

# STAFF RECOMMENDATION

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NCPC File No. Z.C. 06-27



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## CONSOLIDATED PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT AND MAP AMENDMENT FOR SQUARE 54 AT WASHINGTON CIRCLE Northwest Washington, D.C.

Submitted by the Zoning Commission of the District of Columbia

April 26, 2007

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### Abstract

The Zoning Commission has referred a proposed action for a consolidated planned unit development and related map amendment from R-5-D to C-3-C on the site of the old George Washington University Hospital, Square 54. The mixed-use development includes an office component on the northern half of the site and a residential component on the southern half of the site. It is staff's opinion that the project consists of two buildings, each with its own measuring point, and that the project is consistent with the Height of Buildings Act of 1910.

### Federal Interests

The identified federal interests relevant to this project include original L'Enfant streets and reservations (Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, 22<sup>nd</sup> Street, NW, 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, NW, I Street, NW, and Washington Circle); and the Height of Buildings Act of 1910.

### Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Approval of comments to the District of Columbia Zoning Commission pursuant to 40 U.S.C. § 8724(a) and D.C. Code § 2-1006(a).

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### Executive Director's Recommendation

The Commission:

- **Finds** that the proposed residential and commercial buildings do not exceed the maximum allowable height under the Height of Buildings Act of 1910 when measured as follows: a commercial building with its width and measuring point taken from and along Pennsylvania Avenue, NW; and a residential building with ground-floor retail with its width and measuring point taken from and along 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, NW;

- **And therefore concludes** that the proposed consolidated planned unit development and map amendment are not inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital, the Height of Buildings Act of 1910, or other federal interests;
- **And accordingly recommends** that the Zoning Commission approve the consolidated planned unit development and related map amendment.

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## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

### Site

The 2.66-acre site of the old George Washington University Hospital occupies all of Square 54, bounded by Washington Circle and Pennsylvania Avenue, NW on the north, 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, NW on the west, I Street, NW on the south, and 22<sup>nd</sup> Street, NW on the east, and is within the George Washington University campus boundary at its northern edge. Zoned R-5-D, the site has been vacant since 2004 when a new hospital was constructed across 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, and the old hospital was demolished. The Foggy Bottom Metrorail Station sits at the southwest corner of the intersection of 23<sup>rd</sup> and I Streets, NW; and the Foggy Bottom Historic District sits west of the site. The parcels across Washington Circle to the north and east are a mix of medium and high density residential and commercial uses.

### Background

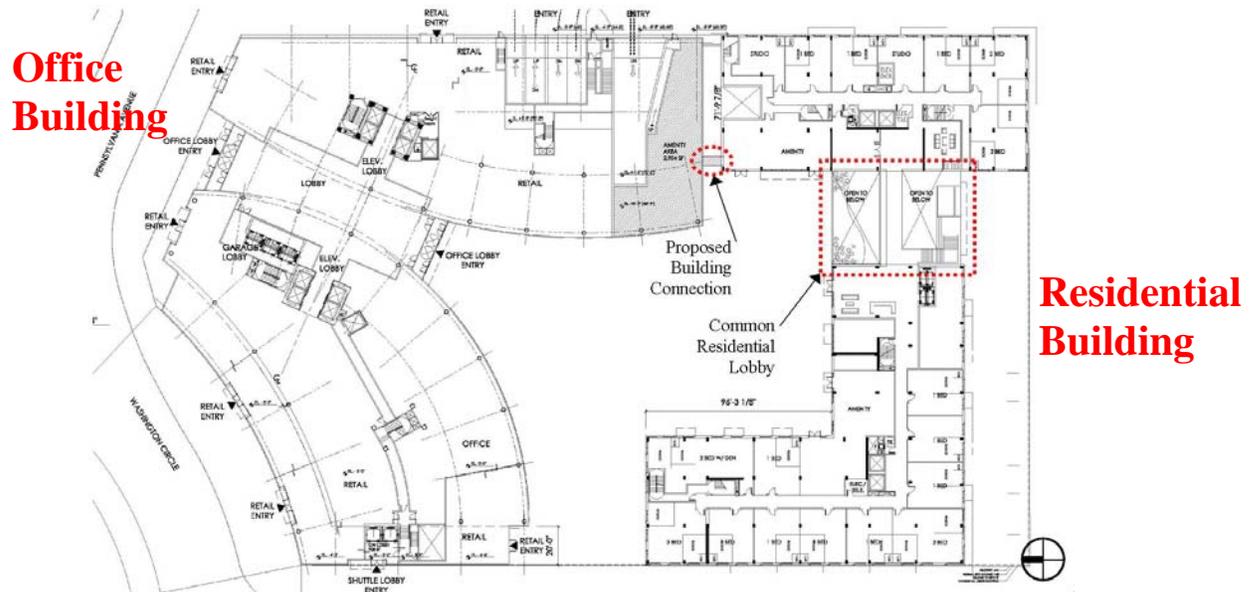
In May 2005, George Washington University and the District of Columbia Office of Planning (DCOP) cosponsored an Urban Land Institute (ULI) panel to examine redevelopment of Square 54. The panel concluded that a mix of commercial and residential development was the best use for Square 54, provided that George Washington University could meet its future academic needs within the existing campus boundaries. This challenge to “Grow Up, Not Out,” voiced by DCOP and echoed by the ULI panel, led to the development of a proposed campus plan for 2006-2025 which the Zoning Commission approved on February 5, 2007. At its meeting on March 1, 2007, NCPC commented favorably to the Zoning Commission on the planned unit development (PUD) that would implement the campus plan. The proposed action for Square 54 is separate from but complementary to the campus plan PUD.



