



MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment

FROM: Jennifer Steingasser, Deputy Director for Development Review & Historical Preservation

DATE: March 30, 2010

SUBJECT: **FMBZA Application No. 18049** - Request for special exception relief at 1714 Massachusetts Avenue NW

I. SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning (OP) **recommends** approval of this special exception to establish a chancery use on the subject property.

II. AREA AND SITE DESCRIPTION

Address:	1714 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Legal Description:	Square 0158 Lot 0834
Ward:	2E
Lot Characteristics:	An irregularly-shaped lot, approximately 62 x 90 feet in size, with frontage along Massachusetts Avenue and a rear alley.
Existing Development:	The lot is developed with a four-story, one-family row dwelling of masonry construction that extends to the front property boundary. A driveway continues through the lot from Massachusetts Avenue to the rear alley where a gated masonry wall surrounds the rear and side property boundaries. In public space in front of the building a semi-circular vehicular drop-off is located within a gated metal picket fence that continues from the northern and southern property boundaries to the sidewalk (refer to Exhibit 1).
Zoning:	DC/SP-1 – chancery uses are permitted in the SP-1 zone by special exception if not disapproved by the Foreign Missions Board of Zoning Adjustment (FMBZA) (Section 1001). The Dupont Circle Overlay does not specify any special review or regulations for chancery uses.
Historic District:	Massachusetts Avenue



DC Counts!

Make a difference in your community. Watch your US mail for your 2010 Census Form.

www.census.dc.gov

Adjacent Properties:	Institutional buildings of similar scale to the east and west including several foreign missions (refer to Exhibit 2); medium-high rise apartment building to the north across Massachusetts; and to the south across the adjacent alley are three-to-four story commercial buildings that front N Street NW.
Surrounding Neighborhood Character:	Medium-scale institutional and residential development.

III. APPLICATION IN BRIEF

The US Department of State, Office of Foreign Missions, submitted an application on behalf of the Embassy of Trinidad and Tobago (Embassy) to establish a chancery use in the former residence located at 1714 Massachusetts Avenue, NW (Square 0158 Lot 0834) pursuant to Section 206 (b) of the Foreign Missions Act (Title II, Public Law 97-241, 96 Stat. 286, August 24, 1982), and Chapter 10 under Title 11 of the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations (DCMR), Zoning.

The subject property is immediately adjacent to the existing chancery at 1708 Massachusetts Avenue. The new chancery would provide additional office and meeting space, and space to establish an archive for embassy files. Visa, passport and other services provided to constituents in the U.S. would remain in the basement offices of 1708 Massachusetts Avenue.

There are no plans to either make significant exterior changes to the subject property in the conjunction with the proposed use change or to establish a direct connection (such as a tunnel, door or hallway) between the two buildings.

IV. OFFICE OF PLANNING ANALYSIS

Compliance with § 1001:

1001.1 The Board shall consider the international obligation of the United States to facilitate the provision of adequate and secure facilities for foreign missions in the nation's capital.

As noted in a letter date March 8, 2010, the Department of State has "...determined that favorable BZA action ... would fulfill the international obligation of the United States to facilitate the acquisition of adequate and secure premises by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago for its diplomatic mission in Washington (DC)." OP agrees that this criterion has been addressed.

1001.2 The Board shall consider historic preservation, as determined by the Board in carrying out this section.

The proposal includes no significant additions or alterations to the exterior of the building. The applicant expressed interest is possibly attaching an Embassy coat-of-arms to the eastern façade of the subject building at some time in the future. Such an exterior change to a contributing building within the Massachusetts Avenue Historic District would be subject to review by the DC Historic Preservation Review Board.

However, no plans for this change were submitted with the application. If the applicant decides to pursue this change, it would be reviewed by the State Office of Historic Preservation upon submission of a Building Permit application. No historic preservation issues are otherwise raised by this request to establish a chancery use on the subject property.

1001.3 *To ensure compatibility with historic landmarks and historic districts, substantial compliance with District and federal regulations governing historic preservation shall be required with respect to new construction and to demolition of or alteration to historic landmarks.*

This proposal does not involve any demolition or new exterior construction.

1001.4 *The Board shall consider the adequacy of off-street or other parking, and the extent to which the area will be served by public transportation to reduce parking requirements, subject to any special security requirements that may be determined by the Secretary of State, after consultation with federal agencies authorized to perform protective services.*

The site is within a quarter-mile of the Dupont Circle underground Metro rail station and is served by multiple Washington Metropolitan Transit Authority (WMATA) bus routes that travel along Massachusetts Avenue. DC land records indicated that the subject building has a floor area of approximately 10,760 square feet. Section 2101.1 requires approximately five parking spaces for a chancery use of this size (equal to 1 space/1,800 square feet of floor area in excess of 2,000 square feet). The applicant estimated that 5-7 vehicles can park in the existing driveway excluding the portion in public space.

1001.5 *The Board shall consider the extent to which the area is capable of being adequately protected, as determined by the Secretary of State, after consultation with federal agencies authorized to perform protective services.*

The Embassy states that "...the subject site and area are capable of being adequately protected." This criterion has therefore been addressed.

1001.6 *The Board shall consider the municipal interest, as determined by the Mayor.*

The Director of Planning, on behalf of the Mayor, finds that the proposed reuse of the subject property would not be inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan or the Zoning Regulations. The District Department of Transportation has expressed interest in a public space review. However, no changes in the public space are requested as part of this application. Subsequent requests, such as to secure dedicated parking spaces for the new chancery use or to erect a flag pole in public space, would be subject to such a review.

1001.7 *The Board shall consider the federal interest, as determined by the Secretary of State.*

The Department of State's letter indicates that a favorable decision on this application would serve the Federal interest because both the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the City of Port-of-Spain have previously assisted with the zoning and land use needs of the US Embassy in Port-of-Spain. Based on this information, this application meets the standards for special exception approval.

V. COMMUNITY COMMENTS

The applicant indicates that Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) 2B reviewed and unanimously supported this request at its public meeting on March 10, 2010.

VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

OP recommends **approval** of this special exception to establish a chancery use on the subject property because granting this request has been determined to be in the municipal interest.



**BZA Application No. 18049
1714 Massachusetts Ave NW**

OPID0018001



Office of Planning ~ February 16, 2010
 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. Oblique imagery © Pictometry International

- LEGEND**
- Property Squares
 - Street Centerlines
 - Water
 - Parks



OPID0018001

BZA Application No. 18049
Chanceries in the Vicinity of 1714 Massachusetts Ave NW



Office of Planning ~ February 16, 2010

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. Oblique imagery © Pictometry International

LEGEND

- Commercial (CAMA)
- Property Squares
- Street Centerlines
- Water
- Parks