



MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment
FROM: Jennifer Steingasser, Deputy Director Development Review & Historic Preservation
DATE: April 13, 2010
SUBJECT: BZA Case 18051 - request for special exception relief under § 205 to expand an existing child development center at 2800 13th Street NW.

I. OFFICE OF PLANNING RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning (OP) recommends **approval** of this application to permit the expansion of an existing child development center at 2800 13th Street NW, requiring special exception relief from § 205, to allow an increase in enrollment and staff from 80 to 96 and 30 to 35, respectively.



II. LOCATION AND SITE DESCRIPTION

Address:	2800 13 th Street, NW
Legal Description:	Square 2855 , Lot 837
Ward:	1
Lot Characteristics:	Rectangular-shaped lot; Adjacent to public alleys along the north property line
Zoning:	R-4 – Row dwellings, a child development center is permitted by special exception.
Existing Development:	The property is located at the northwest corner of Girard and 13 th Streets, NW. The property is improved with a one-story structure with a lower level, an accessory parking lot, and an open, fenced, outdoor play area. The property has a curb cut on Girard Street that accommodates a two-way driveway and provides access to a 26-space parking lot. The parking lot is adjacent to a 12' wide public alley to the north. A covered drop-off area is located along the west side of the building at the main entrance.
Historic District:	N/A
Adjacent Properties:	Asian-American LEAD community center to the west along Girard and low-density residential uses are located to the immediate north, east, and south.



Surrounding Neighborhood Character:	Mix of institutional and low-density residential uses including single-family detached, flats, and multi-family structures. An R-5-D zone is located further west on Girard and to the north on Columbia Road NW and a C-2-B district is located to the west along 14 th Street NW.
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III. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Easter Seals Greater Washington-Baltimore Region, the applicant, requests zoning relief to allow a programmatic expansion of their existing child development center. The proposed expansion would increase enrollment from 80 to 96 students and raise staff levels from 30 to 35. The Easter Seals facility is an inclusive, full-day child development center which has been in operation since 1959. The “inclusive” center model serves children with and without disabilities from 6 weeks to 5 years of age. The center offers a range of services including early childhood education, intervention services, specialized therapy, and full-day childcare. Easter Seals targets underserved populations including single mothers, families with limited English-speaking proficiency, low-income families, and children with disabilities in foster care. The current and proposed hours of operation are from 7am to 6pm.



View of the site looking west

The proposed expansion would increase enrollment in the early intervention program, which serves children ranging in age from 6 months to 3 years, because the applicant states this is where there is the greatest need. The requested increase in enrollment would allow the applicant to better utilize new classroom spaces that were created as a result of a recent by-right building renovation. Easter Seals received close to \$1 million in funding from the Department of Community and Housing Development to renovate the lower level of the building to accommodate additional classroom space.

The existing Easter Seals child development center is the only Gold Tier facility of its type, as certified by the DC Early Care and Education Administration, and the largest provider of early childhood services for children with disabilities in the District of Columbia. The applicant has indicated that all of its clients are DC residents, most of which live within close proximity to the facility. At least 65% of the clients have some form of a disability and 90% are from minority families of low-income status.

IV. ZONING REQUIREMENTS AND REQUESTED RELIEF

The applicant requests special exception approval for a child development center, which is subject to the review criteria found in § 205. The existing facility has been in existence in this location for decades but has not previously received special exception relief for a child development center. Easter Seals child development center received a Certificate of Occupancy from DCRA for an 80 person “health care facility” in 2005 with no expiration date. It appears as though the use was

initially authorized as a health care facility, which was consistent with its early form of operations, but has since shifted from a medical to a therapy intervention model. The existing child development center also received a license from the Office of State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) last year, which expired in March 2010.

The building is located within the R-4 Residence District. This zone is designed to encourage rowhouse dwellings and stabilize single-family residential areas. The R-4 zone also allows a variety of institutional uses by special exception, including community centers, youth rehabilitation homes, and child development centers.

V. OP ANALYSIS:

An analysis of the project against the relevant special exception criteria is provided below.

