

1633 13th Street
Washington, DC 20009

Application for Zoning Variance
Attn: Office of Planning & BZA

FOUNDRA

This document was prepared by:

Foundry Architects, LLC
2022 Columbia Road NW
#511
Washington, DC 20009

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For the client:

Elena Loukoianova
1633 13th Street Unit B
Washington, DC 20009

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Purpose:

This document is in support of requesting relief from DC Zoning Regulation 401.3 which states an apartment house (3 or more units) have at least 900 SF of lot area per unit in an R-4 District. 1633 13th Street, located on Lot 7 of Square 277, is 2,520 SF. In order to have a third unit by right, this lot would need an additional 180 SF of lot area. We believe that we can demonstrate the following:

The property is exceptional and extraordinary:

- The property is extraordinary on 13th Street (and in comparison to almost all rowhouses of similar width/size). All similarly sized rowhouses have a single entry & set of stairs up to a single family two-story unit above the street. 1633 13th Street has two exterior entries and two separate units above street level.

There is practical difficulty in utilizing the property:

- Configuring the existing row dwelling in a way that mimics the rest of the flats on the street would create a practical difficulty for the Owner by requiring very extensive and expensive alterations to the building.

The proposal is not inconsistent with the intent of the Zoning Regulations:

- This particular property would not negatively impact the density of the immediate surrounding neighborhood and would be in keeping with similar existing units.
- There are many similar properties in the area that have much less lot area per unit than what we propose for the property in question.

BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 18298
EXHIBIT NO. 4

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Project Summary:

As previously stated, the project is located on Lot 7 of Square 277 in an R-4 District between Q and R Streets. The property is also located in the Greater 14th Street Historic District. This particular row dwelling was originally built as a flat in a different configuration than any other dwelling of its age in the neighborhood. In fact, we were not able to locate any structure that is similar in configuration. Where most row dwellings on this street - regardless of status as single family, flat, or apartment house - have one exterior main level entry (see fig. 1), 1633 13th St. has two exterior main level entry doors (see fig. 2).



Fig.1. Shows typical row dwelling door configuration.



Fig.2. Shows 1633 13th St.'s original two door configuration.

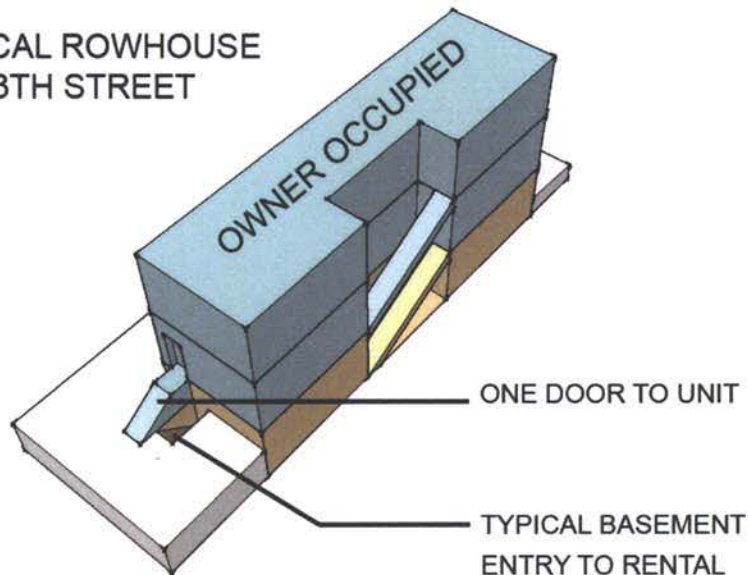
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The lot is 2,520 SF and is therefore 180 SF short of a by-right third unit. In order to have the third unit by right in the R-4 District, the lot would have to be 2,700 SF (or, 900 per unit x 3 units = 2,700 SF).

Exceptional Nature of 1633 13th Street:

In Figure 3, the typical rowhouse flat configuration for this neighborhood is shown. This strategy is not only prevalent in this neighborhood but throughout the City. In it, the two main living levels (presumably for the single family) are above grade, while the rental unit is in the basement, partially below grade. The configuration is allowed by right in the R-4 District and is very common up and down 13th Street, including, but not limited to, between Q and R.

**TYPICAL ROWHOUSE
ON 13TH STREET**



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Figure 3 showing typical rowhouse configuration.

