

Docket Item #19
SPECIAL USE PERMIT #2006-0038

Planning Commission Meeting
June 6, 2006

ISSUE: Consideration of a request for a special use permit for a parking reduction

APPLICANT: St. Paul's Episcopal Church
by Duncan Blair, attorney

LOCATION: 228 South Pitt Street

ZONE: RM/Residential

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends **approval** subject to compliance with all applicable codes and ordinances and the recommended permit conditions found in Section III of this report.

SITE GRAPHIC
AVAILABLE IN THE PLANNING AND ZONING OFFICE

I. DISCUSSION

REQUEST

The applicant, St Paul's Episcopal Church, requests special use permit approval for a parking reduction.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The subject property is one lot of record with 200 feet of frontage on South Pitt Street, 110 feet of frontage on Duke Street, and a total lot area of just over a half acre. The site is occupied by St. Paul's Episcopal Church and accessory buildings.

The surrounding area is occupied by residential uses.

BACKGROUND

St. Paul's Church was founded in 1809. The church building at 228 South Pitt Street was constructed in 1817-1818. Wilmer Hall was constructed at the corner of South Pitt and Duke Streets in 1955. Damascus House, located at 413 Duke Street, a two story brick building with a third story in the mansard, attained its present appearance around 1905.



On February 10, 1955, the Board of Architectural Review approved the design for Wilmer Hall, the new educational building, as well as the design for the arcade and courtyard between Wilmer Hall and the sanctuary and renovations to Norton Hall. A number of other relatively minor projects including signs, fencing and handicapped accessibility have been approved by the Board for St. Paul's over the years.

On September 14, 1955, Special Use Permit #210 was approved by City Council for a day and Sunday school at St. Paul's Church. On March 28, 1968, Special Use Permit #731 was approved by City Council for operation of a private school for up to 36 students on the third floor of St. Paul's Parish House. Off-street parking was not required since the property was located in the Central Business District.

PROPOSAL

St. Paul's Church is in the process of undertaking a substantial alteration of their buildings at 228 South Pitt Street and 413 Duke Street, known respectively as Wilmer Hall and Damascus House. These are the first major renovations of these buildings in more than 50 years. The buildings will be completely rehabilitated with all new major systems, including electrical, plumbing and HVAC and will also include renovated classrooms, office and meeting spaces, and improved ADA accessibility to all church buildings. The project also includes minor renovations to the Church Sanctuary and Norton Parish Hall, however, there is no increase in capacity of either the Sanctuary or classroom space.

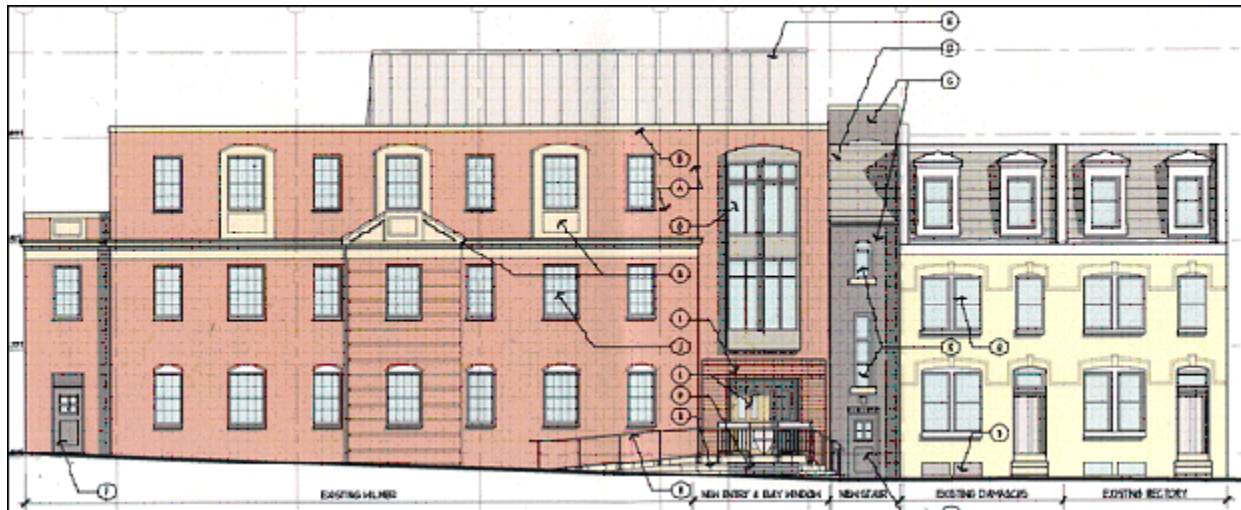
Because of the "significant alterations" mentioned above, the church is subject to off-street parking requirements. The applicant is requesting a Special Use Permit to allow these improvements without providing off-street parking.

