



Office of the Director

TO: District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment

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

DATE: December 1, 2009

SUBJECT: BZA 18007 – Sibley Memorial Hospital

I. RECOMMENDATION

OP recommends **approval** of the applicant's request for:

- Special Exception relief from the roof structure requirements of Section 411.
- Variance relief from the area requirements of Sections 400.7 (roof structure setback and height) and
- Variance relief from § 402.4 (FAR) requirement to permit 1.38 FAR.

This application affects only the R-5-A zoned portion of the property. Therefore, no modification to the prior PUD (05-42) is required.

II. LOCATION and SITE DESCRIPTION

Applicant	Sibley Memorial Hospital
Address	5255 Loughboro Road, NW
Legal Description	Square N-1448, Lot 26
Zone	R-5-A
Building Description	Hospital
Square Boundaries	The square is bounded by Loughboro Road on the south, MacArthur Boulevard on the west, Dalecarlia Parkway on the east, and Little Falls Road (a private road) on the north.
Surrounding Area	The surrounding area is developed with single-family detached homes and institutional uses.
Proposal	The applicant is requesting variance and special exception relief from the FAR and roof structure requirements in order to accommodate the proposed expansion of its existing hospital facilities.

III. BACKGROUND


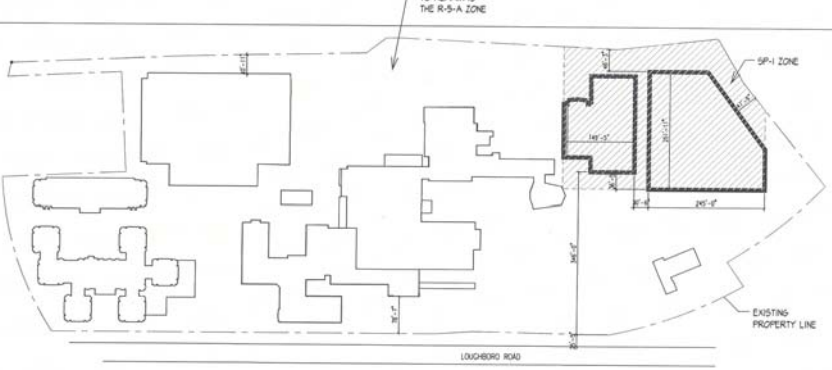
The hospital campus is currently developed with four facilities, including the main hospital building at the center of the site, a skilled nursing facility to the west of the main building, Grand Oaks assisted living facilities west of the nursing center, and the Cancer Center building to the northeast of the main building. Related parking structures and surface parking are located to the east, north and northwest of the site as accessory to the main structure and the assisted living facilities.

