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WASHINGTON, DC 20016

09 DEC 2015 revision
District Of Columbia Office Of Zoning
DC Board of Zoning Adjustment
441 4th St., NW; Ste. 200-S
Washington, DC 20001

re: Statement in Support of BZA Case #19168, Request
for a Special Exception under §§400.23 and 3104 at 1258
Holbrook Tr., NE

Dear Members of the Board;

This letter is in support of the above referenced application. A description of the existing and intended use of the structure is included. A detailed statement explaining how this application meets the specific tests identified in the Zoning Regulations for a Special Exception is likewise included. The form of zoning relief, as well as a statement in support of the application, are set forth below.

AREA & SITE DESCRIPTION

<u>Address:</u>	1258 Holbrook Tr., NE
<u>Legal Description:</u>	Square 4055, Lot 0839
<u>Ward/ANC:</u>	5D02
<u>Lot Characteristics:</u>	The lot area is 7211 sq ft. The Holbrook Tr., NE frontage is an arc almost 37' in length, the alley frontage almost 69'. The land slopes down about twenty feet to the alley. The front 24' of the lot is quite flat and almost at the top of a significant hill.
<u>Zoning:</u>	R-4.
<u>Existing Development:</u>	1258 Holbrook is a existing apartment building, a typical DC four-plex, built in the late 1920's or so. There are two units, one atop the other on each side of a central entrance stair. At the back, double decker sleeping porches flank another

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District of Columbia
CASE NO.19168
EXHIBIT NO.27

central stair. There is a small utility cellar below. The porches have been enclosed, as is common in most of these four-plex apartment houses.

Historic District:

The property is not in any Historic District.

Adjacent Properties:

As mentioned above, the lot is near the top of a significant hill, which peak is across the street. Structures on that land of the peak, one an abandoned apartment building project, are perched above the street. Abutting at east of 1258 is a three story tall and very deep apartment house. It has a large accessory structure that extends to the alley. To the west are a number of apartment houses running down the street, down the hill. The first four are identical to 1258. The next four, however, are much larger, perhaps 2-1/2 times the footprint.

Surrounding Neighborhood Character:

Across the street are mostly single family row homes, as is typical in much of the nearby area. Gaulludet University is several blocks to the west, Mount Olivet Cemetery several blocks to the north. South of the cemetery and to the east is the Northeast Academy and the Trinidad Recreation Center. And only a couple of blocks further to the east is the National Arboretum. This is a surprisingly insulated neighborhood. Gaulladet University, Florida Avenue, Bladensburg Rd and Mt. Olivet Rd constitute distinct edges. Though somewhat homogeneous in its building stock, the topography and a goodly number of striking buildings give it an interesting character. While the neighborhood has suffered in recent years, it is clearly in an upswing, and this street in particular has a nice

demeanor, due in large part to its hilltop exposure.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION IN BRIEF

Applicant:

DILA Construction.

Proposal:

The typical Washington, DC four-plex suffers from the same problem that afflicts all DC four-plexes. The rear porches step down from the rest of the brick apartment structure and are made of wood. Once enclosed, as these porches almost always are, they isolate the rest of the apartment from the outdoors and the rear yard. The reason for enclosure is that with the advent of commonly available air conditioning, these spaces are not useful as sleeping or living quarters; they become storage for bicycles and other miscellaneous equipment. Enclosure is an effort to make these obsolete places useful and to capture the needed space. This proposal is to rebuild this property as an eight unit apartment building with large (1200+ sq ft) two-bedroom, two bathroom apartments that will have generous living/dining rooms and dens. The new construction will make fuller use of the lot. It also fully meets the requirements for stormwater management required by new District code.