Special Exception Criteria

205 CHILD/ELDERLY DEVELOPMENT CENTERS AND ADULT DAY TREATMENT FACILITIES

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.

The subject property is located within the R-4 District, which permits child development centers as a special exception use.

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

The existing child development center has a license from the Office of the State Superintendent of Education issued in March 2009. The facility has been in operation since 1959 and is the only Gold Tier certified facility of its type in Washington, DC. The center has demonstrated that it is capable of meeting applicable licensing requirements for the past several decades and as recently as last year. Given the recent renovations undertaken at the facility, the center should be able to continue to meet all relevant criteria and requirements to continue and expand its operations.

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.

The center has an existing drop-off area on its own property which is visible from the street and easily accessed using the curb cut on Girard Street. The parking lot also has sufficient area to allow cars to turn around and exit the same way or via the alley to the north. The center should not create objectionable traffic conditions for persons visiting the site.

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

A total of nine off-street parking spaces would be required for the use as a result of the proposed expansion request. The site is currently improved with 26 spaces. In addition, the applicant has

indicated that many of its clients and staff are within close proximity to the site and either walk or take public 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 currently has a fenced outdoor play area located along the north edge of the site, along the public alley abutting the rear yards of the adjacent residential buildings. The play area is partially shielded from street view by the building along Girard Street and is completely blocked from view along 13th Street. Access to the play area is provided from the interior of the building as well as from an outdoor entrance along the west side. All play is supervised by staff and coordinated amongst the various age groups. In addition play times are generally during the late morning/early afternoon hours when there should be the least impact on neighboring residential uses. The adjacent use to the west is a community center which has provided a letter of support for the proposed expansion. Due to the design, location, and times of day the play area is used, it should not have an objectionable impact on nearby properties.

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 anticipate the need for additional treatment regarding design, screening, planting and parking areas, signs, or other requirements at this time.

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.

The applicant has an on-site play area. This criterion is not applicable.

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.

There are at least three other child development centers within 1,000 ft of the subject site (see Exhibit 3). These include CentroNia (1420 Columbia Road NW), CentroNia Annex (2900 14th Street NW), and CentroNia at Harvard Street (1100 Harvard Street NW). While the CentroNia facilities provide similar services including full-day child care, they serve an older population (ages 3 months to 18 years) and their mission is focused on the provision of bilingual early education, professional development, and family-support services. The Easter Seals facility serves a more targeted population, children with disabilities, and has done so at this location for decades. The additional children and staff can be accommodated within the existing structure, due to the recent renovation of the lower level of the building, and the operation of the center is not proposed to change. OP finds that the cumulative effect of the proposed expansion, when combined with the

existing child development centers in the area, should not have an adverse impact on the neighborhood with regard to noise, traffic, or other factors.

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 has been forwarded to the relevant agencies and departments for review and comment.

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 review of child development centers is now under the purview of the Office of State Superintendent of Education (OSSE). OSSE staff have reviewed the request and recommended it for approval. It will be further evaluated against their licensure requirements when and if the special exception request is approved.

VI. COMMENTS OF OTHER DISTRICT AGENCIES

OSSE submitted comment indicating their approval of the special use request. No additional comment from District agencies have been received to date.