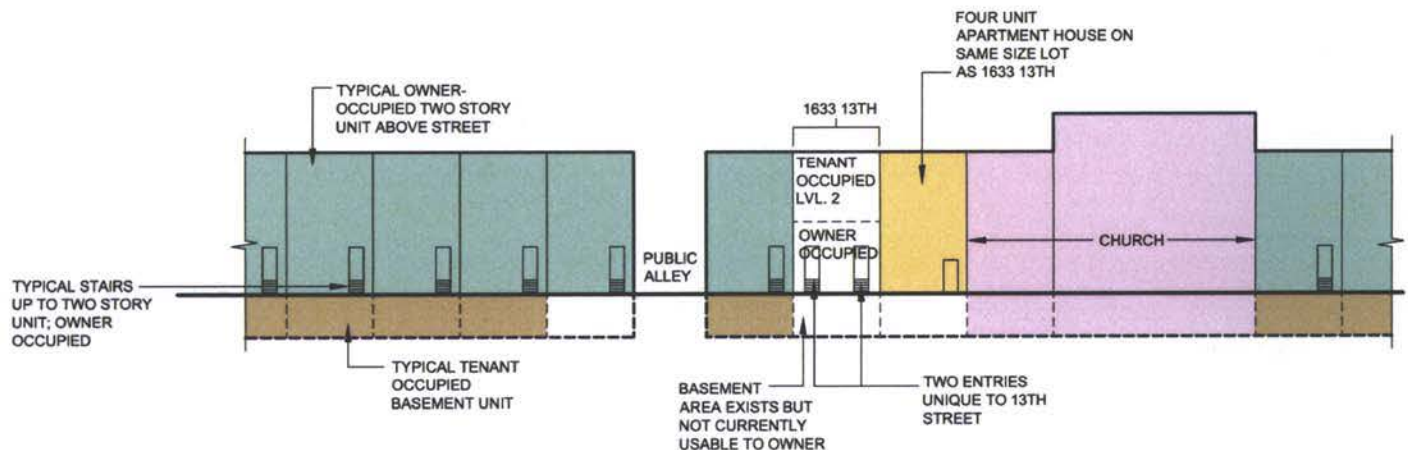
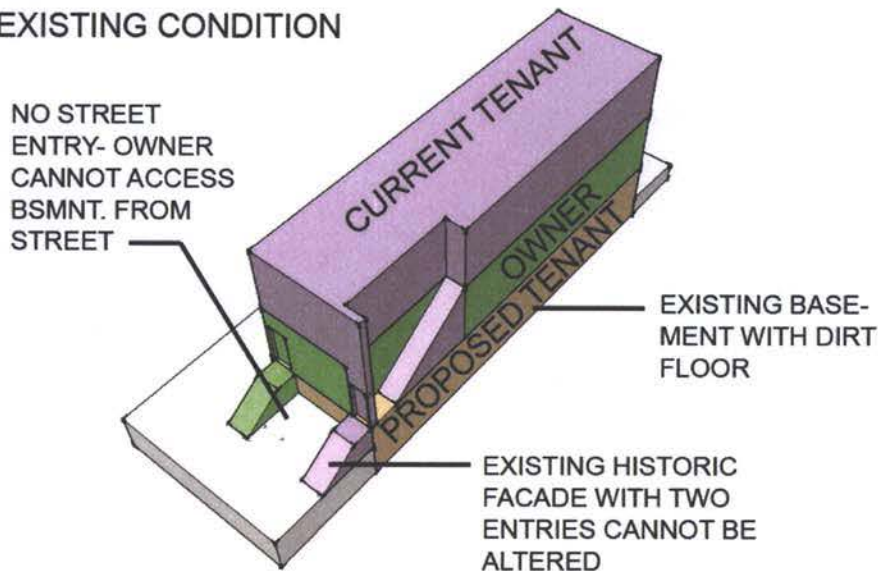


Figure 4 showing exceptional nature of 1633 13th Street NW.

Exceptional Nature of 1633 13th Street (CON'T):

1633 13th Street was built differently than the rest of houses on 13th Street (see Historic Section). Figure 4 demonstrates the existing, as-built condition where the rental units occupy both habitable levels. One set of steps goes directly up to the second floor, while the other set of steps goes to the main level unit. The Owner plans to live on the premises on the main level unit, currently designated Unit B. Figure 5 shows existing configuration with proposed third unit sought in this application.

EXISTING CONDITION



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Figure 5 shows as-built, existing condition at 1633 13th Street. Basement is already fully excavated and has at least +/-8' ceilings (existing) throughout.

Practical Difficulty:

The amount of construction work that would have to take place in order to configure the rowhouse like the rest of the houses on the street would be practically difficult for the Owner. Essentially, a flat conversion like the others on the street would mean a renovation of the entire house. Furthermore, once finished, the interior would not match the original intent of the structure. The Owner cannot currently use all of the property, and the existing basement only has access from the rear.