As a separate matter, the applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for exterior alterations at Wilmer Hall, the education building located to the south of St. Paul's Episcopal Church sanctuary on Pitt Street and for an elevator and stair tower addition between Wilmer Hall and Damascus House, a former residence now used for church meeting space and located at 413 Duke Street. The work is part of a major renovation of those two facilities intended to improve functionality and provide handicapped accessibility.

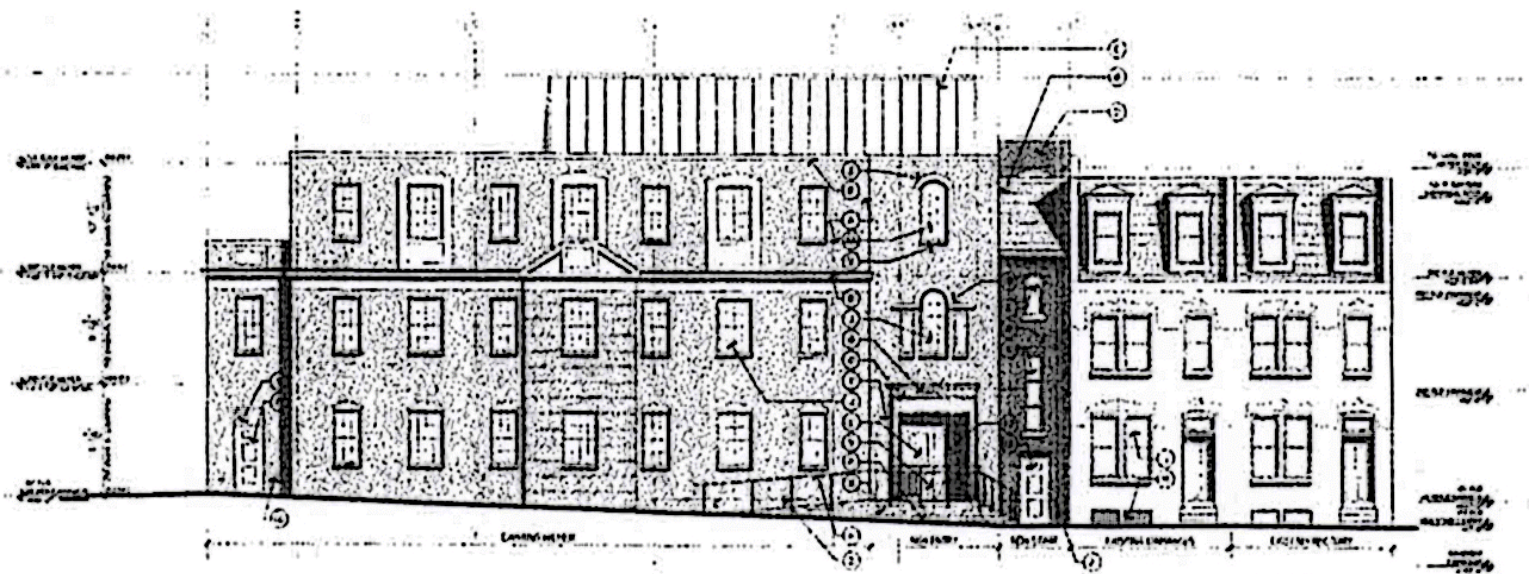
The applicant has submitted plans for the above referenced building alterations to the Old and Historic Alexandria District Board of Architectural Review (BAR). A hearing on the alterations was held on May 17, 2006 at which time the applicant agreed to defer the request and revise their plans in response to comments received from staff and the BAR. The Planning Department has received revised drawings for the alterations and they now address the concerns of staff, neighbors and the BAR. A hearing on the revised plans is scheduled for June 7, 2006.

The proposed alterations, as revised, are as follows:

Wilmer Hall - A new entrance will be created on the south side of the building facing Duke Street. The existing window and arched entrance vestibule will be replaced with a new, larger accessible entrance. The new entranceway will be trimmed with a wood surround and entablature. It will be accessed by both a handicapped ramp and a set of stairs. The ramp will extend along the south wall of the building, approaching the entranceway from the west. It will be approximately 18' long, 4' wide and will have a 1/12 slope. The steps will share the landing with the handicap ramp and will approach the landing from the east. The ramps and steps will be of limestone. A grey painted metal railing will extend along the ramp across the landing and down the stairs. the railing will have an Episcopal shield motif at the landing. The applicant is requesting approval of an encroachment for the ramp and landing (see Encroachment #2006-0001).