VII. COMMUNITY COMMENTS

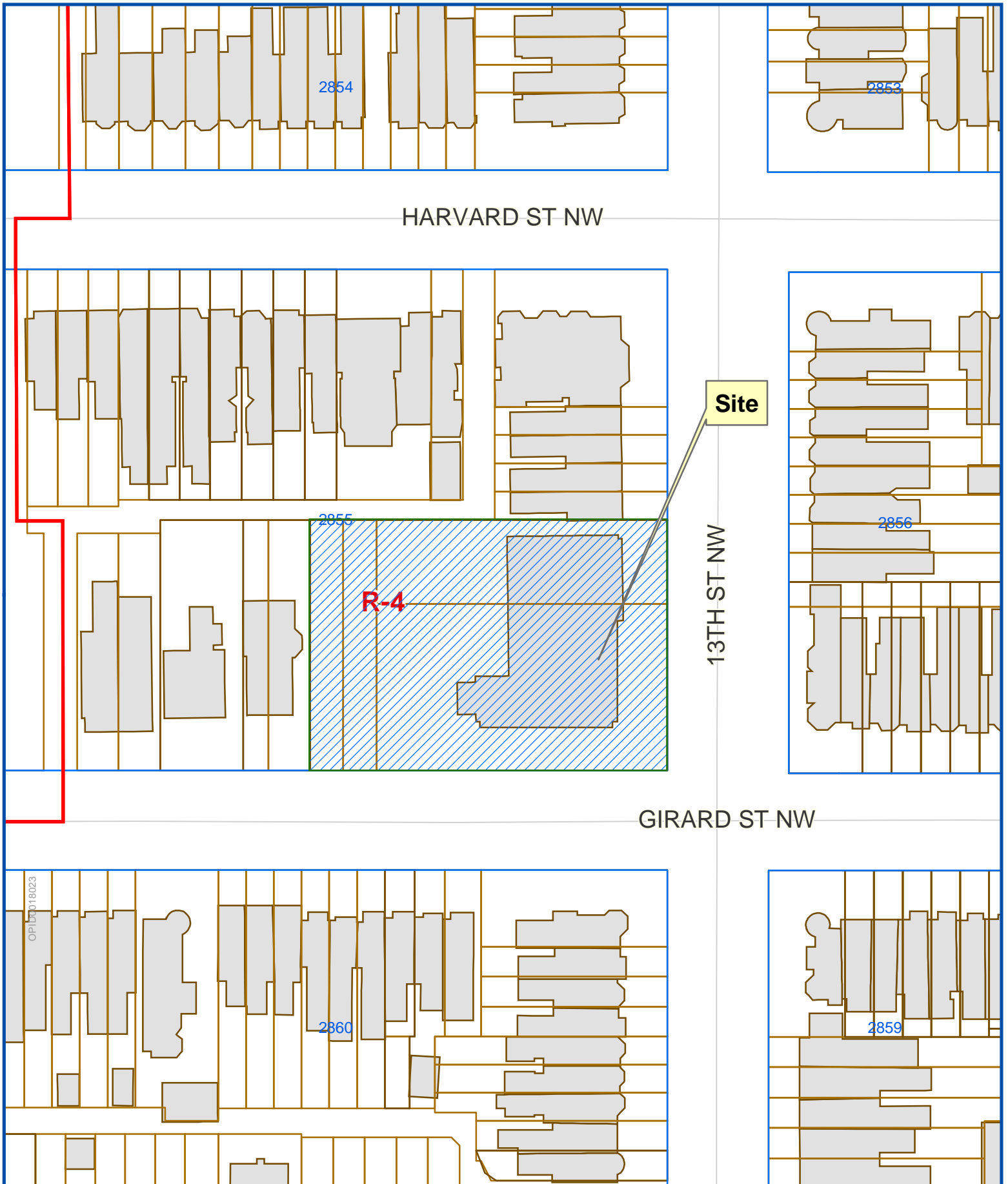
ANC 1B reviewed the special exception request at their April 1, 2010 meeting. No written recommendation has been received at this time. ANC 1B favorably reviewed the proposal in 2006 when Easter Seals was applying for Department of Housing and Community Development block grant funds for interior renovations to provide additional classroom space. The community center located immediately west of the property, Asian American LEAD, submitted a letter of support for the request.

VIII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Overall, the request would be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations. **OP recommends approval** of the requested special exception to allow expansion of an existing child development center within the current building envelope. The site has adequate parking to accommodate the increase as well as a defined pick-up and drop-off area on site so as not create objectionable traffic conditions. Outdoor play areas are screened and located at the rear of the site and the project has received a favorable recommendation from its adjacent neighbor to the west. Finally, the proposal meets the special exception review criteria found in § 205 and should not have an adverse impact on surrounding properties.

