

March 4, 2015

Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20001

Michael T. Reitz
1505 Harvard Street, NW
Washington, DC 20009
Applicant of BZA Case 18944

Subject: Applicant's response to Letters of Oppositions from:

- 1) Gil and Blanche Ziv – 1514 Columbia Road NW, and
- 2) Gordon Overslaugh and Mark Woods – 2901 16th St. NW, Unit 404

Regarding the points raised in Mr. Gil Ziv's letter:

- 1) "he built more than the allowed space and it [the previous BZA application] was somehow approved."

Response: My previous application to build a garage addition with a room above was approved by the BZA on October 21, 2008 with a vote of 5-0-0 for having met the criteria under zoning section 223.1.

- 2) Instead, I am now facing an ugly brick wall about 10 feet from away from my house."

Response: The Ziv's letter fails to indicate that they have a roof top deck and they enjoy the sight of the beautiful domineering dome of the National Baptist Memorial Church to the north (photo attached) and will still be able to do so, this is a spectacular view which I too hope to enjoy but cannot at this time without a roof-top deck. Perhaps he does not want "share" this view!

With regards to my addition, the letter states "now I am facing an ugly brick wall about 10 feet away from my house": the distance is about 20 feet at the very closest corner to corner of the two buildings. The north wall of the 6-story Copperfield condo building is much closer to that residence at about 7 feet, and the Copperfield building that is a much more commanding structure dominates this property's view to the south and west. As my proposed deck will be essentially at the same height as the Ziv's deck is will not be over-shadowing theirs. As my proposed sunroom will be much farther way from their deck at about 50 feet at the closest point, they will still have a full view to the east and the predominate amount of the existing view in the southernly and southeastern direction.

- 3) "The front of the building also affects the block. All homes on the block have a pretty architecture with curves, almost historic motifs. The front of the applicant is not. It sticks like a thorn among other homes, it looks bad and not belongs."

Response: I take issue with this statement contending that my home is unsightly and does not conform with the character of the neighborhood. I have taken strong steps on the frontage of my addition to maintain historical features by building a parapet wall and by adding five brick square

projections slightly protruding the wall surface to add dimension to the building's top frontage and to help maintain historical features.

Also as indicated in my Statement of Existing and Intended Uses:

"A lot of care has been taken to blend the proposed third floor frontage into a heighten version of the existing mansard roof, the base of which is behind an existing parapet wall. The propose addition will have a recessed window into and behind the plane of the mansard roof line. This recessed window is much less apparent than the projecting "dormer" style windows that are on the three new condo buildings on the SW corner of 15th and Harvard that were recently converted from single family homes in the past three years while raising the building heights from 3 ½ to 4 ½ stories. In addition, to better blend into mansard roof line of the other two neighboring houses, the design would extent the property's mansard roof to the west over the newer "garage section" where it does not currently exist. This new mansard roof will be the front wall to the proposed roof-top deck area, rather than using a modern fence or railing. So steps have been successfully taken to ensure the addition is in harmony with the character, scale and pattern of the houses along the subject street frontage.

...So in summary, the planned addition will extend my house's existing mansard roof to the west over the garage and will make an improvement by bringing the existing older house and newer garage/room addition into closer harmony!

- 4) "I've been a resident of this block for the past 15 years. The applicant home contributed nothing good for the block. It took away the character, view, trees and peacefulness."

Response: I have been a resident of the neighborhood for over 19 years and I have worked hundreds (if not thousands) of hours on my house personally restoring it, with the love, the sweat and the trials and tribulations of myself, my father a master carpenter/general contractor, and my brother also a carpenter/GC. When I purchased the house in 1995 its infrastructure was largely original from 1915! I/we have rebuilt the historic front porch consistent with original moldings and design. Inside, which none of the Ziv's have never seen, I maintained the historical features. For instance, my father ordered and installed custom-made oak molds to exactly match with the original moldings. I have re-pointed the brick work and replaced all of the old windows. These improvements have benefited the neighbors' views and have help to maintain historical features. I contend that Mr. Ziv is wrong on this account and fails to acknowledge the good, rather only accentuates the negatives. For instance attached is the back view of my garage addition and I used premium concrete board with a wood pattern, rather than cheap vinyl or aluminum siding. I have received several un-solicited compliments on it. Please see photo at the end. Lastly, I plan to use this same high-quality material on the proposed sunroom.

Regarding the points raised in the letter from Gordon Overslaugh and Mark Woods:

1) One has to question a letter that states:

“Several years later Mr. Reitz decided it was in his best interest to remove in the middle of the night to cut down a 30 plus foot tall tree’s to make way for a garage type structure...”

Response: I can assure you that no reasonably sane man would take down a tree with a chain saw (which was required) “in the middle of the night!”

2) “We have tolerated this additional structure because it did not directly impact our unit even though it negatively impacted the units on the 1st 2nd and 3rd floors by blocking out any natural sunlight that they had before the structure was erected.

Response: Again questionable as there is approximately 12 foot distance between the two buildings and the length of the east wall of the Copperfield is about 36 feet and this area is open to the south, so a good amount of sunlight is available: Agreed, the light from the west is blocked by occupant’s 6-story building.

3) “This brings me to our current situation. Mr. Reitz once again cut down a tree in front of 1505 Harvard Street under the cloak of darkness and on a weekend from the street landscape.”

Response: I had to remove the tree (I did so on a Friday and a Saturday in the middle of the day) as the tree roots were busting-up the stone wall in the front of the house along the public sidewalk. The bigger and higher the tree grew, the harder to repair the damage caused especially as removing roots is part of the process to be able to replace the stones back into their original positions. I guess I must be a “tree-hater”, I can assure you that I am not. My wife and I hope to put in a small Japanese maple this spring in the front. My wife wants to take out the front over-grown bushes in the spring, I want them to stay but I conceded.