### Proposal

Boston Properties, KSI Services, Inc., and George Washington University have requested that the Zoning Commission approve a PUD and related map amendment from R-5-D to C-3-C to build a high density, mixed use development on the Square 54 site.

The development would total 842,552 square feet. Over half of the square, on the north side of the site adjacent to Washington Circle and Pennsylvania Avenue, would be developed as office space. The remaining land, on the south side adjacent to the George Washington University campus, would be residential with ground floor retail. The center of the square would be developed as an interior courtyard, a portion of which would be accessible to the public from 23<sup>rd</sup> Street. Portions of the courtyard would be elevated above others to cover loading areas below that would serve all of the uses for both buildings. All loading and parking would be below grade, and would be accessed from 22<sup>nd</sup> Street. Up to 1,026 parking spaces would serve the site and the University.



The office components, with fronts on 22<sup>nd</sup> Street, Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington Circle, and 23<sup>rd</sup> Streets, would be connected by a glass atrium lobby. Building facades would consist of glass, steel and masonry elements.

The residential building on the southern portion of the site would consist of two components entered from a common lobby near the center of the block on I Street. The residential building would front on I Street, 22<sup>nd</sup> Street, and 23<sup>rd</sup> Street. Residential facades would be faced with brick and glass. Plans also show a corridor linking the office and residential portions of the development along 22<sup>nd</sup> Street. The project applicant indicates that this corridor renders the commercial and residential structures one building.

Principal public benefits and project amenities would include:

- **Affordable Housing.** Approximately 8% of the residential space would be reserved for rental by households earning up to 80% of Area Median Income, and 5% would be for workforce housing between 80% and 120% of Area Median Income.
- **Grocery Store.** Designed to accommodate a grocery store up to 42,000 square feet, the applicant continues to work with potential grocery tenants in order to attract one to lease the space.
- **Metro Entrance.** The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority called for a second entrance at the southeast corner of 22<sup>nd</sup> and I Streets, southeast of Square 54. At the request of DCOP, the applicant has committed to contribute \$100,000 towards the design and engineering studies for a potential second Metrorail entrance.
- **Environmentally Sensitive Design Elements/Green Roof Component.** The applicant has agreed to include a green roof element on the office components and one residential component, and to achieve the equivalent of a LEED certification for office and residential components.

- Public Space. Approximately half of the courtyard would be open to the public during the day. A 60-foot setback on the I Street frontage will allow incorporation of open space for pedestrians and will encourage active streets.

## PROJECT ANALYSIS

### Building Heights

Staff has determined that the project conforms to the requirements of the Height of Buildings Act of 1910. Following is the analysis of the project.

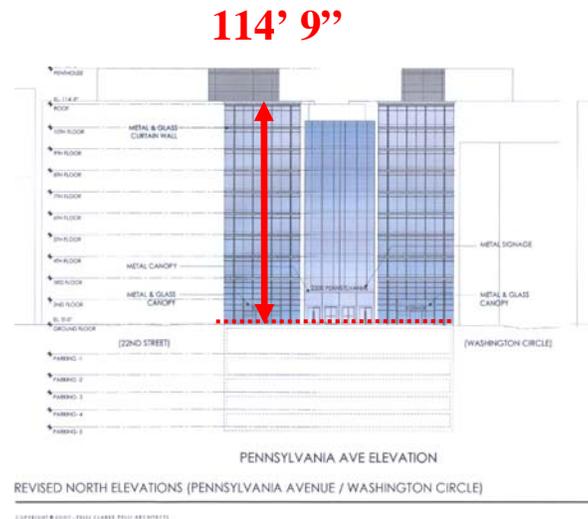
Section 5 of the Height of Buildings Act states that “no building shall be erected, altered, or raised in the District of Columbia in any manner so as to exceed in height above the sidewalk the width of the street, avenue, or highway in its front, increased by twenty feet.”