JS/ajj

Attachments: 1. Lot map w/ building footprints
 2. Aerial Photograph (2008)
 3. Child Development Centers 1000' Radius Map

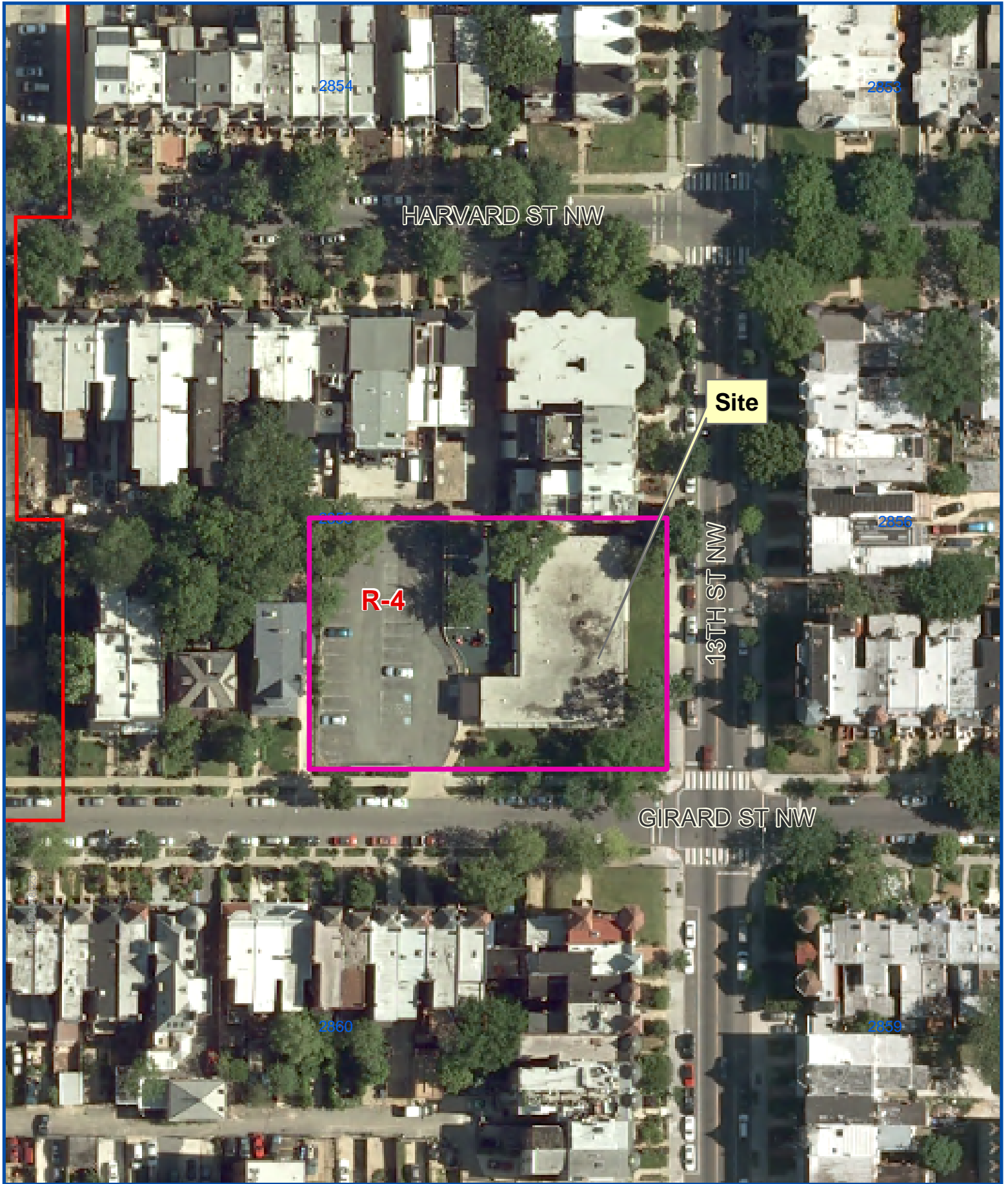


Legend

Zoning Districts

BZA 18051 - 2800 13th Street NW
Exhibit 1 - Lot map with building footprints

This map was created for planning purposes from a variety of sources. It is neither a survey nor a legal document. Information provided by other agencies should be verified with them where appropriate.



