

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF PLANNING



Office of the Director

MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 13, 2006
TO: District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment
FROM:  Ellen McCarthy, Director
SUBJECT: Board of Zoning Adjustment Case No. 17337
1743-55 N Street N.W.

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Summary

The applicant originally applied for approval of multiple forms of relief from the zoning regulations to build a hotel. On January 10, 2006, the applicants submitted a revised plan to reduce the amount of relief requested. The application no longer seeks relief for height, FAR, or rear yard. The applicant is now seeking a special exception to allow a hotel in the SP-1 zone, relief from the 1:1 setback for roof structures, and a variance from the court width requirements. The Office of Planning **recommends approval** of the requested special exception to allow a hotel and variance from court width. OP **recommends postponement** of the roof structure special exception.

Site and Area Description

The subject property is comprised of six vacant structures on N Street NW between 17th and 18th Streets (Square 158, Lots 69, 835 & 836). The site is 20,648 square feet in size and has over 150 feet of frontage on N Street. The property is in the Dupont Circle Historic District and all of the existing buildings are contributing structures to the historic district.

The subject property and the properties on all sides are zoned DC/SP-1. The buildings themselves are part of one of the most architecturally significant streets in Dupont Circle dominated by Queen Anne and Romanesque style houses and historically home to many socially and culturally prominent Washington residents including Presidents Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt.

BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT
District of Columbia

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EXHIBIT NO. 43

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Project Description

The proposal calls for the historic houses to be incorporated into a new hotel building. The hotel would be five stories in height, maintaining the façade and portions of exterior walls. The buildings at 1743 and 1749 would receive fifth floors making the entire structure the same height. The proposed number of hotel rooms has been lowered from 117 to 77. The hotel would also include meeting space, a bar, fitness facilities, and staff office space.

The existing buildings on the site are between 40' and 54' in height and have a total FAR of just under 2.0. The proposed hotel will remain at 54' plus a new roof structure and have an FAR of 4.0.



Figure 1: Site Area

Zoning Requirements

The proposal requires a special exception to allow a hotel in the SP-1 zone. A variance is requested from the court requirements of §536.1. Also, the applicant seeks relief from the roof structure requirements of §530.4 and §411.

Section	Item	Required/Allowed	Existing	Proposed	Variance
530.1	Height	65'	54'	54'	N/A
531.1	FAR	4.0	2.0	4.0	N/A
534	Rear Yard	12'	70'	12'	N/A
535	Side Yard	0'	0'	0'	N/A
536.1	Court	12'	N/A	10'	2'

Analysis

The hotel must meet the provisions of Section 512 to be permitted as a special exception in the SP-1 district:

512.3 The height, bulk, and design of the hotel or inn shall be in harmony with existing uses and structures on neighboring property.

The amended proposal maintains the existing scale and design of the buildings on the site. The structure will be limited to five stories plus roof structures and the appearance and structures of the buildings will be maintained through approval of the Historic Preservation Review Board.

512.4 To ensure that the height, bulk, and design of the hotel or inn is in harmony with existing uses and structures on neighboring property, the Board may require special treatment in the way of design, building setbacks, screening, landscaping, sign controls, and other features as it deems necessary to protect neighboring property.

The project is subject to HPRB review and will have requirements in all of these areas from that body. OP does not anticipate the need for additional design requirements through the special exception process.

512.5 The approval of the hotel or inn shall result in a balance of residential, office, and hotel or inn uses in the SP district in the vicinity of the hotel or inn.

The area around the property currently contains a balanced mix of office, hotel and residential uses. The immediate neighbor to the east is an inn. Properties to the south and west are office buildings, while there are also apartment buildings in

the vicinity. The proposal will not have a negative affect on this balance of uses.

512.6 The gross floor area devoted to function rooms and exhibit space shall not exceed fifteen percent (15%) of the gross floor area of the hotel.

According to the applicant, the area devoted to function rooms and exhibit space will be approximately 12.1% of the gross floor area of the hotel.

512.7 The hotel or inn shall be located within thirteen hundred feet of the Central Employment Area or a Metrorail station.

The property is within the Central Employment Area and within 1300 feet of the Dupont Circle Metrorail station.

512.9 The Board may require more or less off-street parking spaces and loading berths than required by chapters 21 and 22 of this title to accommodate the activities of the hotel or inn, so as to avoid dangerous or other objectionable traffic conditions.

The project is providing the parking and loading spaces required by the zoning regulations. OP does not see any need to limit the parking and loading numbers or put additional requirements on the project because the site is near metro and many hotel patrons arrive by taxi.

512.10 The location and design of driveways, access roads, and other circulation elements of the hotel or inn shall be to avoid dangerous or other objectionable traffic conditions.

Access to the parking and loading will be through the rear alley and should not have a significant affect on traffic conditions. Only valet service will have access to the parking, so the design will not increase public use of the alley.

The main objections of the previous OP report have been addressed by the amended proposal. Both FAR and height are now within matter-of-right standards for the SP-1 district and appear to meet the spirit and letter of the Dupont Circle Overlay District.

Court Variance

The project appears to meet the variance tests for court width. The court in question is an existing open space between 1745 and 1751 N Street. Both the width of this space and the height of the buildings are existing conditions that will not change. The existing situation is exceptional because filling in the space between the buildings creates an open court where a side yard currently exists. There is no way to combine the buildings in an historically sensitive manner without creating the court and no way to widen the space between buildings. Granting of this variance will not be detrimental to the public good or

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impair the intent of the zone plan. Maintaining the existing historic buildings actually serves the public good and the zone plan anticipates relief for issues of this nature.

Roof Structures

OP has some concerns about the roof structures. Historic Preservation staff has indicated that the new roof structure design is not in keeping with the historic fabric of the street and that the applicant may have to redesign the roof structures. As of the date of this report it is unclear whether either the Dupont Conservancy or ANC 2B has had a chance to review the new plans and formulate a response. In light of HP issues and the lack of time provided for neighborhood review, OP cannot at this time recommend favorably on the roof structure relief. OP would propose that this issue be postponed until HPRB and the neighborhood have had a chance to review the amended plans.

Recommendation

The Office of Planning concludes that the applicant has met the burden of proof, pursuant to 11 DCMR §§3103 and 3104 of the Zoning Regulations, for the granting of the requested special exception for hotel use and variance of court requirements. OP recommends that the roof structure relief not be approved until adequate time has been allowed for neighborhood and HPRB review of the plans.

OP recommends approval of all of the requested special exception for hotel use and variance of court requirements for the project at 1743-55 N Street N.W.

EM/tp