GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF PLANNING

Office of the Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment

FROM: JLS for Ellen McCarthy, Director

DATE: October 25, 2005

SUBJECT: BZA Application **No. 17381**
Rock Creek Ford Road, N.W. (Square 2727, Lot 810)

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Application of AMM Development Inc., pursuant to 11 DCMR § 3104.1, for a special exception to permit new residential development of four row dwellings in the R-5-A Zone District under § 353 and for multiple buildings to be considered a single building under § 410 at Lot 810 on Rock Creek Ford Road, N.W. (Square 2727, Lot 810)

RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning **recommends approval** of the 4-unit residential project with the following condition:

- The revised plan showing that the second floor is no longer cantilever into public space be submitted prior to the Board's decision.

SITE AND AREA DESCRIPTION

The currently undeveloped parcel is listed as Lot 810 in Square 2727. The lot is an irregularly shaped lot of uneven topography within the Square, which is bounded by 15th Street on the east, 16th Street on the west, Fort Stevens Drive on the north and Rock Creek Park/Military Road on the south. Lot 810 abuts an apartment building to the southeast and is surrounded by vacant District–owned land to the north and west. The subject property is approximately 7,119 square feet in area and is located within the R-5-A Zone District.

The predominant zone to the east of the property is R-5-A with R-1-B Zone District to the west. However, the immediate neighborhood is characterized by multi-family residences and semi-detached row and garden apartment homes.

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The vacant property will be developed with four, two-story row dwellings, with off-street parking. According to submitted plans, the development would meet all bulk requirements, including rear yard, side yard set backs, lot occupancy, height and F.A.R. for the R-5-A Zone District as outlined in the following table:

Section	Item	Required	Existing	Proposed
401.3	Lot Area	As prescribed by Board	7,119 square feet	7,119
402.4	F.A.R	0.9	N/A	0.85
403.2	Lot Occupancy	40%	N/A	39.4%
404.1	Rear Yard	20 feet	N/A	20+ feet
405.9	Side Yard	8, 8 feet (both sides)	N/A	8+

Therefore, no additional relief is required.