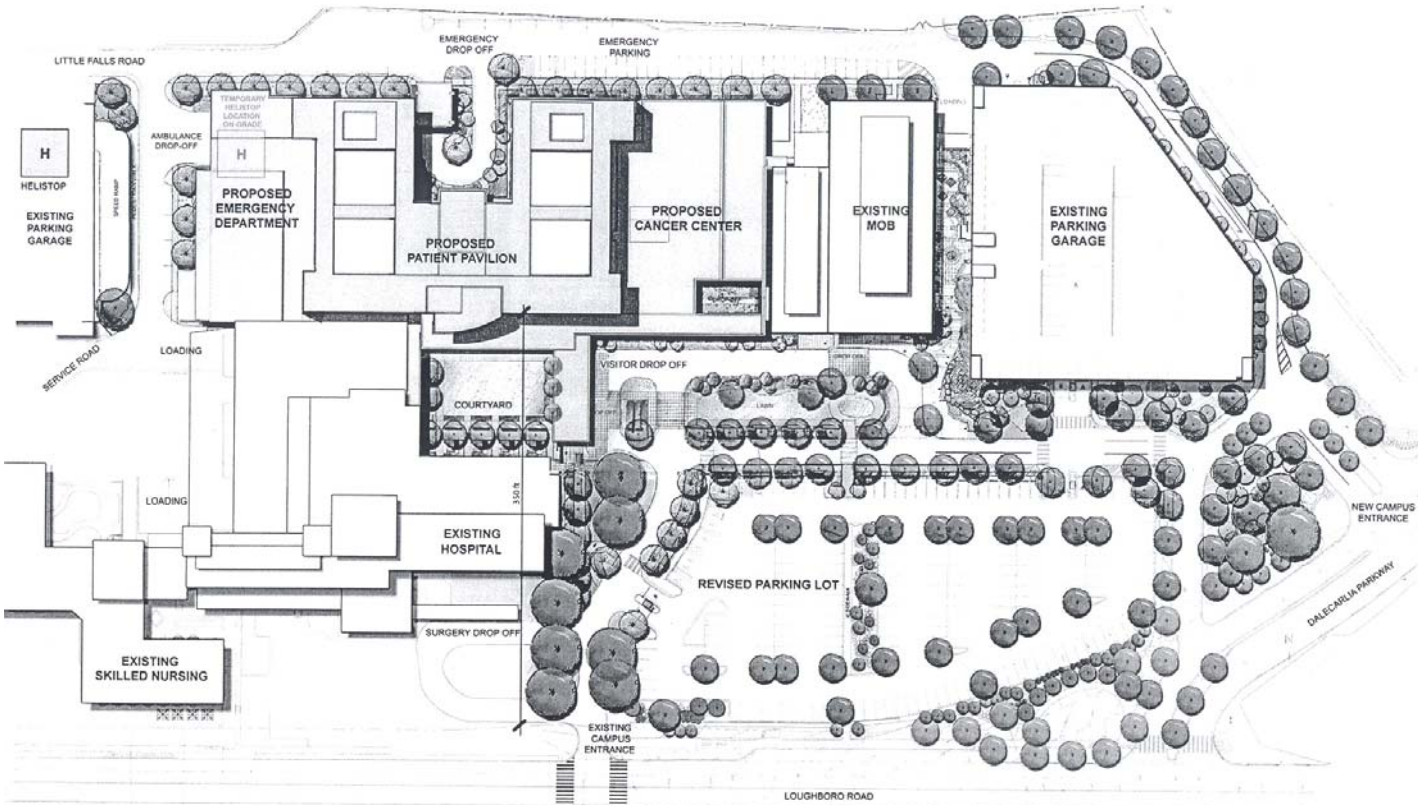
The proposed expansion includes a new 8-story addition to the hospital at the rear of the property, along Little Falls Road, to accommodate a new patient pavilion, cancer center and emergency department. The existing 8-story Hayes Hall and

Cancer Center and other surface lots and paved areas at the rear would be removed. This would result in a total of 675,409 square feet of gross floor area and density of 0.8 FAR for the remaining hospital complex and assisted living facility (Grand Oaks). This demolition would occur concurrently with the construction of the medical office building (MOB) and garage, which is expected to be completed in 2010.

Sibley is currently licensed for 328 beds and operates 230. The expansion of services would also include additional beds to accommodate private rooms with bathrooms and sleepover accommodations for families. The expansion of beds would be phased, increasing to 268 beds by 2015, and 308 beds by 2020.

Summary of Zoning History for Sibley

ORDER/date	Requested	Granted
<p>16312 (1997)</p>	<p>Grand Oaks Assisted Living and skilled nursing center.</p>	<p>Approval for variance relief from 0.9 FAR to a maximum of 1.09</p>
<p>16654 (1998)</p>	<p>Cancer Center addition</p>	<p>Approval for variance relief from the FAR requirement for 1.04 FAR</p>
<p>ZC 02-29 (2002)</p> 	<p>8.54 ac. Parcel acquired from federal government required zoning. Map amendment to R-5-A requested. This area is included in the current proposal.</p>	<p>Approval for 8.54 acres to be zoned R-5-A. With additional land, FAR fell below 0.9</p>
<p>ZC 05-42 (2005)</p> 	<p>PUD and related map amendment to SP-1 for a 2.24 acre portion to construct a medical office building and garage.</p>	<p>Approved for up to 2.09 FAR.</p>



Proposed Addition

ANALYSIS

The R-5-A district permits matter-of-right development to 40% lot occupancy, 0.9 FAR and a maximum height of 40 feet. It is designed to permit all types of urban residential development if it conforms to the height, density and area requirements established for that district (§350.1). The district also permits the construction of institutional and semi-public buildings that would be compatible with adjoining residential uses and which are excluded from the more restrictive residence districts (§350.1).