Duke Street Elevation, Original Proposal
proposed alterations included new bay window and new large institutional entry



Duke Street Elevation, Revised Proposal
bay window eliminated and entry revised in response to staff/community concerns

A new doorway will be inserted in the westernmost bay of the south wall facing Duke Street on the first story where there is now a window. The wood paneled door will have wood louvers above.

The existing primary entrance on the west side of the building facing Pitt Street will be retained.

As part of the renovation, a new HVAC system will be installed. A roof top unit, anticipated to be approximately eight foot tall, and duct work will be located on the roof of Wilmer Hall, toward the northeast corner. The equipment will be screened by an nine foot high screen wall. The screen wall will extend around all four sides of the equipment area, with an opening on the north side toward the east end.

Damascus Hall - The existing basement level windows are currently covered with wood panels. Painted metal louvers will be placed in these openings, with decorative metal grills over the louvers..

Proposed Addition - A new three story elevator and stair tower will be constructed in the private alleyway between Wilmer Hall and Damascus House. The 32' long addition will fill the full width of the approximately 7.5' wide alley. It will be set back approximately two feet from the face of Wilmer Hall and slightly more from the face of Damascus House. Only the south facade of the addition, facing Duke Street, will be visible from the public right-of-way. The addition will be clad in dark brick and the mansard like roof will have metal shingles similar to those on Damascus House. The addition will have a wood panel egress door on the first level and a window on the second and third levels.

The Church buildings primarily serve church related uses, such as Sunday services and Bible study, but also provide space for a variety of community related uses. The church holds four services on Sundays between 8 A.M. and 6 P.M. Approximately 500 parishioners altogether attend the four church services on Sundays. The proposed improvements to the church buildings will not increase the capacity of the church. The capacity of the Sanctuary and classroom space will remain the same. The improvements are intended to improve circulation within the church and provide handicap access.

PARKING

According to Section 8-200(F)(1)(B) of the Zoning Ordinance, any building that is significantly altered after January 27, 1987 shall comply with the parking requirements of the Ordinance. Significantly altered means:

“the reconstruction, remodeling or rehabilitation of, or other physical changes to, a structure or building, or a portion thereof, over any two-year period, whether or not involving any supporting members of the structure or building and whether altering interior or exterior components of the structure or building, which involves expenditures amounting to 33 1/3 percent or more of the market value of the structure or building, or portion thereof, at the time of the application for an alteration permit.”

According to the applicant, the projected cost for the improvements exceeds 33 1/3 of the market value of the buildings comprising the St. Paul's Church. Based on the code requirements for one space for each five seats in a church sanctuary, a total of 120 parking spaces would be required. The church does not currently provide off-street parking spaces and is therefore requesting a Special Use Permit for a parking reduction of 120 spaces.

The applicant indicates that there are approximately 500 members of St. Paul's Church who attend services on a regular basis. There are also 12 full and part-time staff persons.

St. Paul's Church has maintained a voluntary parking program in conjunction with APCOA, Inc. to provide parking in the City owned garage in the Courthouse Building on the 100 block of South Pitt Street. This arrangement has been in place for approximately 15 years. The program is a voucher system which allows St. Paul's parishioners to present a coupon at the garage for free parking during Sunday Services. APCOA, Inc. redeems the coupons at St. Paul's for one dollar. In addition, the Church rents six off-street parking spaces from St. Mary's Church on the lot on the 300 block of South Pitt Street on week days for staff parking.

ZONING/MASTER PLAN DESIGNATION

The subject property is located in the RM zone. Section 3-1102 of the Zoning Ordinance allows a church in the RM zone as a permitted use.

The proposed use is consistent with the Old Town Small Area Plan chapter of the Master Plan which designates the property for institutional use.

II. STAFF ANALYSIS

The church has been an integral part of the Alexandria community since it was built in the early 1800's. It is used for church as well as for community activities.

The proposed improvements will not increase the capacity of the church or classrooms, but will enhance the circulation and handicap access of the church. The proposed addition is for a stairwell and elevator. There is no impact on parking from the proposed improvements.