4) “if this is granted it will reduce our visibility, our privacy as well as our natural light and will negatively impact our investment.”

Response:

Slightly more than half of their balcony (7 of the total 13 feet length) is in front of the front plane/wall of my house and the balcony is 7 feet from my building so their balcony view, which is the most visible exterior position from their condo, will be largely unobstructed. Also the height of my proposed deck is basically at the same level as their balcony. Light is certainly not obstructed in any dominant way. As for our privacy, our privacy will not only be impact by their 4th floor residence but also that of the 5th and 6th floor east-units.

One can also argue from the Overslaugh and Woods photos that their view of my current roof isn’t “exactly spectacular” and the roof and new addition will actually be an improvement. (Please see the photos in their Exhibit. One of their photos is includes at the end of this response, as it clearly shows a large part of their balcony is in front of the front wall of my house.)

General response to both objections:

As both parties raised concerns about my garage and room addition, they don’t seem to understand that my property’s R-5-B zoning category allows for a 50-foot height maximum and the Floor to Area

Ratio of 1.8 maximum. My proposed addition raises my building height from 26 feet, 3 inches to 34 feet, 8 inches – far less than the 50 feet provided. Also my Floor to Area Ratio would be raised to 1.47, again solidly below the 1.8 maximum allowable. Lastly, I cannot foresee any circumstance in the future where I would want or need to increase either the building's height or its FAR.

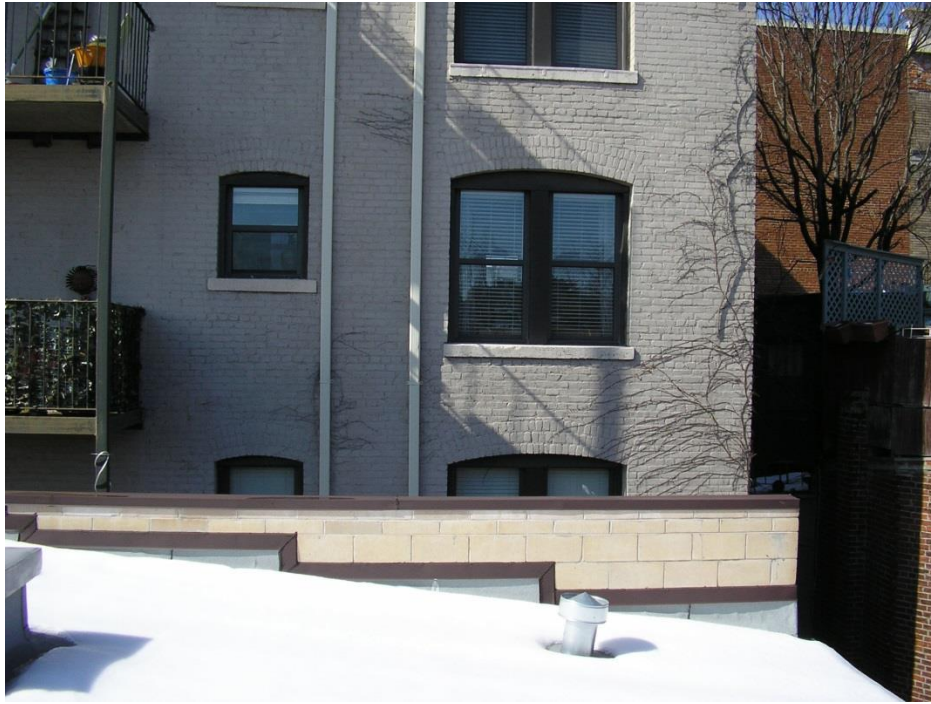
In closing, Thank You Very Much for your time and consideration of this application in general and of this response in particular.

Respectfully,
Michael T. Reitz

Please see photos below



Photo of the Overslaugh and Woods' balcony. At this angle it is hard to see the Copperfield is actually 7 feet closer to the road than the frontage my house and the other two adjoining houses on the 1500 block of Harvard Street north. So as the balcony is 7 feet from my building and with this forward-position, their balcony view, which is the most visible exterior position from their condo will be largely unobstructed.



The view of the Overslaugh and Woods' bathroom and bedroom windows, apparently.



Photo of the Ziv's roof-top deck. It has essentially no view to the direct west and limited views to the south due to the Copperfield building. It does have a full view to the east, which will not be affected by my proposed addition, and the predominate amount of the existing view in the southernly and southeastern direction will also remain.



So the Ziv family will still be able to enjoy and fully see the most beautiful view to see: the dome and tower of the National Baptist Memorial Church. I hope to be able to share this view with my wife. I would appreciate your support in this matter.



This photo shows the Ziv residence is only about 7 feet from the Copperfield building– RED arrow. With the gray structure bay-window/rooms built into the house (by I believe the previous owner), it appears this house exceeds the percent lot occupancy criteria. See ORANGE arrow. BLUE arrow shows approximate 20 feet from the closest point of my building to the Ziv residence. Note – no trees in their yard, but not much room for trees given the lot occupancy.

I am quite pleased and proud of the quality my brother, also a master carpenter (rough, finish, and cabinetry) and a General Contractor/GC, like our father, was able perform on this addition. I hope to secure a general contractor though the competitive to qualified-GCs that meet this level of quality. So this help to put the Ziv objection letter in content, I believe.



On the NEXT Page, please see the third balcony up from the ground that is the 4th Floor balcony of the Overslaugh and Woods property. Clearly their view is and will not be largely obstructed because the front part of their balcony is 7 feet in front of my front brick wall.