The project includes important amenities and the applicant has worked with OP to address site planning issues, particularly in light of the planned construction of the MOB and garage on the PUD-related SP-1 portion of the hospital campus. Table 1 highlights the comparison between the area requirements of the R-5-A district with the current proposal, excluding the PUD-related SP-1 portion, which is not included in this application.

Requirements	R-5-A Standards	Existing	Proposal	Relief Required
Area	As prescribed	794,363 sq. ft (R-5-A portion)	794,363 sq. ft (R-5-A portion)	No
Height	40 ft. - 90 ft. ¹	87 ft 4in.	90 ft	No
FAR	0.9	0.85 (with auditorium and services building demolished) This figure includes 0.1 FAR for the existing parking garage structure on the R-5-A zoned portion of the campus.	1.38	Yes
Lot Occupancy	40%	27.13%	38.48%	No
Roof Structure- Ht Setback	18 ft 6in 1:1 from roof's edges	N/A	26 ft. 13 ft 10 in	Yes Yes

¹ Institutional buildings in an R-5 zone may be erected to 90 ft. subject to a 1:1 setback (for each foot of height in excess of height requirement of the underlying zone) from all lot lines. (§ 400.9)

Variance to § 402.4 - FAR

Section 402.4 sets the maximum FAR for the existing building and proposed addition combined at 0.9 FAR on the R-5-A portion of the site. The proposed demolition of two existing buildings and the new addition would increase the FAR to 1.38.

Uniqueness

The subject property is unique as the hospital building is part of the “property” and is an established public service entity that provides essential health care services. The Board, in prior requests for FAR relief pertaining to this property and other public service facilities established that the institutional needs of public service facilities constitute exceptional circumstances.

A confluence of exceptional circumstances is unique to this institution including:

- The hospital building’s needs to modernize and improve care of patients;
- The need to connect the proposed addition to the existing hospital floor plates above and below-grade to maintain continuity and efficiency of services;
- The required space needs to accommodate related improvements in medical equipment. Its particular building systems are unique to the institutional requirements for new or upgraded facilities; and

Practical Difficulty

Without the ability to construct the building addition as proposed, the applicant would be limited in their ability to modernize equipment and bring the building up to modern standards. Sibley already devotes a significant amount of space within the existing building to administrative functions. Hayes Hall, a former nursing dormitory, was converted to accommodate the existing administrative support services in several small and now inadequate offices. This building is proposed to be demolished, and its functions relocated to the new addition to allow more space for medical and surgery units within a more cohesive structure. The demolition would reduce the FAR to 0.8 and it would create a practical difficulty for Sibley to provide its primary hospital services within the confines of a new building of only 0.1 FAR (39,515 square feet) for the following reasons:

- The need to connect the main hospital and the medical office building as a seamless transition to the hospital’s mechanical and imaging labs below grade, and the Cancer Center and Oncology Department above grade for efficiency in the provision of services.
- The use of the existing outdated hospital structure would result in an inefficient layout, and inadequate floor to ceiling height/space required for larger modern imaging and other medical equipment.
- The need to provide upgraded patient rooms, including private rooms and bathrooms as required by code, would also be impractical within the existing structure.
- It would not be feasible for the hospital to decommission existing space and services to redesign the existing building to meet the new requirements. The remaining FAR (39,515 square feet) would only support about 45 beds. According to the applicant’s statement, converting the existing hospital to all private rooms would yield 81 fewer beds than currently available.

Thus, the requested additional density would support the current number of beds and additional private rooms designed to modern hospital code standards, and accommodate a new emergency room. The requested increase would allow for design efficiencies to improve the hospital’s operations and patient care without adversely impacting the hospital’s services.

Intent of the Zone Plan and Detriment to the Public Good

The granting of a variance of 0.48 FAR above the maximum permitted should not have an adverse effect on the Zone Plan. The existing and proposed addition combined would remain within the established maximum lot occupancy and height requirement for the zone district.

