



MOODY Landscape Architecture

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Sara Benjamin Bardin,
Director, Office of Zoning
Suite 210
441 4th St. NW
Washington DC 20001

Dear Director Bardin,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide information and testimony to the board for the project at 134 11th St. NE, Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) case number 19108.

The proposed project includes a new garage structure and roof deck. The current lot coverage of the existing home and rear deck is 53%. The proposed lot coverage (assuming removal of the existing second story deck) is 69%. The currently allowed lot coverage in zone R-4 is 60%. The applicants are seeking a special exception for zoning approval under Section 3104.1.

This project was presented and reviewed at the ANC 6A Zoning and Development hearing on Wednesday, October 21, 2015 and received a letter of support. The project was next reviewed at the full 6A ANC meeting on Thursday, November 12, 2015 and received a letter of support. The project was most recently reviewed for concept approval at the (Historic Preservation Review Board) HPRB hearing on Thursday, November 19, 2015 and received a letter of support. The project has also been supported by the Office of Planning (OP).

During the review process, the following modifications to the design were made based on feedback from staff at the Historic Preservation Office (HPO) and ANC 6A members. The first modification was to flip the stair location for access to the roof deck on the garage. The design change was made to minimize the visual impact of the stair from 11th St. SE and has been represented in all submissions to the ANC, HPRB, and BZA. The second change, based on comments from the ANC 6A Economic Development and Zoning Committee hearing, was the addition of a seven foot deep green (vegetated) roof at the rear of the garage. The intent of the green roof is to decrease visual access to the neighboring rear alley from the roof deck and reduce the size of the occupiable space (currently approximately 13'x13'). This update has been reflected in the drawings provided to the full ANC 6A presentation, the HPRB hearing, and the BZA hearing. The third revision, also in response to comments from the ANC 6A, was to revise

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the parapet wall height of the roof from 3'-6" to 5'-6", thereby increasing the overall garage height from 13' to 15'. Upon consultation with HPO staff we were encouraged to study the taller design and present both options to the HPRB. The preference at the HPRB hearing was for the lower height garage. It was suggested at the hearing that the garage should either be one or two stories and not something in between. However, in subsequent studies of the alley buildings around the Capitol Hill Historic District we have found numerous examples of alley structures with intermediate heights including some that have just recently been permitted and constructed. We have included drawings of the 13' and 15' garage height for review.

Light & Air

The current design (at 13' or 15') does not unduly affect the lighting conditions of any adjacent properties. Shadows from the proposed garage and roof deck will cast into the alley or on top of the adjacent garage structure to the north. Because the proposed project includes removing a first and second floor deck attached to the home, the light and airflow to the neighbor to the north should increase. The construction of the garage should not influence airflow in either a positive or negative way.

Privacy

We do not believe the addition of the garage and associated deck will negatively affect the privacy of adjacent homeowners. By removing the approximately 8' deep deck at the second floor on the back of the house we are eliminating the position with the most expansive and direct views into neighboring yards and homes. This is particularly true for views across the 30' wide rear public alley for which limited concerns have been raised.

The two properties potentially most affected by the project, the neighbor directly adjacent to the property to the north and the neighbor two houses to the north, have both written letters of support for the project. Two additional neighbors on the block have written letters of support for the project.

By adding a green roof for the 7' of space closest to the alley we have shifted the occupiable space closer to the home and limited the accessible space. In combination with an opaque guardrail at either 3'-6", 5'-6" (or something in between) the sightlines are greatly reduced.

As a neighbor in opposition has noted in a letter to the BZA, "our alley is a very busy and vibrant one, a spot where many children play, where nearly two dozen people put out their trash for collection and park their cars, and where neighborhood gatherings are held." If anything, the proposed roof deck and garden will enhance this vibrant alley. According to the DC Office of Planning and DC Historic Preservation Office recent (2012) document *The DC Historic Alley Buildings Survey* they are hopeful that their recommendations will ultimately "...inspire an effort to more formally address the city's alleys as viable spaces for living, working and socializing in an increasingly dense and expanding city."

Our neighborhood alleys provide great opportunities to enhance living spaces and further knit our communities. Capitol Hill garages, carriage homes, and roof decks have been successful in enlivening our day to day experience without unduly affecting the privacy of our homes. Recent examples of approved roof decks in the Capitol Hill Historic District include projects at 619 G St. SE, 640 Lexington Place NE, and 1102 Park St. NE among numerous others.

We have worked with the HPO office and the community to develop a project that balances the homeowners desires and rights while making changes to be sensitive to historic and privacy concerns. This project has the support of the community through the local ANC and the HPRB. We thank the BZA for their time and encourage their support as well.

Kind Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'RM', is positioned below the 'Kind Regards,' text.

Ryan Moody
President
Moody Landscape Architecture