Section 5 of the Height of Buildings Act also states that “the height of a building on a corner lot will be determined by the width of the wider street.” This project occupies the entirety of Square 54 and has several corners. The office components front on the corner of Pennsylvania Avenue and 22<sup>nd</sup> Street; Pennsylvania Avenue and Washington Circle; and Washington Circle and 23<sup>rd</sup> Street. The residential components front on the corner of 22<sup>nd</sup> Street and I Street, and the corner of 23<sup>rd</sup> Street and I Street.

Finally, Section 5 of the Act also states that “no building shall be erected, altered, or raised in any manner as to exceed the height of one hundred and thirty feet on a business street.” All the streets surrounding Square 54 are business streets. Therefore, the following building heights are allowed on Square 54:

- A building that fronts on Washington Circle is allowable to a height of 130 feet.
- A building that fronts on Pennsylvania Avenue is allowable to a height of 130 feet.
- A building that fronts on 22<sup>nd</sup> Street is allowable to a height of 110 feet.
- A building that fronts on 23<sup>rd</sup> Street is allowable to a height of 120 feet.
- A building that fronts on I Street is allowable to a height of 110 feet.

The applicant has evaluated compliance with the Height of Buildings Act on the premise that the project is one single building, and the Zoning Commission has referred it to NCPC as such. The applicant believes that the entire project constitutes one single building since a large atrium connects the two distinct sections of the office building and a small corridor connects the office building to the residential building along its 22<sup>nd</sup> Street elevation. In addition, there is a physical connection between the office and residential buildings on the 22<sup>nd</sup> Street façade where metal louvers and other curtain wall components of the office building meet the residential building. This connection extends the full height of the buildings. As this project is located on a corner lot, the applicant has chosen Pennsylvania Avenue as the street which will determine the allowable height and has measured the height along that street frontage. Therefore, since the applicant asserts that the project is one single building, the allowable building height of 130 feet should apply to the entire square. Since the highest point of the façade at the measuring point is 114 feet, 9 inches the applicant concludes that the height is allowable.



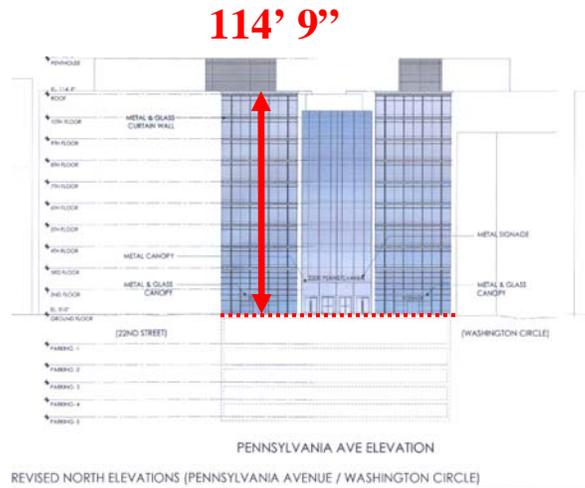
### Pennsylvania Avenue Elevation

However, staff finds that this project is not one single building, and that the project consists of two separate buildings: an office building centered on an atrium lobby, and a residential building centered on an atrium lobby.

It is staff's opinion that the proposed physical connection between the project's office and residential components, by means of a single corridor through the mechanical chase at one level, does not render the two buildings as one. The buildings are two separate structures, each with its own mechanical systems, core building functions (i.e., elevator and stairwell requirements) and building uses. The floor levels of the office building do not correspond to those of the residential building, the architectural styles vary, and the cornice line between the office and residential components changes at the point where one building ends and another begins on the 22<sup>nd</sup> Street façade. Upon completion, they will function as two separate buildings.