ZONING REQUIREMENTS

The zoning requirements are itemized in the Self Certification form #135. The relevant language of the §400.23 and 400.24 is discussed below:

400.23 In an R-4 Zoning District, a building or other structure may be erected to a height not exceeding forty feet (40 ft.) if approved by the Board of Zoning Adjustment as a special exception, under § 3104, subject to the following

conditions, except that if the building is being converted to an apartment house, special exception relief from the thirty-five foot (35 ft.) height limitation is only available pursuant to §§ 336 or 337 as applicable:

- (a) The applicant shall demonstrate that the overall building or structure height or upper addition will not have a substantially adverse effect on the use or enjoyment of any abutting or adjacent dwelling or property, in particular:

- (1) The light and air available to neighboring properties shall not be unduly affected;

Because of the orientation of the lot and the fact that the rear yard slopes strongly downhill to the north, the yards here are very shaded. The extra height of this structure will cast its shadow into yards which are already quite shaded by their own structures. In fact, because of the orientation of our building and lot, most of the shading will be onto our rear yard and the alley. For instance, the impact of this building will be substantially less than the impact of 1260 on the rear of our lot.

- (2) The privacy of use and enjoyment of neighboring properties shall not be unduly compromised;

Please see page 7, #2.

- (3) An addition shall not block or impede the functioning of a chimney or other external vent on an adjacent property required by any municipal code;

There are no chimneys within 10 feet of the property line.

- (4) An addition shall not interfere with the operation of an existing or permitted solar energy system on an adjacent property, as evidenced through a shadow, shade, or other reputable study acceptable to the Zoning Administrator; and

There are no known neighboring solar systems.

- (5) The resulting building or structure height, as viewed from the street, alley, and other public way, shall not substantially visually intrude upon the character, scale and pattern of houses along the subject street frontage;

The above concerns are the primary topics of this Narrative letter. Please see #2 on pages 7 and 8 below.

- (b) The applicant shall demonstrate that overall building or structure height or an upper addition resulting from the additional four feet 3" $\pm$ (4.2 $\pm$ ft.) will not have a substantially adverse effect on the defining architectural features of the building or result in the removal of such features; and

Adding 4.2 feet of extra height will certainly affect the appearance, detailing and proportions of the defining architectural features of the building. However, there are no features about the design of the existing apartment house that stand out from any of hundreds of other similar structures throughout the city. The main feature that will be lost is the slated mansard roof. To lift this feature up to the new top of wall, or to try to add wall above it would clearly not work. Furthermore, other than these five contiguous apartment houses, none of the other fifteen apartment houses on this street have such a feature. The improved living conditions proposed to replace the existing and the revitalized lot will be well worth the building's revised appearance.

- (c) In demonstrating compliance with §§ 400.23(a) and (b), the applicant shall use graphical representations such as plans, photographs, or elevation and section drawings sufficient to represent the relationship of the new or extended building or structure to adjacent buildings and views from public ways.

These are provided.

400.24 In an R-4 Zone District, the following provisions shall apply:

- (a) A roof top architectural element original to the building such as a turret, tower or dormers, shall not be removed or significantly altered, including changing its

shape or increasing its height, elevation, or size;

There are no such appurtenances.

- (b) Any addition, including a roof structure or penthouse, shall not block or impede the functioning of a chimney or other external vent on an adjacent property required by any municipal code; and

There are no chimneys within 10 feet of the property line.

- (c) Any addition, including a roof structure or penthouse, shall not interfere with the operation of an existing or permitted solar energy system on an adjacent property, as evidenced through a shadow, shade, or other reputable study acceptable to the Zoning Administrator.

There are no known neighboring solar systems.

BACKGROUND AND RELIEF SOUGHT:

The applicant is requesting a Special exception pursuant to §400.23 and §3104 to add four feet three inches (4.2' ±) above the 35' height limit.

Application

The project will require enlarging the existing cellar, adding a floor at the top and enlarging the two existing floors making four floors with two large apartments on each floor. The footprint will be about 42% larger than the current. Due to a sort of dumbbell shape, each apartment will have windows on four exposures to light the two bedrooms, den and family / dining / kitchen space. There are two bathrooms at the core of each apartment. There will be parking for 5 cars at the alley, accessible from above by a series of planted terraces. Thus four nicely maintained but poorly configured apartments will be replaced by eight large, airy and spacious modern homes for families.

ANALYSIS

Special Exception: §§ 400.23, 3401 Height in excess of 35 feet as specified in § 400.1 to a maximum of 40 feet in R-4 Districts.