Sibley is a long-standing hospital use and designated within the institutional category in the Generalized Policy Map and Future Land Use Map. The 2006 Comprehensive Plan includes specific provisions for facilities and recognizes the need to renovate and replace health care facilities that are out-dated (§§ 1106.11 and 1106.12). The effective FAR for a single-family residence in the R-1-B District could be 1.2 FAR and the actual FAR devoted to hospital use under the proposal would be only slightly greater at 1.28 FAR. An additional 0.1 FAR is devoted to on-site structured parking, which cannot

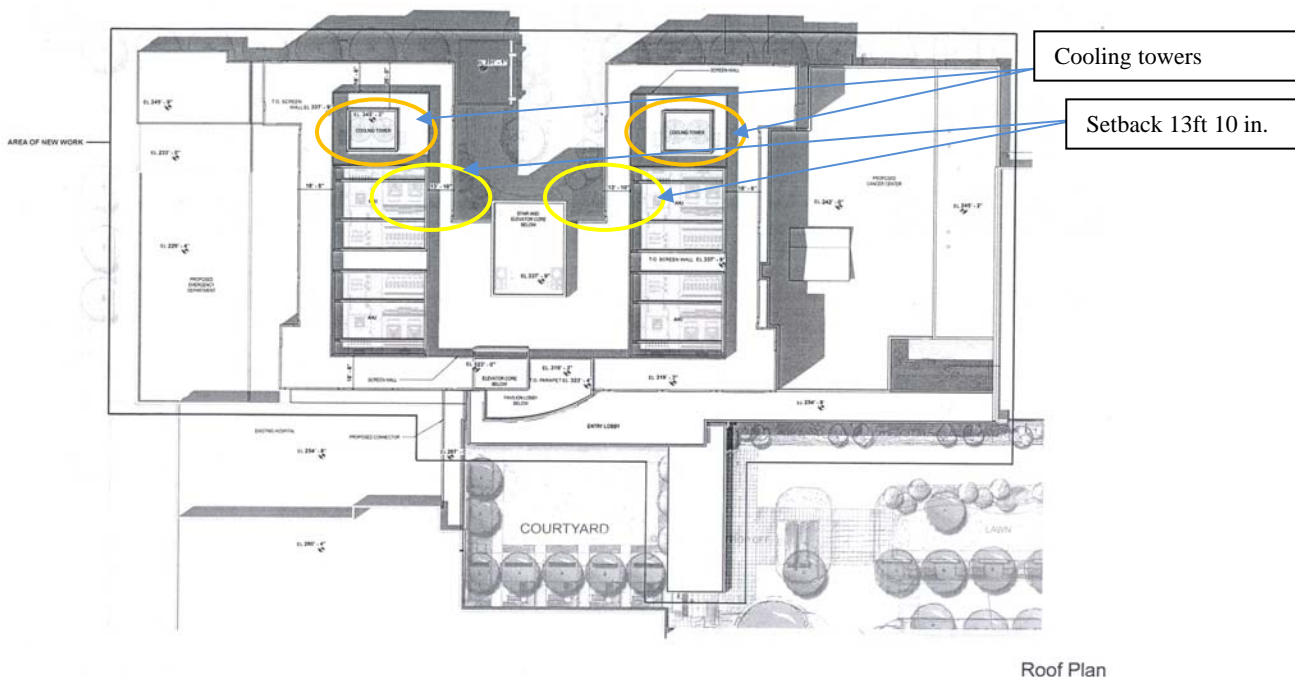
be demolished or placed below-grade at this time because it would reduce the required on-site parking and underground parking structures would be potentially cost-prohibitive for the applicant.

Traffic impacts to the neighborhood should be minimal. The increase in patient beds would be phased in through 2020. The total number of patient beds (308) would not reach or exceed the licensed capacity of the hospital. The parking is currently provided on-site in excess of the zoning requirements and would be maintained as such with the proposed addition. The order approving the medical office building (ZC 05-42) was conditioned with a transportation management plan, including shuttle bus service to and from the Friendship Heights Metro station, as well as a SmartBenefits transit program for employees to reduce traffic impacts along the adjacent streets. The reconfiguration of the Dalecarlia Parkway/Loughboro Road intersection, and a new vehicular entrance off Dalecarlia Parkway would also facilitate more efficient vehicular movement. The applicant has submitted a traffic impact analysis in support of the proposed expansion, which discusses these initiatives in further detail and concludes that the increase in the number of beds at Sibley would not adversely impact future traffic conditions.