The church will maintain its parking arrangement with the Courthouse garage to provide Sunday parking to parishioners and will maintain its arrangement to provide staff parking on the lot on the 300 block of South Pitt Street.

Revised plans for the design of the addition and other exterior improvements have been submitted to staff and will be considered by the Old and Historic Alexandria District Board of Architectural Review on June 7, 2006. The plans submitted by the applicant address concerns expressed previously by staff and the BAR. Staff has added a condition requiring that the alterations be in conformance

with the description of work to be performed, as indicated on pages 4 and 5 of this report and the revised drawings made a part of this report and subject to approval by the Old and Historic District Board of Architectural Review.

Staff has no objection to the requested parking reduction under the following conditions:

III. RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS

Staff recommends **approval** subject to compliance with all applicable codes and ordinances and the following conditions:

1. The special use permit shall be granted to the applicant only or to any corporation in which the applicant has a controlling interest. (P&Z)
2. The applicant shall conduct employee training sessions on an ongoing basis, including as part of any employee orientation, to discuss all SUP provisions and requirements, and on how to prevent underage sales of alcohol. (P&Z)
3. The applicant shall maintain a parking arrangement with the garage at Courthouse Square by which parking is made available for free to parishioners during Sunday services. (T&ES)
4. The applicant shall maintain an arrangement to provide six parking spaces for employees at St. Mary's Church. (T&ES)
5. The applicant shall post signs inside the building indicating the location of the off-street parking, inform its congregants about other off-site parking alternatives such as Market Square and encourage them to use off-street parking as a church policy through the use of publications and bulletins. (T&ES)
6. The applicant shall encourage its congregants and staff to use mass transit when traveling to and from the church, by posting information regarding DASH and METRO routes, the location where fare passes for transit are sold. (T&ES)
7. The applicant shall monitor and enforce the provision of parking at Courthouse Square and St. Mary's Church. (T&ES)
8. The applicant shall inform its visitors and congregation of the availability of off-street parking and shall encourage its use. (T&ES)

9. The proposed alterations shall be in conformance with the description of work to be performed, as indicated on pages 4 and 5 of this report and the revised drawings made a part of this report and subject to approval by the Old and Historic District Board of Architectural Review. (P&Z)

10. The Director of Planning and Zoning shall review the special use permit after it has been operational for one year, and shall docket the matter for consideration by the Planning Commission and City Council if (a) there have been documented violations of the permit conditions which were not corrected immediately, constitute repeat violations or which create a direct and immediate adverse zoning impact on the surrounding community; (b) the director has received a request from any person to docket the permit for review as the result of a complaint that rises to the level of a violation of the permit conditions, (c) the director has determined that there are problems with the operation of the use and that new or revised conditions are needed. (P&Z)

STAFF: Eileen Fogarty, Director, Department of Planning and Zoning;
Richard Josephson, Deputy Director

Staff Note: In accordance with section 11-506(c) of the zoning ordinance, construction or operation shall be commenced and diligently and substantially pursued within 18 months of the date of granting of a special use permit by City Council or the special use permit shall become void.

IV. CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

Legend: C - code requirement R - recommendation S - suggestion F - finding

Transportation & Environmental Services:

- R-1 The applicant shall maintain a parking arrangement with the garage at Courthouse Square by which parking is made available for free to parishioners during Sunday services.
- R-2 The applicant shall maintain an arrangement to provide six parking spaces for employees at St. Mary's Church.
- R-3 The applicant shall post signs inside the building indicating the location of the off-street parking, inform its congregants about other off-site parking alternatives such as Market Square and encourage them to use off-street parking as a church policy through the use of publications and bulletins.
- R-4 The applicant shall encourage its congregants and staff to use mass transit when traveling to and from the church, by posting information regarding DASH and METRO routes, the location where fare passes for transit are sold.
- R-5 The applicant shall monitor and enforce the provision of parking at Courthouse Square and St. Mary's Church.
- R-6 The applicant shall inform its visitors and congregation of the availability of off-street parking and shall encourage its use. (T&ES)
- F-1 Although available on-street parking in the immediate area is limited, T&ES believes the proposed renovations and improvements will have a negligible impact on existing parking conditions. T&ES has no objections to the request for parking reduction. (T&ES)

Code Enforcement:

- F-1 No Comment

SUP #2006-0038
228 South Pitt Street

Health Department:

F-1 No Comment

SUP #2006-0038
228 South Pitt Street

**REPORT ATTACHMENTS
AVAILABLE IN THE PLANNING AND ZONING OFFICE**