

Variance Request for Percentage of Lot Occupancy

Title 11-772.1
per Form 120 Addendum

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1311 Pennsylvania Ave, S.E.
Square 1045, Lot 107
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Due to the exceptional narrowness of the site, the owners of 1311 Pennsylvania Ave, SE request a variance to Title 11, 772.1 which restricts any building devoted to residential use in the C-2-A zone district to 60% maximum lot occupancy.

1311 Pennsylvania Ave, SE is currently a vacant lot recorded as Lot 107, Square 1045 with a lot area of 1,087.35 sq. ft. The plat for the parcel indicates that the lot is 15'-0" wide with an irregular shape. There are no side yard requirements and the minimum rear yard setback is 15 feet. Due to its irregular shape the rear yard is subject to an average calculation. The allowable building height is 50 feet. The lot is located in the C-2-A zone district. Although there is no lot occupancy requirement in C-2-A zoning districts for commercial development, the intent of the property owners is to utilize the C-2-A zoning to meet the high demand for medium income housing in the city.

The 15'-0" lot width includes a shared side lot line which dimensions to the center of the existing fire separation walls of the adjacent buildings. By today's building codes, however, these existing fire separation walls cannot be utilized in new construction. Building on the lot will have to occur within the open space between the existing walls because they are integral to the adjacent buildings and their removal would compromise the structural integrity of the existing buildings. This leaves an actual clear buildable width on the lot of 13'-10". In addition, the new building walls will further reduce the width of the livable area by a minimum of 7.25 inches on each side or 1'-2 1/2" overall. In total, the 15'-0" wide lot yields a buildable inside dimension of 12'-7".

Clearances required by the building code for egress routes further reduce the floor area available for living space. Using the 60% allowable lot coverage and the reduced width of 12'-7", a total of 533 sq. ft. of usable floor space is available. Common space required for the egress stairs and access on the first floor requires a minimum of 140 sq. ft., which leaves 393 sq. ft. for living space in the unit. If the unit were provided with a small kitchen area, a clothes closet and a minimum sized bath, a living/dining/sleeping area of approximately 11'-0" x 12'-7" remains. Because of the 60% allowable lot coverage and required clearance for egress routes and common space, even an efficiency unit is unfeasible.

The original intention was to build four condominiums within the 50 foot height limit, but the owners had to modify the plans to three units because the 12'-7" width cannot accommodate the ADA accessibility requirements that four units would require. To ease the financial burden created by the loss of the additional unit, the owners desire to regain some value by making the design of the three units as spacious and as practical as possible, and integrate a roof top terrace with an observation deck for the residents.

We are requesting your consideration to grant a variance for a 19.3% increase in the lot coverage as the strict application of Title 11, 772.1. defines a building size that is not viable for its intended use due to the extreme narrowness of the lot. The 19.3% increase in lot coverage would extend the building footprint to the 15 foot rear setback for an overall length of 57'-6", which is exactly what would be allowed on the same site if it were developed commercially. The longer three unit building with rooftop access still remains within the required F.A.R. limits. The 19.3% increase in lot coverage provides the owners an opportunity to create a functional structure while still maintaining the intent of the zoning code.

Because so much time has been spent exploring different options that might best resolve the constraint of the site's narrowness, schematic drawings had to be submitted for the purpose of the variance. We ask the Board to build flexibility into the final design of the layout of the units, and fenestration and materials, as long as it doesn't impact the relief granted. With your approval of a variance for a 19.3% increase in lot coverage, the owners of 1311 Pennsylvania Ave, SE can construct a condominium with three modest studio units, each an average of 590 sq. ft., with a small kitchen and bath, and a functional sleeping/dining/living room area. With the benefit of the extended outdoor living area on the rooftop, the residents can enjoy a beautiful view of the city from what once was a vacant lot.

BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 18498
EXHIBIT NO. 5