3104 Special Exceptions

3104.1 The Board Is Authorized Under § 8 Of The Zoning Act, D.C. Official Code § 6-641.07(G)(2) (Formerly Codified At D.C. Code § 5-424(G)(2) (1994 Repl.)), To Grant Special Exceptions, As Provided In This Title, Where, In The Judgment Of The Board, The Special Exceptions Will Be In Harmony With The General Purpose And Intent Of The Zoning Regulations And Zoning Maps And Will Not Tend To Affect Adversely, The Use Of Neighboring Property In Accordance With The Zoning Regulations And Zoning Maps, Subject In Each Case To The Special Conditions Specified In This Title, As Follows:

1. Will The Special Exceptions Be In Harmony With The General Purpose And Intent Of The Zoning Regulations And Zoning Maps

This lot is comfortably wide at the front and generous at the alley and drops about 20' in elevation from the front to the alley. The building to the east is both tall and big. It is a three story building (with cellar I think), not quite as tall as ours is proposed to be, and about as deep on its lot. To the west, as noted above, are eight more apartment buildings. And behind on the other side of the alley there are more apartment buildings. Thus, this alteration of an existing apartment house is in keeping with both the existing context and the General Purpose and Intent of the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps.

2. The Special Exceptions will not tend to affect adversely, the use of neighboring property in accordance with the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps, subject in each case to the special conditions specified in this title, as follows:

The relief can be granted without adversely affecting the use of neighboring properties. As you have read above, the property to the southeast of the subject lot is already built to three stories, though it will not be quite as tall as the proposed. The several properties to the west are of the same four-plex configuration as our existing structure- apparently well kept, but just as impractical as our existing structure for today's needs and technology. The properties behind are on the other side of the

alley and face away. They are far enough away as to not be significantly impacted.

This neighborhood is rapidly changing. Trinidad is a well defined community, contained between the National Arboretum, Mt Olivet Rd and Gallaudet University. There is a lot of good housing stock in Trinidad. This particular group of four-plex apartment buildings occupy a very sweet spot atop a significant hill, but as the community evolves, the inadequacy of these particular buildings will become more and more apparent. They will become less and less desirable and therefore more difficult to keep maintained.

Not granting the relief requested will actually become a detriment at this location, while allowing the new more functional design will be a benefit.

COMMUNITY COMMENTS/ANC

Two ANC hearings have been held. The first was a community meeting at the community center held on Saturday, the 9th of January. We received an email after the community outreach meeting that expressed general support for our project as well as listing several ideas that the attendees were interested in or concerned about, such as protection of existing infrastructure in the streets, parking, and congestion during construction.

The second was the actual ANC Commission meeting on Tuesday the 12th. We presented the project in some detail and clarified the relief sought. There was not a lot of time spent discussing the design or its impact. The larger conversation revolved around a feeling that the neighborhood needs to take some time to evaluate the future of development in Trinidad in general and what the community wants and expects in the days ahead. We have not received any comment from the ANC subsequent to that meeting.

CONCLUSION

This four-plex building is in surprisingly good condition. Even so, the difficult access to the rear yard and alley is frustrating. While the yard is basically well kept, it is steeply sloped and clearly not well used- likewise

the neighbor yards. The derelict structure across Holbrook Terrace and other failing properties nearby testify to the difficulty this neighborhood has experienced in recent years.

This proposed design, due to its keystone location and new apartment layouts that will be greatly improved over the existing, is more likely to contribute to the community than the existing. Since the proposed apartments are all large (1200+ sq ft) two-bedroom, two-bathroom units with generous living/dining areas and dens, they will attract families which neighborhoods like this need.

You can tell by the tidiness of the nearby homes and yards and the nice cars that line the street, that this is a street in a neighborhood that wants to thrive. These existing old apartment buildings are holding it back, not so much by their age and appearance, but more by their internal configurations which are more inconvenient and impractical every day.

We think the relief requested will provide a significant benefit to the community and in no way create a detriment. We therefore ask your support and thank you for your consideration of this application;

Stephen duPont, Jr. RA

cc: file

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Stephen duPont, Jr.", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.