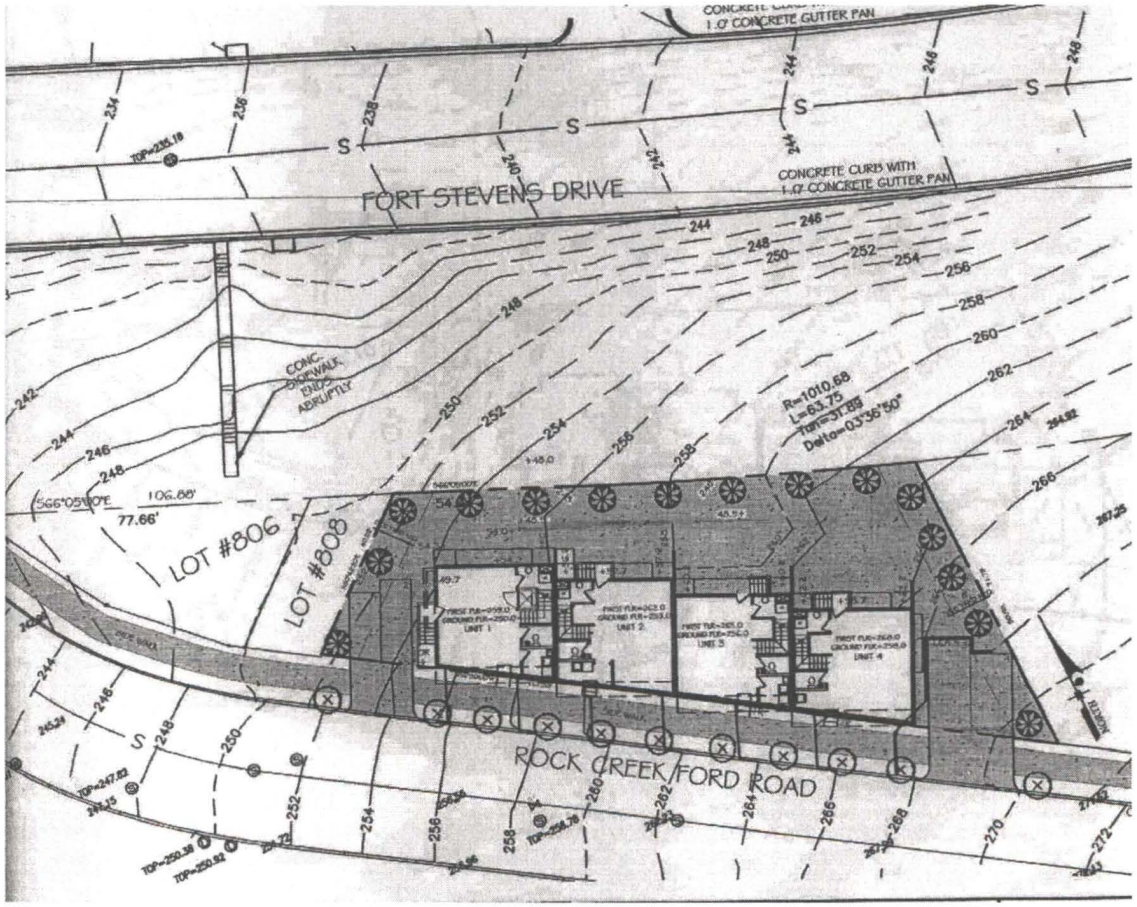


Figure 1

ZONING REQUIREMENTS and ANALYSIS

The R-5-A Zone District permits matter-of-right development of single-family residential uses for detached and semi-detached dwellings, and with the approval of the Board of Zoning Adjustment, low density development of general residential uses including row houses and flats to a maximum lot occupancy of 40%.

Pursuant to § 3104.1, the applicant is requesting a Special Exception under 11 DCMR § 353, to construct a new residential development that is not one-family detached or semi-detached dwellings, in an R-5-A zone. The application also has to satisfy the tests of §410 for consideration of the group of row dwellings to be deemed a single building.

The requirements are reviewed as follows:

SECTION 353 specifies the following:

353 NEW RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS (R-5-A)

353.1 **In R-5-A districts, all new residential developments, except those comprising all one-family detached and semi-detached dwellings, shall be reviewed by the Board of Zoning Adjustment in accordance with the standards and requirements set forth in §410; the conditions specified in §3108 of chapter 31 of this title, and the requirements of this section.**

353.2 **The Board shall refer the application to the D.C. Board of Education for comment and recommendation as to the adequacy of existing and planned area schools to accommodate the numbers of students that can be expected to reside in the project.**

OP has not received DCPS's analysis about the proposed development. However, OP researched information concerning the current capacity and utilization of the schools in the immediate area as published by DCPS Facilities Master Plan Update 2003. DCPS has prescribed geographic boundaries as school districts, and the property falls within Area H's boundary as identified in the Facilities Master Plan.

School	School Type	Grade Level ▼
Barnard	Public	Elementary School
Brightwood	Public	Elementary School
Clark	Public	Elementary School
Lasalle	Public	Elementary School
Powell	Public	Elementary School
Raymond	Public	Elementary School
Rudolph	Public	Elementary School
Shepherd	Public	Elementary School
Takoma	Public	Elementary School
Truesdell	Public	Elementary School
West	Public	Elementary School
Macfarland	Public	Middle School
Coolidge	Public	Senior High School
Roosevelt	Public	Senior High School

The above table lists the public elementary, middle and senior high schools for Area H as provided in the Plan.

The closest elementary school, Brightwood Elementary, located at 1300 Nicholson Street, is currently projected below capacity. In addition, other elementary schools are within a five-mile radius, as well as approximately 16 private institutions which offer a range of facilities from elementary through senior high school.

OP cannot predict distribution of attendance at these neighborhood schools beyond information provided in the above table, since there is no basis for assumptions concerning the number of children per household or the age ranges of children who would actually reside in the neighborhood or the percentage of children who may attend private and public schools.

However, OP does not believe that the public school's capacity will be adversely affected by the development of the four, low density residential structures, not typical of the multi-family residential R-5-A Zone District.