BZA 18051 - 2800 13th Street NW Exhibit 2 - Aerial Photo (2008)

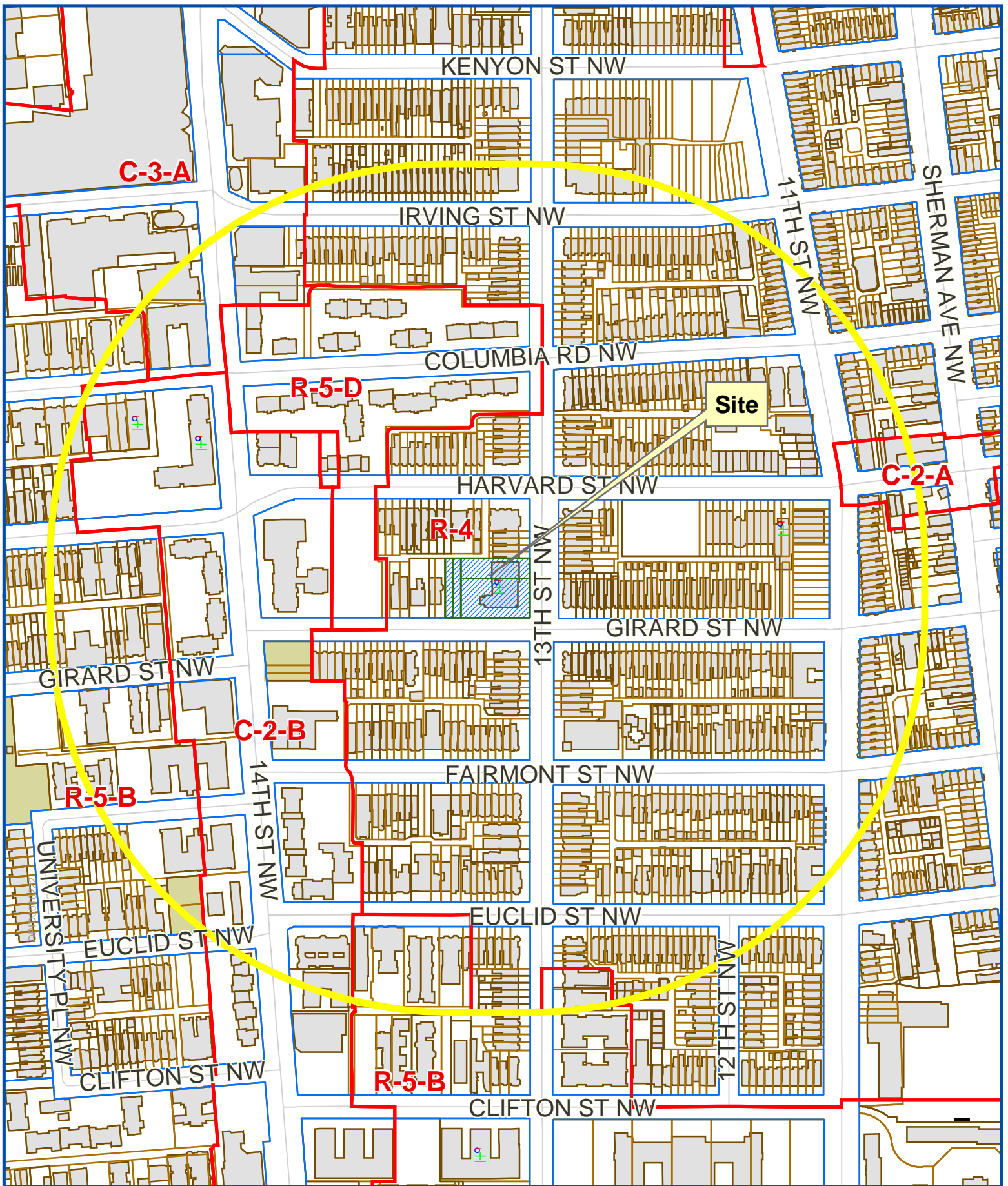
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 Zoning Districts

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Legend

- Zoning Districts
- cc Child Care Locations
- Easter Seals site
- 1000' radius

BZA 18051 - 2800 13th Street NW
Exhibit 3 - Child Development Centers w/in 1000' radius

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