As demonstrated by the south elevation of the plan (Exhibit B page 17 of the application), the visual impact of the addition on the neighborhood would be negligible, as most of the addition proposed at the rear of the property would be obscured from view by the existing hospital building, and would be well set back from any existing houses.

Variance to Section 400.7 (c) – Roof Structures

The applicant seeks relief to construct the roof structures, including the cooling towers that exceed the height limit of 18 feet 6 inches to 26 feet and from the setback requirement for the roof structures along the interior court as shown in the diagram below.



Uniqueness

As previously stated, the use of the site and the hospital building's need to modernize with particular building systems are unique.

The proposed 26-foot tall cooling towers and air-handling units are the latest equipment which meet the code requirements for ventilation and hygiene. The hospital intends to provide individual climate controlled patient rooms and operating facilities, which reflect improved standards for patient care and safety.

Practical Difficulty

The larger cooling towers would provide the capacity required for the various functions within the hospital and strict compliance would hinder the ability of the addition to provide adequate room services and patient care. It would create a practical difficulty for Sibley to provide the intended increase in the number of beds and the proposed individual temperature controlled private rooms with existing equipment or smaller air handling units, which may not be possible or would require more expensive alternatives.

The proposed location and size of the cooling towers create a practical difficulty for the stair and elevator core to meet the setback requirements of 400.7 (b). It would also be a practical difficulty to require the applicant to remove core building features, such as the proposed elevator core, which is sited to provide the most efficient and expeditious access to the elevated floors from the new emergency department.

Intent of Zone Plan and Detriment to the Public Good

The requested height increase for the cooling towers would not harm the intent of the Zone Plan. The height of the structure would remain within the prescribed height limit for this zone and would not exceed the Height Act limits as they are also setback 26 feet from the roof's edges. The increased height of the cooling towers and the enclosures would be partially obscured from view off Loughboro Road due to the separation between the road and the building, which would also be partially obscured from view by the existing hospital. The light and air to surrounding neighborhood buildings would not be affected, as these structures would be imperceptible from the closest residential structures to the south of the hospital campus.

Special Exception: Roof Structure - § 411

Section 411.11 provides that *where impracticable because of operating difficulties, size of building lot, or other conditions relating to the building or surrounding area that would tend to make full compliance unduly restrictive, prohibitively costly, or unreasonable, the Board of Zoning Adjustment shall be empowered to approve, as a special exception under § 3104, the location, design, number, and all other aspects of such structure regulated under §§ 411.3 through 411.6, even if such structures do not meet the normal setback requirements of §§ 400.7,, when applicable,....; provided, that the intent and purpose of this chapter and this title shall not be materially impaired by the structure, and the light and air of adjacent buildings shall not be affected adversely.*

Relative to this application, Sections 411.3 and 411.5 require:

411.3 All penthouses and mechanical equipment shall be placed in one (1) enclosure, and shall harmonize with the main structure in architectural character, material, and color.

Due to the various functions of the hospital, all penthouses and mechanical equipment cannot be located within one enclosure as they are not located within one space.

411.5 Enclosing walls from roof level shall be of equal height, and shall rise vertically to a roof, except as provided in § 411.6.

Similarly, as in 411.3, the enclosing walls are of unequal height in order to reduce the massing of one large structure on the roof.

OP has no objection to granting this special exception request as light and air to nearby structures would not be adversely affected. The provision of walls of unequal height would reduce the massing on the roof, reducing the visibility of the structures from surrounding properties.

COMMUNITY COMMENTS

Sibley presented their application to the full ANC at its regularly scheduled meetings on November 4, 2009 and is scheduled to return December 2, 2009. The applicant also met with the Palisades Citizens Association on November 3, 2009 and is scheduled to return on December 1, 2009. The applicant's report (Page 27) highlights the number of meetings

that were held with the community.

AGENCY REFERRALS

The proposal was reviewed by the District Department of Transportation (DDOT). Their review is expected to be submitted under separate cover.

RECOMMENDATION

OP has reviewed the application's request for variance relief from the FAR and roof structure requirements with respect to the R-5-A portion of the existing development of the hospital campus. The Office of Planning finds the subject application to be in conformance with the provisions of the requirements for the granting of variances. Therefore, the Office of Planning recommends **APPROVAL** of the application.