**COMPLETE
RENOVATION
REQUIRED TO
CREATE FLAT**

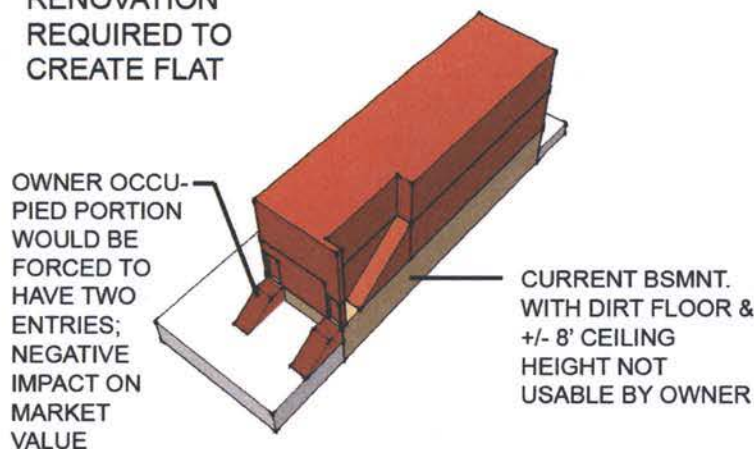


Figure 6 indicates (in red) the amount of extensive renovation that would be required to make the interior configuration similar to those of other rowhouses on the street.

Vicinity Map:

The vicinity map below shows the properties (lettered) described in following section.



- A. 1736 13TH STREET NW
- B. 1809 13TH STREET NW
- C. 1826 13TH STREET NW
- D. 1828 13TH STREET NW
- E. 1324 R STREET NW
- F. 1700 13TH STREET NW
- G. 1645 13TH STREET NW
- H. 1631 13TH STREET NW

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Fig. 7 Vicinity Map.

Comparable Properties:

The following section will list a number of comparable properties that are either apartment houses or condominiums that have either similar and/or smaller lot sizes and interior square footages than what is being proposed at 1633 13th Street NW.

A. 1736 13th Street NW



Zone: R-4
Lot/Square: 126/239
Lot Area: 1621 SF
Number of Units: 3
Average Unit Size: 1,269 SF
Average Lot Area per Unit: 540 SF

B. 1809 13th Street NW



Zone: R-4
Lot/Square: 804/275
Lot Area: 1980 SF
Number of Units: 4
Average Unit Size: Information not available
Average Lot Area per Unit: 495 SF estimated

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C. 1826 13th Street NW



Zone: R-4
Lot/Square: 102/238
Lot Area: 2,504 SF
Number of Units: 4
Average Unit Size: 869 SF
Average Lot Area per Unit: 626 SF

D. 1828 13th Street NW



Zone: R-4
Lot/Square: 95/238
Lot Area: 2,504 SF
Number of Units: 4
Average Unit Size: 923 SF
Average Lot Area per Unit: 626 SF

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E. 1324 R Street NW



Zone: R-4
Lot/Square: 44/240
Lot Area: 2,000 SF
Number of Units: 3
Average Unit Size: 1062 SF
Average Lot Area per Unit: 667 SF



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F. 1700 13th Street NW



Zone: R-4
Lot/Square: 125/239
Lot Area: 2,129 SF
Number of Units: 3
Average Unit Size: Information not available
Average Lot Area per Unit: 709 SF

G. 1645 13th Street NW



Zone: R-4
Lot/Square: 49/277
Lot Area: 1,456 SF
Number of Units: 3
Average Unit Size: 1,020 SF
Average Lot Area per Unit: 485 SF

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H. 1631 13th Street NW



Note: This is the immediate neighbor on the South side of the property. The lot is the exact same size and has 4 units.

