandywine Street, not unusual with a C-2-A district. It would relieve the crowding within this existing one-of-a-kind facility within the District, and allow it to be upgraded to a modern state-of-the-art facility to serve District residents and their pets. The proposed facility would not exceed the maximum bulk regulations of what could be constructed on the site.

iii. No Substantial Harm to the Zoning Regulations

The granting of this variance would allow for the continuation and expansion of this existing animal hospital, a use permitted within the C-2-A. A portion of the additional FAR would allow the applicant to add a second internal stairwell and elevator, making the building accessible to the handicapped and improve circulation within the building.

b. Variance Relief from § 774, Rear Yard

i. Exceptional Situation Resulting in a Practical Difficulty

The existing building has no elevator and one internal stairwell. Addition of a second stairwell and elevator shaft to the existing structure would require inserting them through the existing floors, which was not designed to accommodate them. Construction of an addition

within the rear yard would allow for the consolidation of hospital uses within the center of the building, while allowing core services to be provided at the rear of the building within new construction, and allow for an intensive care unit on the first floor and a surgical unit on the second. A third floor could be added to the top of the building, preserving rear yard space, but a third floor addition would also involve the construction of additional FAR dedicated to stairwells, hallways and elevators to service a small hospital area, which would be a practical difficulty.

ii. No Substantial Detriment to the Public Good

The addition of an elevator and second stairwell would increase the safety, accessibility and utility of the building in an area not highly visible from Brandywine Street, or impact area residents.

iii. No Substantial Harm to the Zoning Regulations

The proposed expansion of this animal hospital building would allow for the provision of additional access to the second floor, necessary for the provision of a state-of-the-art facility, to allow for the continued operation of a use permitted as a matter-of-right by the Zoning Regulations.

c. Variance Relief from § 2101, Off-Street Parking

i. Exceptional Situation Resulting in a Practical Difficulty

The existing garage parking can accommodate ten off-street parking spaces, in excess of what was required when the building was constructed in 1960, but insufficient for the proposed addition. Construction of a second level of parking below the basement level of an existing building is not feasible, and removal of the existing building would require the animal hospital to cease operations for a period of time, either of which would result in a practical difficulty.

ii. No Substantial Detriment to the Public Good

The surrounding neighborhood is improved with metered on-street parking and several commercial parking garages with spaces available to the general public. Residential streets are RRP, precluding employee parking. The site has a Walk Score¹ of 95 out of 100, defined as “Walkers Paradise,” and a Transit Score of 73, or excellent transit. The applicant proposes to provide a variety of transportation options to its employees and parking options to its clientele to minimize impact on the neighborhood.

The application proposes a Transportation Demand Program (TDM). This program would include the following:

- i. One hundred percent of the costs for Capital Bikeshare to any employee that requests it.
- ii. Operation of a valet parking service either within public space at the front of the building on Brandywine Street, as permitted by DDOT, or within its garage. This space may also be used by the applicant for loading.
- iii. Designation of one employee as a Site Transportation Coordinator (STC) to provide employees and clients with information on alternative modes of transportation.
- iv. Subsidization of fifty percent of employee transit fares.

¹ www.walkscore.com

- v. Provision of monetary benefits comparable to the transit subsidies for employees participating in Commuter Connections and Guaranteed Ride Home programs.
- vi. Provision of five bicycle parking spaces within the building.

In combination, these would all contribute to reducing the need for additional on-site parking, by either providing parking elsewhere or eliminating the need to provide parking due to the use of alternative means of transportation.

iii. No Substantial Harm to the Zoning Regulations

The existing facility operates with ten off-street parking spaces. The proposed building addition is primarily to permit the addition of state-of-the-art facilities. There would be no change to the number of staff or the number of animals treated per hour for primary or emergency care, and an increase of only three veterinarians is proposed for specialty care per work day.

d. Variance Relief from § 2201, Off-Street Loading

i. Exceptional Situation Resulting in a Practical Difficulty

The existing building was not required to have and was constructed without loading facilities in 1960. The basement level cannot accommodate a loading space without the elimination of some of the off-street parking, elimination of administrative or employee areas, or the relocation of the required emergency generator. Due to the weight of the generator, it cannot be moved to the roof. Therefore, it would be a practical difficulty to require the applicant to provide loading.

ii. No Substantial Detriment to the Public Good

Loading is primarily by panel trucks, and include items such as pharmaceuticals, food and hospital supplies. No changes to loading are proposed as a result of the expansion of the building to accommodate a state-of-the-art facility. In addition, DDOT recently dedicated an on-street loading space on the south side of Brandywine Street, across from the subject property, and should the applicant successfully negotiate the use of public space to the front of the building for valet parking, this space would also be available for loading, if needed, without the need for loading to inconvenience surrounding neighborhood residents.

iii. No Substantial Harm to the Zoning Regulations

Loading is proposed to occur at the subject property in much the same manner as anticipated when the building was constructed more than fifty years ago, but with additional options available to ensure that the building is adequately serviced.

e. Special Exception Relief pursuant to § 411.11, Roof Structures

i. Is the proposal in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps?

The proposal to provide two roof structures of unequal height would allow the applicant to provide a screen wall at a height lower than the elevator override. The height of the screen wall could be increased to match the height of the elevator override, but this would serve to increase the visibility of the roof structure from the street and increase the appearance of bulk on the roof of this building without providing additional screening of rooftop structures.

ii. Would the proposal appear to tend to affect adversely, the use of neighboring property?

The lower height of the roof structure surrounding the mechanical equipment on the roof would not tend to adversely affect the use of neighboring property as its lower height would be less visible than if the height were to be increased to match that of the elevator override.

VI. COMMENTS OF OTHER DISTRICT AGENCIES

No comments were received from other District agencies.

VII. COMMUNITY COMMENTS

ANC 3E, at its regularly scheduled meeting of October 11, 2012, voted in support of the application.

Attachment: Location Map

