

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION



d. Policy, Planning and Sustainability Administration

MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment

FROM: Sam Zimbabwe 
Associate Director

DATE: March 24, 2015

SUBJECT: BZA Case No. 18964 – 1220 Potomac Avenue, S.E. (Square 1021, Lot 40)

APPLICATION

Pursuant to 11 DCMR §§3103.2 1220 Potomac Avenue SE, LLC (the “Applicant”) seeks a variance from the minimum number of required parking spaces provisions under §§2101.1 to construct an eight-unit apartment building in the R-5-B District at premises 1220 Potomac Avenue, S.E. (Square 1021, Lot 40)

The Applicant seeks relief from the parking requirements of providing one vehicular parking space for every two dwelling units or a minimum of four parking spaces. The project was reviewed by the Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB) on June 26, 2014 with a recommendation to not approve the existing curb-cut or vehicular access to the site (See Attachment).

RECOMMENDATIONS IN BRIEF

The purpose of the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) review is to assess the impact of the proposed action on the District’s transportation network and, as necessary, propose appropriate mitigations. After an extensive, multi-administration review of the case materials submitted by the Applicant, DDOT finds:

- A robust network of pedestrian, bicycle, and transit infrastructure exists in close proximity to the proposed development;
- Residents are likely to heavily utilize non-automobile modes of travel, reducing the need for auto ownership;
- The Applicant proposes Residential Parking Provisions (RPP) restrictions for residents which is not a strictly enforceable condition by the District and therefore the restriction may not realize its intended outcome;
- The Applicant is required to provide a minimum of three long-term bicycle spaces; and
- The Applicant's proposed Transportation Demand Management (TDM) will encourage the use of alternative modes of transportation.

The site's proximity to the Potomac Avenue Metro Station, extensive bus service, bicycle facilities, and quality pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, along with the commitment to an adequate TDM program and provision of adequate bicycle parking will lead to low levels of auto ownership and use. As such, DDOT has no objection to the approval of the requested special exception provided the Applicant installs a minimum of three secure bicycle parking spaces and modifies the TDM program to support a condominium or apartment use.

TRANSPORTATION ANALYSIS

DDOT has reviewed the Applicant's request and determined that based on the information provided, this proposed project will have no adverse impacts on the travel conditions of the District's transportation network.

TDM Program

The Applicant has committed to the following TDM measures;

- The Applicant will limit the number of Residential Parking Permits (RPPs) to one for each dwelling unit for a total not to exceed eight (8);
- A TransitScreen will be installed in the residential lobby and the TMC will make printed transportation related materials available to residents upon request;
- Residents will be provided either a complimentary annual Capital Bikeshare memberships or a complimentary annual subscription to a car-sharing service such as Zipcar or Flexcar for the initial tenants upon move-in; and

DDOT recommends the Applicant adjust the TDM commitment to match the proposed building occupants. For condominium units provide annual bikeshare membership or car-sharing subscription for the initial sale of each unit. For rental apartments provide

complimentary annual bikeshare or complimentary annual car-share membership subscription for the tenants of each unit for the first five years.

Parking

The overall parking demand created by the development is primarily a function of land use, development square footage, and price/supply of parking spaces. However in urban areas, other factors contribute to the demand for parking, such as the availability of high quality transit, frequency of transit service, proximity to transit, connectivity of bicycle and pedestrian facilities within the vicinity of the development, and the demographic composition and other characteristics of the potential residents.

The apartment use is required to provide one vehicular parking space for every two dwelling units for a minimum of four parking spaces; the Applicant proposal does not include any vehicular parking spaces for residents. Residents will be eligible for the Residential Permit Parking (RPP) system, however the Applicant proposes to allow only one RPP vehicle per dwelling unit. The proposed RPP restrictions are not enforceable with existing regulations.

The proposed project may lead to a minor increase in vehicular, transit, pedestrian, and bicycle trips. In addition, the project has the potential to generate minor impacts to on-street parking conditions in the area. Vehicle parking demand may increase slightly as a result of the project, inducing a higher level of parking utilization in the immediate area. Should the parking utilization need to be addressed, DDOT may employ policy tools to mitigate the impact.

Car-Sharing Services

The District is served by three car sharing companies. Zipcar and Enterprise CarShare use reserved parking spaces to manage vehicle fleets. Zipcar provides a total of five vehicles near the project site with one vehicle located in the alley behind 735 12th Street and four vehicles located at the Potomac Avenue Metro. Enterprise CarShare provides two vehicles in the immediate vicinity with one vehicle located in the alley behind 1301 K Street and one vehicle near the Potomac Avenue Metro. Car-2-Go is an alternative self-service, car-sharing service that allows on-demand access to vehicles with cars available to be picked up and returned to any authorized parking space in the service area.

Mass Transit

The site is well served by transit facilities and alternative commuting options. The site is located three and a half blocks (0.30 miles) from the Potomac Avenue Metro Station on the Orange, Blue and Silver Lines. The area is served by numerous Metrobus routes that provide connections to Downtown, Anacostia, the Federal Triangle, Barracks Row and Capitol Hill. The following Metrobus routes servicing the Potomac Avenue Metro in the vicinity of the site; 30N, 30S, 32, 34, 36 and B2. In addition the site area is served by the Potomac Ave Metro – Skyland Via Barracks Row route of the DC Circulator

Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities

The site has frontage on I Street and Potomac Avenue with the main building lobby located on Potomac Avenue and a rear lead walk that accesses I Street. The area has a good sidewalk network with and striped crosswalks at all intersections. Signalized intersections in the vicinity of the site have countdown signals to facilitate safe pedestrian crossings.

