

February 6, 2012

VIA HAND DELIVERY

Chairman Anthony Hood
D.C. Zoning Commission
441 4th Street NW, Suite 210S
Washington, DC 20001

Re: ZC Case No. 11-07A – American University Further Processing Application for North Hall – Response to Zoning Commission Comments

Dear Chairman Hood and Members of the Commission:

The enclosed submission of American University (the “University” or “Applicant”) addresses the comments made by the Zoning Commissioners at the January 30, 2012 public meeting in the above-mentioned case. In response to those comments, the Applicant has again reviewed the ability to make massing changes to the project along Massachusetts Avenue and has also re-reviewed the proposed façade treatment of the North Hall building.

A. Appropriateness of the Massing of the Project to the Character of Massachusetts Avenue:

The Applicant acknowledges the comments that were made by the Zoning Commissioners on January 30, 2012 and understands the general consensus to be that the proposed siting of a residence hall at this location is appropriate, and while the Commissioners did not have concerns that the proposed North Hall would “tower” or “loom” over Massachusetts Avenue, they would like the Applicant to review potential massing reductions along the Massachusetts Avenue frontage of the structure.

The Applicant has thoroughly reviewed this issue, in response to the January 30, 2012 comments of the Zoning Commissioners and since the start of the project’s design development process. The Applicant believes that the proposed massing and siting of the building, as well as its appearance from and along Massachusetts Avenue, that was presented to the Zoning Commission at the October 20, 2011 public hearing and modified in the December 1, 2011 written submission to the Zoning Commission fully satisfies the standards of 11 DCMR § 210 and § 3103.2. The University believes that the proposed siting and massing of the building is the result of an appropriate balancing of the needs and interests of the University to provide on-campus student housing, and have a structure that includes appropriate relationships to nearby buildings on the AU Campus (such as the President’s Office Building and the three residence halls to the south), and the interests of the entire community surrounding the AU campus to be protected from objectionable impacts.

As discussed in detail in the Applicant's written statements and testimony at the October 20, 2011 public hearing, the proposed siting, massing, and height of North Hall is appropriate. The North Hall building is setback from the Massachusetts Avenue sidewalk by approximately 84 feet, and the narrowest portion of the building is oriented towards Massachusetts Avenue. The project includes a significant landscape buffer around the entire site, which appropriately shields views of this building.

This project has received the support of the Office of Planning and the Department of Transportation. The Office of Planning noted: "the proposed building design takes advantage of existing site topography as it will only appear to be 6 stories tall from Massachusetts Avenue. The site design also locates the tallest portion of the structure along its southern edge, across from existing residence halls of a similar height. The proposed pedestrian plaza would link the building to an existing student residential community to the south and better define the entrance. A proposed woodland buffer and landscaped area would be located in front of the building, shielding some its view from Massachusetts Avenue and from the adjacent Presidents' building to the southeast."

This project is supported by the Wesley Theological Seminary, the property owner that is closest to the North Hall site. The Ft. Gaines Citizens Association and ANC 3E, located immediately across Massachusetts Avenue from the North Hall project, have been consulted by the University and have raised no objection to this project. These residents live in the only homes from which you might see the building (the closest Ft. Gaines property owner is approximately 400 feet from the North Hall structure) and have reviewed the siting, massing and façade design in detail.

On October 5, 2011, ANC 3D adopted a resolution in support of this project with the following conditions:

- American University submits a plan for storm water management to the DC Department of the Environment (DDOE) for review and comments; share those comments with ANC 3D; and make any revisions recommended by DDOE;
- American University agrees to setbacks from the applicant's property line along Massachusetts Avenue NW and the Wesley Seminary of no less than 23 feet;
- American University ensures that the elevation of any building design at the site along Massachusetts Avenue minimize the visual impact of the building for neighboring residents;
- American University continues to work with residents on final design issues, including building facades; and
- American University develops a construction management plan and landscaping plan in cooperation with residential neighbors and the Wesley Seminary.

All of these conditions have been satisfied by the University. At the public hearing on October 20, 2011, the testimony of the ANC 3D representative did not fully reflect that ANC 3D adopted a resolution in support with conditions. At the public hearing two people testified in opposition to this

project. The residence of the representative of the Spring Valley Wesley Heights Citizens Association is approximately 800 feet from the North Hall structure, and the residence of the representative of Neighbors for a Livable Community is approximately 3,500 feet from the North Hall structure. There is no widespread opposition to this project.

If the University were required to further reduce the massing of North Hall, it would result in the loss of beds on this site and/or negatively impact the relationship of this building to the adjacent President's Office Building. Throughout the Campus Plan and Further Processing application processes, the University, the Zoning Commission, the Office of Planning, and the surrounding communities have stressed the importance of creating more beds on the AU Campus. The 360 beds proposed in North Hall are critical to the University's ability to provide housing for 67% of its full-time undergraduate students by the fall of 2016. Moreover, the 360 beds on the North Hall site are proposed in a building that has been moved approximately 33 feet further back from Massachusetts Avenue since the initial filing and a building that has undergone refinements to its appearance in order to address issues raised by a few members of the community.

As the University has noted in other submissions in this case and in the Campus Plan application, in order for North Hall to be able to be ready for occupancy by the fall of 2013, it is crucial that the Zoning Commission approve this Further Processing application at the February 16, 2012 public meeting. If the Zoning Commission were to require additional massing reductions to this project, these beds will not be available until the fall of 2014.

B. Additional Modifications to the Façade Treatment:

The Applicant has made the following additional refinements to the façade of the North Hall building, in response to the comments of the Zoning Commission, ANC 3D, Neighbors for a Livable Community, and the Spring Valley Wesley Heights Citizens Association.

- As shown on Exhibit A, the wrap-around windows on the northwest corner of the building have been changed to two separate windows, with masonry in between, consistent with windows on the balance of the façade.
- As shown on Exhibit B, the metal screen on the curtain wall of the stair tower on the north elevation has been removed and replaced with a new precast wall surface that will match the precast surface on the adjacent wall panels. The finish of these wall panels will match the finish of the grid elements on the façade. In previous discussions with the community, this metal screen element was a significant area of disagreement. Please note the metal sunshades on the south elevation, facing the AU Campus, will remain.

Conclusion

The Applicant believes that the proposed siting, massing and height of the North Hall building is appropriate for the topography of this portion of the AU Campus and is consistent with the patterns of development along this portion of Massachusetts Avenue. The materials and appearance of this building reflect an appropriate balance between a respect for the architecture of the neighboring community, as well as the adjacent buildings on the AU Campus.

The Applicant looks forward to the Zoning Commission's approval of this application at the February 16, 2012 public meeting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul A. Tummonds, Jr." with a stylized flourish at the end.

Paul A. Tummonds, Jr.

Enclosure

cc: Attached Certificate of Service

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that on February 6, 2012, copies of the attached letter and enclosure were delivered via email to the following:

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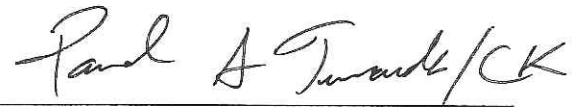
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Paul Tummonds