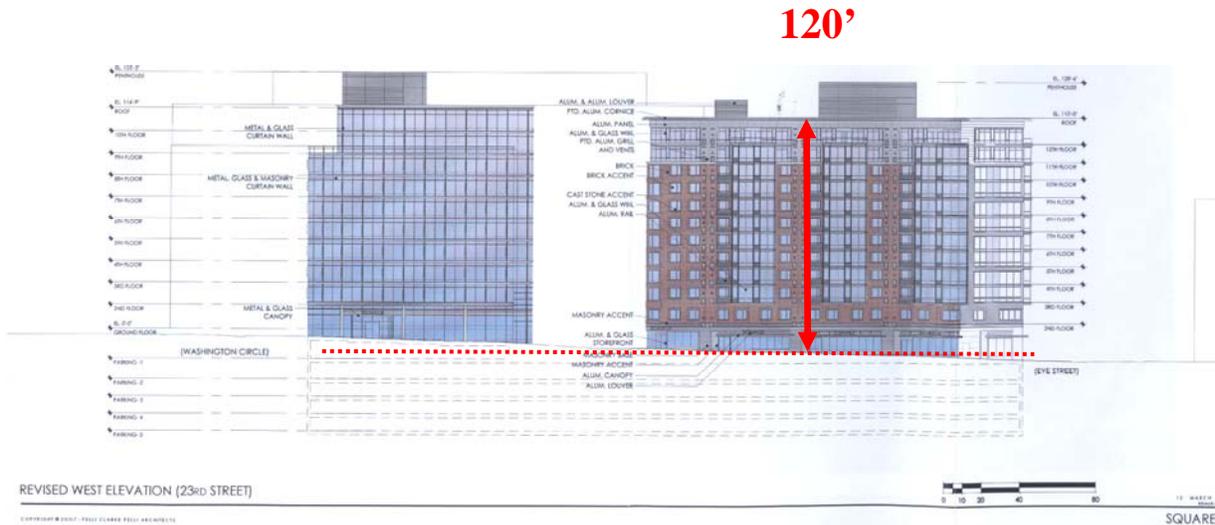
Accordingly, staff has evaluated this project as two buildings and finds that the project does conform to the requirements of the Height of Buildings Act of 1910 because each building independently meets the requirements.

The office components of this project front on Washington Circle, Pennsylvania Avenue and 22<sup>nd</sup> Street. Section 5 of the Height of Buildings Act states that a building can be built to a height twenty feet greater than the width of the street on which the building fronts, and that the allowable height of a building on a corner lot may be determined by the width of the wider street. The Act also states that "no building shall be erected, altered, or raised in any manner as to exceed the height of one hundred and thirty feet on a business street." All the streets surrounding Square 54 are business streets. Therefore, the office components of this project are allowed to a height of 130 feet. Measured from the point where the wider street frontage allows a height of 130 feet, the proposed maximum height of 114 feet, 9 inches is thus allowable.



### Pennsylvania Avenue Elevation

The residential components of this project front on 22<sup>nd</sup> Street, 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, and I Street. In this analysis the widest street is 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, which would allow a height of 120 feet, measuring the height of the building from the middle of that frontage. The proposed maximum height of 120 feet is thus allowable.



### 23<sup>rd</sup> Street Elevation

The National Capital Planning Commission faced similar issues when it considered Zoning Commission action 05-36 at its March 2, 2006 meeting. In that planned unit development, building plans did not show a connection between the retail and residential portions of the project, and the Commission found a lack of evidence as to whether or not a project consisted of

one or two buildings. The Commission requested that the Zoning Commission require the applicant to demonstrate very clearly that the structure was one building.

Staff has determined that no other federal interests would be adversely affected by this proposal.

## CONFORMANCE

### Comprehensive Plan

The proposed planned unit development is not inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital, Federal Elements which contains a policy to “Preserve the horizontal character of the national capital through enforcement of the 1910 Height of Buildings Act.”

## CONSULTATION

### D.C. State Historic Preservation Office

The D.C. State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) staff reviewed the George Washington University campus plan and advised DCOP on preservation concerns. SHPO staff evaluated potential development sites identified by George Washington University in terms of their potential to affect existing and potential historic properties. Although Square 54 was not individually addressed, the following excerpt from the June 29, 2006 report provides some guidance for the future development of the Square:

“Inherent in the historic preservation plan, and key to the historic preservation strategy, is a shift of potential future development away from the historic streetscapes on F and G Streets and the side streets in between, and into the less sensitive core campus area along 22<sup>nd</sup> north of G Street. The proposed increase in maximum building heights in this development area allows the university to concentrate much of its future construction at a location that is removed from both the historic neighborhood as well as the monumental L’Enfant boulevard of 23<sup>rd</sup> Street. In effect this is an internal shift of campus density that allows for preservation of the scale and character of the historic environment at the heart of the campus.”

### D.C. Office of Planning

In its March 15, 2007 report to the Zoning Commission, DCOP recommended approval of the modified application submitted by the applicant on March 12, 2007.

### Advisory Neighborhood Commission

Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) 2A and other local community organizations including the Foggy Bottom Association and the West End Citizens’ Association have expressed concerns with the application. At a public hearing ANC 2A held at its November 9, 2006 meeting, the ANC voted to oppose the application based on lack of University use of the site, the use of the Planned Unit Development process for the campus, the concern that proposed amenities were not guaranteed, and concerns with traffic and parking. At the meeting, both the

Foggy Bottom Association and the West End Citizens' Association opposed the application. In addition to reiterating some of the ANC's concerns, the Foggy Bottom Association expressed concern about the University's expansion plans and the West End Citizens' Association objected to the mix of uses on the site. Staff has determined that the comments of the ANC and the community organizations do not affect the federal interest.