Zone: R-4

Lot/Square: 6/277

Lot Area: 2,520 SF

Number of Units: 4

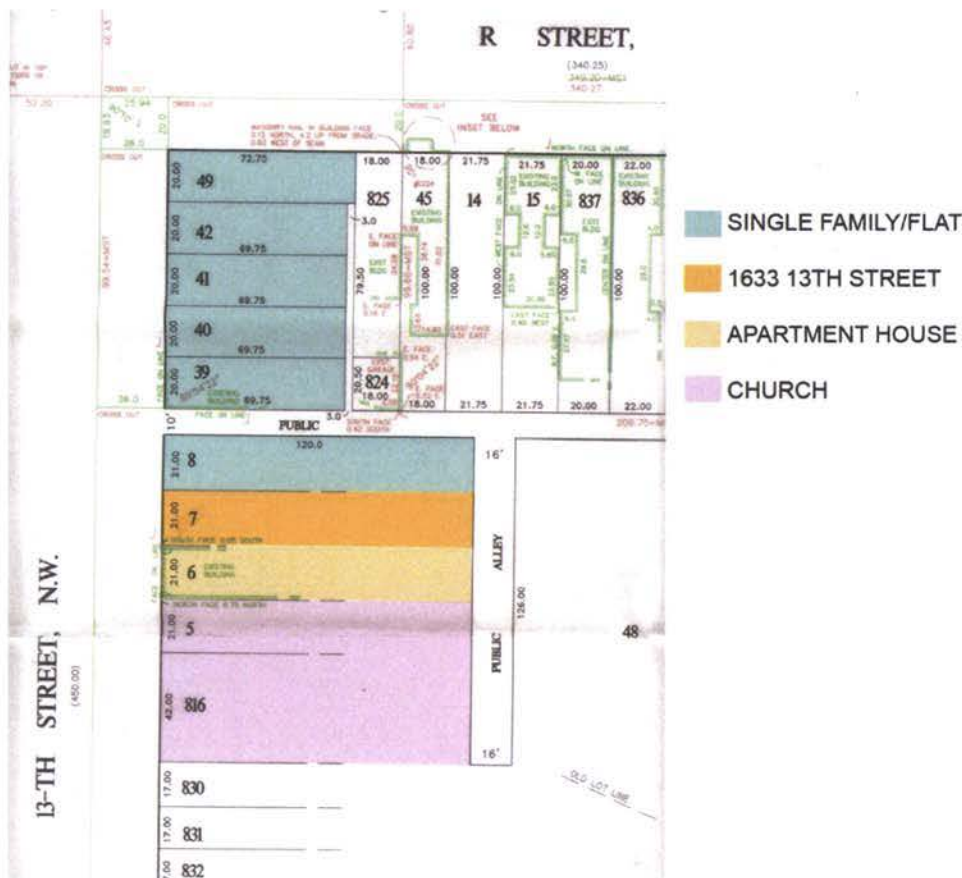
Average Unit Size: 817 SF

Average Lot Area per Unit: 630 SF

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Lot Sizes:

The lot that 1633 13th is located on – Lot 7 of Square 277, is significantly longer than many similar lots on 13th Street (see lots 39-49). This would allow for a greater lot area to apartment unit ratio than what is shown in the previous examples. Of the previous examples, the overall average lot area per unit is equal to 674 SF. Lot 7 of Square 277, if approved, would have 840 SF per unit – a 25% increase above the average of similar units in the vicinity. Figure 8 below shows the length of Lot 7 in comparison to other lots on the block. Note that Lot 49 is the location of Property G, and Lot 6 is the location of Property H.



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Historical Significance:

It is known that 1633 13th St. was originally built as an apartment building, and it has not had any significant exterior modifications since it was built in 1912. The owner of 1633 was Henry Albers, who also built the neighboring house (1635) for himself almost 30 years prior in 1883. The architect for 1633 was James Warner, who is not listed in the DC Historic database as the architect for any other buildings in the District. 1633 is a contributing structure to the Greater 14th Street Historic District.

DC Historic has verbally approved the basement entry as drawn. DC Historic has also commented positively about the owner's desire to replace the windows with more appropriate fenestration, as well as removing the electrical incoming service to a more discreet location.

Neighbor Support:

All of the tenants and owner of 1631 13th Street (south neighbor) have expressed that they are in support of the project and the prospect of a basement rental unit. Most importantly, the owner of the single family home next door at 1635 13th Street is also in full support of the project, and is very enthusiastic about the proposed improvements. The 1633 property has been in disrepair for quite some time now, and the basement unit will actually improve the property in ways that the neighbors will appreciate. It's evident, for instance, that there has been a recent squatter in the basement – clothing and a mattress are evidence of this. A rental unit would obviously deter that type of activity. Moreover, the Owner of 1633 plans to inhabit the main level unit – the Owner will provide the necessary maintenance to keep the property in good condition, something that the neighbors do not take for granted.

Project Photos:



Fig. 9 shows the neighboring buildings : 1635 (left), property in question 1633 (middle), and 1631 (right).

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Fig. 10 shows the neighboring apartment house and church.



Fig. 11 shows existing cornice to be repaired.



Fig. 12 shows existing electrical to be relocated per plan.



Fig. 13 shows the vinyl windows that will be replaced with more historically appropriate fenestration.



Fig. 14 shows existing rear (east) façade with existing door to basement.

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