



# City and Borough of Sitka

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*A Coast Guard City*

## **Planning and Community Development Department**

### **AGENDA ITEM**

Case No: V 22-05  
Proposal: Reduction in parking requirement  
Applicant: Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (ADEED)  
Owner: Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (ADEED)  
Location: 831 Lincoln Street  
Legal: Lot 3, Sheldon Jackson Campus Subdivision  
Zone: R-2 – Multifamily District  
Size: 35,277 sq. ft.  
Parcel ID: 1-8562-007  
Existing Use: Library/Museum Storage  
Adjacent Use: Residential, Museum, Fine Arts Camp, Sitka Sound Science Center  
Utilities: Existing  
Access: Lincoln Street

### **KEY POINTS AND CONCERNS**

- Application is linked to CUP 22-02, to use the first floor of the property as professional office space for lease
- SGC requires 1 parking space per 300 sq. ft. of gross floor area of professional offices
- The existing lot has 16 parking spaces, a deficit of 3 spaces or 6 spaces depending on interpretation of how to apply parking requirements for the remainder of the building not used for professional offices

### **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A: Aerial  
Attachment B: Parking Plan  
Attachment C: Floor Plan  
Attachment D: Plat  
Attachment E: Photos  
Attachment F: Applicant Materials

## **BACKGROUND/PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

This request is made in conjunction with CUP 22-02, a request made by the applicant for professional offices at 831 Lincoln Street. The building, on Sheldon Jackson Campus, was formerly known as Stratton Library. While no further development of the site is proposed, a change of use must meet the parking requirements. The proposed professional office use has a higher parking requirement than what is available on-site. As this variance to reduce parking requirements is necessary for the change in use, consideration of parking must be given prior to the requested conditional use.

SGC 22.20.100(G)(4) requires professional office to have one parking space for each 300 sq. ft. of gross floor area. The proposed lease area is approximately 5,649 sq. ft. and would require a minimum of 19 spaces. Depending on interpretation of the building's existing use as supplemental storage for the Sheldon Jackson Museum, additional parking spaces may be required.

- If the remainder of the building is characterized as a “storage” use, SGC 22.20.100(G)(16) would require 3 additional parking spaces for a total of 22 spaces.
- However, if the remainder of the building could be characterized as a “library or museum” use. This does seem appropriate given that the building's original design was a library, and the storage area is being used by the neighboring museum. Under this interpretation of use, SGC 22.20.100(G)(20) would not require additional parking; parking calculations for museums and libraries are only based on square footage of floor areas open to the public. This would keep the total parking required at 19 spaces.

Regardless of interpretation for characterizing use for the rest of the building, a parking variance is still required for the proposed office use. The site is fully developed with 16 existing parking spaces and limited capacity to expand to meet the parking requirement.

## **ANALYSIS**

SGC 22.20.100 defines parking requirements to be met at the development stage, with consideration for buildings that predate the Code requirement however, SGC 22.20.100(F) states that a change in use in an existing structure shall require parking requirements be met. The associated conditional use permit request and the change of use it would establish is the basis for the parking variance request.

Alaska Statute 29.40.040(b)(3) states that a variance may not be granted solely to relieve financial hardship or inconvenience. A required finding for variances involving major structures or expansions in the Sitka General Code echoes this statement by stating that there must be “...special circumstances to the intended use that do not apply generally to the other properties. Special circumstances may include the shape of the parcel, topography of the lot, the size or dimensions of the parcels, the orientation or placement of existing structures, or other circumstances that are

outside the control of the property owner”. In this case, the orientation and placement of existing structures could be considered special circumstances. Further, the Sitka General Code states that the threshold for minor variances should be less than that of major variances.

### *Potential Impacts*

Generally, the potential impacts resulting from a lack of parking would be longer walks between distant parking spaces and destinations, the propensity of drivers to find other parking nearby that may be suboptimal (along streets, “creating” parking where there is open space), or to utilize parking on nearby/neighborhood properties. In this case, there are limited on-street parking available on Lincoln Street, as well as dedicated parking for Fine Arts Camp and Sitka Sound Science Center that could be considered for potential impact. However, given the relatively small discrepancy between Code requirement and on-site parking availability as well as the downtown location of the site, the likelihood of parking impacts along the street or nearby uses is expected to be minimal.

### *Comprehensive Plan Guidance*

The Comprehensive Plan (2030) has two applicable items to this request:

- LU 3.2: *In the former Sheldon Jackson Campus area, encourage uses that support Sitka’s education, arts and sciences economy, while preserving and enhancing the historic character.*
- LU 8.2: *Amend development standards to promote affordable development including increasing height, decreasing minimum lot size and width, establishing lot and structure maximums in specific zones, and reducing parking requirements as appropriate.*

The reduction in parking requirements for the proposed professional office use preserves the historic character of the campus by removing the need for additional parking to be developed on-site at the cost of the historical campus landscape.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

The Planning Department recommends approval of the request for reduction in the off-street parking requirement at 831 Lincoln Street. Granting this request would allow for increased use of an under-utilized downtown site and preserve its historic character.

### **Motions in favor of approval**

- 1) **“I move to approve the variance to decrease required parking associated with a proposed professional office use at 831 Lincoln Street in the R-2 Multifamily district subject to the conditions of approval as listed in the staff report. The property is also known as Lot 3, Sheldon Jackson Campus Subdivision. The request is filed by the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development. The owner of record is Alaska Department of Education and Early Development.”**

#### Conditions:

1. The parking provided shall be no less than the number of spaces available at the time of application. Any decrease in parking spaces or increase in the associated lease area will require a new variance request to be approved by the Planning Commission.
  2. Building plans shall remain consistent with the narrative and plans provided by the applicant for this request. Any major changes (as determined by staff) to development plans will require additional Planning Commission review.
  3. Substantial construction progress must be made on the project within one year of the date of the variance approval or the approval becomes void. In the event it can be documented that other substantial progress has been made, a one-year extension may be granted by the Planning Director if a request is filed within eleven months of initial approval.
- 2) **“I move to adopt and approve the required findings for variances involving minor structures or expansions as listed in the staff report.”**

#### Before any variance is granted, it shall be shown<sup>1</sup>:

- a. The municipality finds that the necessary threshold for granting this variance should be lower than thresholds for variances involving major structures or major expansions;
- b. The granting of the variance is not injurious to nearby properties or improvements;
- c. The granting of the variance furthers an appropriate use of the property.

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<sup>1</sup> Section 22.30.160(D)(2)—Required Findings for Minor Variances