The area has adequate bicycle facilities including a dedicated bicycle lane on 11th Street and the Anacostia Riverwalk Trail approximately three blocks south of the subject site. There is one existing Capital Bikeshare station located at the southeast corner of Pennsylvania Avenue and Potomac Avenue with a total of 15 bike docks. The project is required to provide a minimum of three long-term bicycle parking spaces at a ratio of one parking space for every three dwelling units.

Public Space

DDOT's lack of objection to the zoning special exception should not be viewed as an approval of public space elements. For the portions of the project with elements in the public space requiring approval, the Applicant is required to pursue a public space permit through DDOT's permitting process. If the project is approved by the Board, the existing driveway curb-cut on Potomac Avenue must be removed and replaced with the standard streetscape materials for the area including brick gutter, granite curbs, continuous landscaped tree space and brick sidewalk paving. The Applicant may refer to the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations and DDOT's Design and Engineering Manual for specific controls of public space. A summary can be found in DDOT's Public Realm Design Manual.

ATTACHMENT

HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

Landmark/District:	Capitol Hill Historic District	☒ Agenda
Address:	1220 Potomac Avenue SE	☐ Consent
		☒ Concept
Meeting Date:	June 26, 2014	☐ Alteration
Case Number:	13-566	☒ New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Frances McMillen	☒ Demolition
		☐ Subdivision

Applicant Todd Ragimov with drawings prepared by RAM Design LLC, requests concept review for the demolition of a non-contributing building and construction of a multi-unit building at 1220 Potomac Avenue SE in the Capitol Hill Historic District.

Property Description

Constructed in 1998, 1220 Potomac Avenue is a two-story frame house located on a substantial and unusually shaped lot that fronts Potomac Avenue and has a narrow portion that backs up to Eye Street. Neighboring buildings include a small number of bay and flat front row houses located to the west of the subject property and constructed from the mid-nineteenth century to more recent years. A curb cut and driveway are located on the west side of the house. Based on its recent date of construction, the current house is non-contributing to the historic district.

Proposal

The proposal calls for the demolition of the non-contributing house and construction of a three-story multi-unit building. The submission includes two largely identical designs for the new building, but presents two options for parking. Option A proposes a new curb cut on Eye Street to access a rear garage. Option B calls for the existing Potomac Avenue curb cut and driveway to remain. The driveway will be re-graded and partially widened to access two basement level garages.

The new building would feature a brick façade with projecting bays, one-over-one double hung windows, and a wood cornice. Brick soldier courses span the width of the building at each floor. The design and material for the door are unclear; the entrance would be accessed by concrete steps. A single window well associated with a basement unit is located on the east side of the building. The rear and side elevations would be clad in stucco and fenestration consists of one-over-one double hung windows.

Evaluation

The proposal is largely compatible with the character of the neighboring houses on Potomac Avenue and the historic district in terms of massing, design, materials, and fenestration. The applicant has worked with HPO to refine the concept and numerous details on the front elevation but some aspects of the project remain unclear and additional development and information is necessary. The proposal calls for retaining portions of the existing building, but the areas to be

retained are not indicated on the plans. The design of the front entrance, including the steps, canopy, and door need further study in order to be deemed compatible. The large expanse of masonry above the doorway needs restudy; adding windows is recommended to break up the space. Windows are also recommended for the side elevations of the bays.

Some information on the surrounding context, such as photographs of Eye Street and elevations illustrating the new building's relationship to the neighboring houses, was not included with the submission. Based on the limited information provided in the drawings, the building is taller than adjacent houses, but the increase in height appears to be modest. Further information is necessary to make a full evaluation and confirm that the new building will not overpower the neighboring properties, as well as to determine if the proportion and projection of the bays are in keeping with the adjacent houses.

However, the primary compatibility issue with the proposal is in regard to the curb cuts and garage doors. Garages and parking areas in Capitol Hill are primarily located at the rear of buildings and accessible by alleys. Driveways and garages on primary elevations can be found in Capitol Hill, but they are largely located on noncontributing buildings built after the period of significance and prior to the establishment of the historic district, including the Potomac Avenue curb cut at this property, which was installed before the 2003 expansion of the historic district to include the subject property.

Driveways and curb cuts were not part of the historic development of Eye Street and Potomac Avenue, despite there being no alley located in this square. The most compatible preservation solution for the redevelopment of the site would be to have no curb cuts. These features, along with street-facing garage doors, are not in keeping with the historic character of the square and the historic district. The redevelopment of the site provides the opportunity for eliminating the curb cut on Potomac Avenue and aids in returning the streetscape to its historic appearance. While such an approach would require zoning relief, it would potentially allow infill development on both the Potomac Avenue and Eye Street sites, rather than having one of them devoted to vehicular parking and access.

The applicant is encouraged to work with HPO on further developing the façade, including the bay fenestration, window headers and sills, and the size and configuration of basement level window wells. The selection the canopy, door, railings and other materials, along with landscape features, such as new lead walks and fencing around front and rear yards should also be coordinated with HPO. The location of utility meters is not indicated on the plans; they should not be placed on the street-facing elevation, but either located on the building's interior or on the rear elevation, as per the Board's design guidelines.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board approve the general concept for the project, with the design conditions discussed above, but not approve the options for curb cuts and vehicular access to the property.