

Statement on application for variances.

The homeowner is requesting permission to build a new carriage house behind the existing house. The carriage house would provide additional living space as well as space for a home office.

The lot occupancy of the property is currently at 42%. The proposed carriage house would increase the lot occupancy to 69%. The size of the carriage house was carefully considered to keep the lot occupancy below 70%.

It is also proposed that the carriage house be located at the rear property line.

The subject property (18.17 feet wide) runs in a north/south direction and is an interior lot that abuts privately owned property on both sides. The lot contains a two-story brick row house fronting on S Street, NW. The current structure is 50.17 feet deep with its front on the property line. There is a 6.66 foot by 6.25 foot addition on the rear at the second floor level. The building consists of a living room, dining room, and kitchen on the first floor. The second floor contains two bedrooms, two baths and one large closet. The basement contains a one-bedroom apartment. There will be no changes to the existing house.

The rear yard backs up to an east/west alley. Across the alley is the fenced in side yard of a property fronting on Vermont Avenue, NW.

Points in support of the application.

The size of the lot is slightly less than that called for by the Zoning Code, 1,742 square instead of the required 1,800 square feet. The lot is also an unusual shape with the rear lot line at a considerable angle. Both of these issues make it difficult to create new usable square footage, which other homeowners might be able to do as a matter of right, without exceeding the allowable lot coverage.

Moreover, other options to expand are foreclosed to the owner. Even though the zoning allows for three floors, the house is located in an historic district so adding a third floor is problematic. An addition on the third floor would need to be pulled back far enough to not be seen from public space across the street but, even with the pull back, a third floor addition would also have far greater impact on all of the nearby neighbors than a carriage house in the rear yard.

As for the location of the carriage house at the rear property line, there is not another location where a carriage house would work. If the carriage house is considered to be a principle structure instead of an accessory structure it means that the carriage house would need a rear yard set back of twenty (20) feet. If that were the case the carriage house would push up against the rear of the existing house. As it has already been established, setting a structure just a few feet off the rear property line creates a safety hazard. Moreover, to do so would be inconsistent with the existing properties since all of the surrounding properties on the block have a fence or carriage house directly on the alley.

Finally, the carriage house will have little impact on the immediate neighbors, one of which currently has a structure at the rear property line. There is also an existing two-story carriage house at the end of the alley. There are numerous two-story alley structures in the surrounding neighborhood so there is certainly historic precedent for this kind of building.