



2013 DEC 31 AM 11:30

MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment
FROM: Matt Jesick, Case Manager
Joel Lawson, Associate Director Development Review
DATE: December 31, 2013
SUBJECT: BZA #18682 – Ballou High School

BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 18682
EXHIBIT NO. 19

I. RECOMMENDATION

With regard to this proposal to construct a public high school, the Office of Planning (OP) recommends **approval** of the requested relief:

- § 411.3 Number of Rooftop Mechanical Enclosures (One enclosure permitted, Multiple proposed),

Although OP was not able to confirm this with the Zoning Administrator, the following relief also appears to be required

- § 400.7(b) Setback for Rooftop Mechanical Enclosures (1-to-1 setback required; Zero setback provided for one of the enclosures),
- § 411.5 Height of Enclosures (Uniform height required; Various heights proposed).

In an abundance of caution, OP analysis and recommendation is for all three aspects of relief

II. LOCATION AND SITE DESCRIPTION

Address	3401 4 th Street, SE	Legal Description	Square 5978, Lot 59
Zoning	R-5-A, Low Density Apartment Residential	Ward and ANC	8, 8C
Lot Characteristics	Northern portion of the lot is relatively flat; Southern portion of the property slopes down from north to south, Southern half of the site narrows to a point at Mississippi Avenue		
Existing Development	Existing Ballou High School, School building to the north, football field to the south		
Historic District	None		
Adjacent Properties	North – Apartments South – Apartments and elementary school East – Apartments and single family homes West – Apartments, single family homes and institutional		
Surrounding Neigh. Character	Mix of mostly low density apartments and single family homes		

III. APPLICATION IN BRIEF

A new school building to replace the existing Ballou High School is under construction at the southern end of the subject site, which is generally triangular in shape. The new structure takes advantage of that site through the use of three building wings surrounding a central courtyard. Academic functions will generally be housed in the southwest side of the “triangle”; Arts and administrative functions will be housed in the east wing; And athletics will generally occupy the north side of the school. Mechanical units would be housed on the roof of each portion of the building, and in order to construct as proposed, relief would be required.

IV. ZONING REQUIREMENTS, REQUESTED RELIEF AND ANALYSIS

The subject site is zoned R-5-A. The following table lists the relevant requirements for rooftop structures.

R-5-A	Regulation	Proposed	Relief
§ 411.3	One mechanical enclosure permitted	Multiple enclosures	Requested
§ 411.5	Enclosing walls shall be of equal height	Various heights	Appears to be Required
§ 400.7(b)	1-to-1 setback required	Zero proposed for one enclosure	Appears to be Required

The applicant has requested variance relief from the provision for the number of rooftop structures. The application identifies four rooftop structures, but OP’s review of the plans indicates that there would be a fifth structure at the very eastern edge of the building, most clearly seen on the left side of the aerial rendering. Based on the regulations of § 411, the Office of Planning believes that a special exception is the appropriate type of relief to be considered by the Board. Furthermore, based on a review of the application materials, OP believes that additional relief is needed for the height of the enclosures and the setback for the fifth enclosure. The Board may grant, pursuant to § 411.11, special exception relief for rooftop structures, based on the following criteria:

- 1. Meeting the requirement would be impracticable because of operating difficulties, size of building lot, or other conditions relating to the building or surrounding area that would tend to make full compliance unduly restrictive, prohibitively costly or unreasonable.**

The diversity of uses within the building and the size of the site and structure make it impractical to fully comply with the regulations. The application materials state that the different uses within the building have differing HVAC and mechanical requirements, necessitating different mechanical units on the roof. It is also important that the HVAC is efficient, and that is best achieved through the use of localized units for each portion of the building. Larger, centralized

units would result in longer duct runs of larger dimension. This, according to the applicant, would not only increase the operational costs, but would also create greater floor-to-floor dimensions. Similarly, creating uniform heights for the different enclosures is unnecessary due to the different sizes of the equipment. Because of the size of the building, a difference in height of a few feet would be barely noticeable.

As noted above, the easternmost mechanical enclosure has a zero setback. Although not stated in the application, in its research on the case OP believes this to be above the auditorium for the school, which would usually imply specific HVAC needs. At the hearing the applicant should provide additional evidence about the needs for these HVAC units to be placed at this specific location. The design of the enclosure with zero setback completely harmonizes with the design of the building generally. In appearance it is simply an extension of the building walls.

- 2. The intent and purpose of this chapter and this title shall not be materially impaired by the structure, and the light and air of adjacent buildings shall not be affected adversely.**

Granting relief to the rooftop structure provisions would not impair the intent of the Zoning Regulations. The appearance of the structures would generally be compatible with the architecture of the overall building, especially at the eastern wall where the materials of the wall continue uninterrupted up onto the mechanical enclosure. The deviations from the regulations would not result in any impairment to the light or air available to nearby buildings. The proposed design would also be more efficient than a design with a centralized HVAC system.

V. HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The subject site is not located in an historic district.

VI. COMMENTS OF OTHER DISTRICT AGENCIES

OP is not aware of comments from any other District agency at this time.

VII. COMMUNITY COMMENTS

As of this writing the Office of Planning has received no comments from the ANC or the community.