353.3 **The Board shall refer the application to the D.C. Departments of Public Works and Housing and Community Development for comment and recommendation as to the adequacy of public streets, recreation and other services to accommodate the residents of the project and the relationship of the proposed project to public plans and projects.**

The Office of Zoning forwarded the application to the above-mentioned departments. The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) provided written comments and is primarily concerned about the overhang of the second floors of the units into public space. However, the applicant responded to OP that revised plans will be submitted at the hearing to

show that the building will be pushed back to the rear to remove the overhang from public space.

OP does not believe that trash pick-up for the four residences would have an adverse impact on the neighborhood if curb side pick-up is provided by the city, since there is no alley system at the rear of the property.

353.4 **The Board shall refer the application to the D.C. Office of Planning for comment and recommendation on the site plan, arrangement of buildings and structures, provisions of light, air, parking; recreation, landscaping and grading as they relate to the future residents of the project and the surrounding neighborhood.**

Site Plan Review

OP is satisfied that the applicant considered light and air access to the units. The submitted site plan includes windows to allow residents the benefits of sufficient light and air to their residences. The roof-deck terraces would provide adequate, light, air and open space for residential recreation for each unit of the building group. OP is satisfied that the building will be an all brick building, which is compatible with existing residential structures.

Traffic

DDOT's report dated July 8, 2005 concluded that the project will have negligible impact on traffic circulation and on-street parking supply. OP's site plan review noted that the applicant has met its required 1:1 parking for residential units in the R-5-A residential zone district with the provision of four on-site parking spaces.

Recreation

The project is located within walking distance of Rock Creek Park, which provides ample recreation opportunities for neighborhood residents. OP is also satisfied that the site plan includes roof terraces and adequate rear yards that meet or exceed the 20 feet required for the Zone District.

Grading

The General Soils Map provided by the District of Columbia's Environmental Health Department indicates that the general soil type in this area is classified as Urban Land-Christiana-Sunnyside; characteristic of urban land with deep, nearly level to steep, well drained soils that are underlain by unstable clayey sediment. The Department's Erosion Control Principles outline erosion and sediment control measures and are part of the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA) building permit review process.

The Department of Health reviews the grading plans as part of the building permit phase, which is initiated after BZA approval. In addition, for all development proposals over 5,000 square feet, the applicant must follow the Health Department guidelines for storm water management on site.

Landscaping

The project included landscaping features as part of site planning for the development. However, OP recommends that the applicant include standard tree protection measures during construction for any off-site street trees in the project's vicinity to ensure their future viability.

353.5 **In addition to other filing requirements, the developer shall submit to the Board with the application, four site plans and two (2) sets of typical floor plans and elevations, grading plans (existing and final), landscaping plans, and plans for all new rights-of-way and easements.**

The Office of Zoning received the required submissions, including twenty sets (20) of plans, including floor plans, elevations, grading and landscaping plans for submission to the Board.

SECTION 410:

410 EXCEPTIONS **FOR R-5 DISTRICTS**

410.1 In an R-5 district, if approved by the Board of Zoning Adjustment, a group of one-family dwellings, flats, or apartment houses, or a combination of these buildings, with division walls erected from the ground up or from the lowest floor up, may be erected and deemed a single building for the purpose of this title; Provided, that the requirements of §§410.2 through 410.11 shall be met.

410.2 All buildings in the group of buildings shall be erected simultaneously.

According to the proposal presented to OP, all the units of the building group will be erected at the same time.

410.3 All front entrances of the group shall abut a street, front yard, or front court

All front entrances and the access stairway at the end unit (Unit 1) abut Rock Creek Ford Road.

410.4 No rear or service entrance shall abut a street, front yard, or front court unless below the main floor.

The residential units do not include service entrances.

410.5 No exterior stairway shall be constructed above the level of the joists of the main floor unless located entirely within the building area.

According to the site plan, there is one exterior stairway at Unit 1, which is entirely within the building area of the site plan and it is not shown above the level of the main floor joists.

410.6 No subdivision of the property shall be authorized until the Board has determined that the following requirements are met:

(a) There shall be adequate free access to the street from each separate dwelling, group of dwellings, or buildings resulting from the subdivision;

(b) Adequate access for fire protection and other purposes shall be provided by easement, fee, alley, or street: and

(c) There shall be adequate yards, courts, light, and air for each dwelling, group of dwellings, or group of buildings resulting from the subdivision.

Based on the submitted plans, there is adequate unobstructed access to the street from each of the dwellings. The design allows access to and from each dwelling via paved walkways for pedestrians and there is sufficient rear yard to allow access to the rear of each unit.

The applicant has assured OP that the development will meet the District's standards that are designed to ensure adequate access for fire protection and other purposes. As previously discussed under §353.4, OP believes the proposed design provides adequate yards, light and air for each dwelling.

410.7 The height of an individual building in a group of buildings may be measured as follows:

(a) Any building that does not have another building between it and a public street shall be considered to front on the street, and the building height shall be measured from the curb at the center of the front of the building; and

(b) Any building that has another building between it and the public street may have its height measured from the proposed finished grade at the center of the front of the building, and the front shall be that side of the building providing access to the majority of the dwelling units within the building.

The four units considered as part of a single building, front on Rock Creek Ford Road. The proposed building height at 20 feet is measured from the curb at the center of each row dwelling. The permitted height of buildings in an R-5-A Zone is 40 feet.

410.8 The front entrances of not more than four (4) one-family dwellings, nor more than four (4) dwelling units per floor, shall face any street that abuts the lot.

No more than four units are proposed for the building.

410.9 All front entrances of the group shall abut a street, front yard, or front court; Provided, that a front entrance may abut a side yard if all one-family dwellings or dwelling units to which the entrance is appurtenant are located no nearer a

street upon which the lot abuts than the rear of any part of the group having a front entrance abutting a street, front yard, or front court.

Front entrances of three units face Rock Creek Ford Road. Unit 1's front entrance abuts a side yard in conformance with this provision.

410.10 No rear or service entrance shall abut a street, front yard, or front court, unless located below the main floor.

No rear entrances abut a street, front yard, or front court.

410.11 No exterior stairway shall be constructed above the level of the joists of the main floor, unless located entirely within the building area of the group.

No exterior stairway is shown above the level of the main floor.

410.12 In the R-5-A and R-4 districts, if approved by the Board of Zoning Adjustment, a group of one-family dwellings, flats, or apartment houses, or a combination of these buildings, with division walls from the ground up or from the lowest floor up, may be erected and be deemed a single building for the purpose of this title, when the group does not comply with the provisions of §§410.1 through 410.11, subject to the following conditions:

(a) The provisions of §§ 410.4 and 410.5 shall be complied with; and

(b) The erection of the group of buildings shall not affect adversely the present character or future development of the neighborhood.

OP concludes that the proposal complies with the provisions of §§ 410.4 and 410.5. The proposed development will be infill development for a long vacant parcel in the Square. The row homes that are proposed are compatible in height and design with the character of the smaller garden apartment buildings in the neighborhood.

RELATIONSHIP TO THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The District of Columbia Generalized Land Use Map designates the square for Moderate Density Housing, which includes row houses and garden apartments as the predominant uses. The provision of new housing at this site is entirely consistent with an objective for housing in Ward 4, which encourages the private sector to provide new housing to meet the needs of present and future District residents at locations consistent with District land use policies and objectives (Section 1508.1 (c)).

COMMUNITY COMMENTS

According to the applicant, the ANC4A voted not to support the proposed development. OP has no further information regarding the ANC's position to date.

OP SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

OP believes that the application meets the intent of the Zoning Regulations and Map, and is consistent with the goals of Ward 4's Objective for Housing as stated in the Comprehensive Plan.

The proposed development would not adversely affect the use of the neighboring properties, within the context of the Zoning Regulations or Map. The development would provide housing on a site that has long been vacant in this stable residential neighborhood. The submitted plans depict a development that is compatible in its scale and mass with other residential structures and as such would enhance the present residential character of the neighborhood.

Therefore, OP recommends **APPROVAL** of the proposal to develop the four (4) row dwellings located in Square 2727, Lot 810 as being in conformance with the requirements of §§ 353 and 410 with the following condition:

- The revised plan showing that the second floor is no longer cantilever into public space be submitted prior to the Board's decision.