

MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment

FROM: Matt Jesick, Case Manager
JB Joel Lawson, Associate Director Development Review

DATE: June 14, 2016

SUBJECT: BZA #19296 – 26 Adams Street, NW – Special Exception to Modify Rooftop Architectural Elements

I. RECOMMENDATION

With regard to this proposal to construct a third floor on an existing single family residence, the Office of Planning (OP) recommends **approval** of the requested special exception relief:

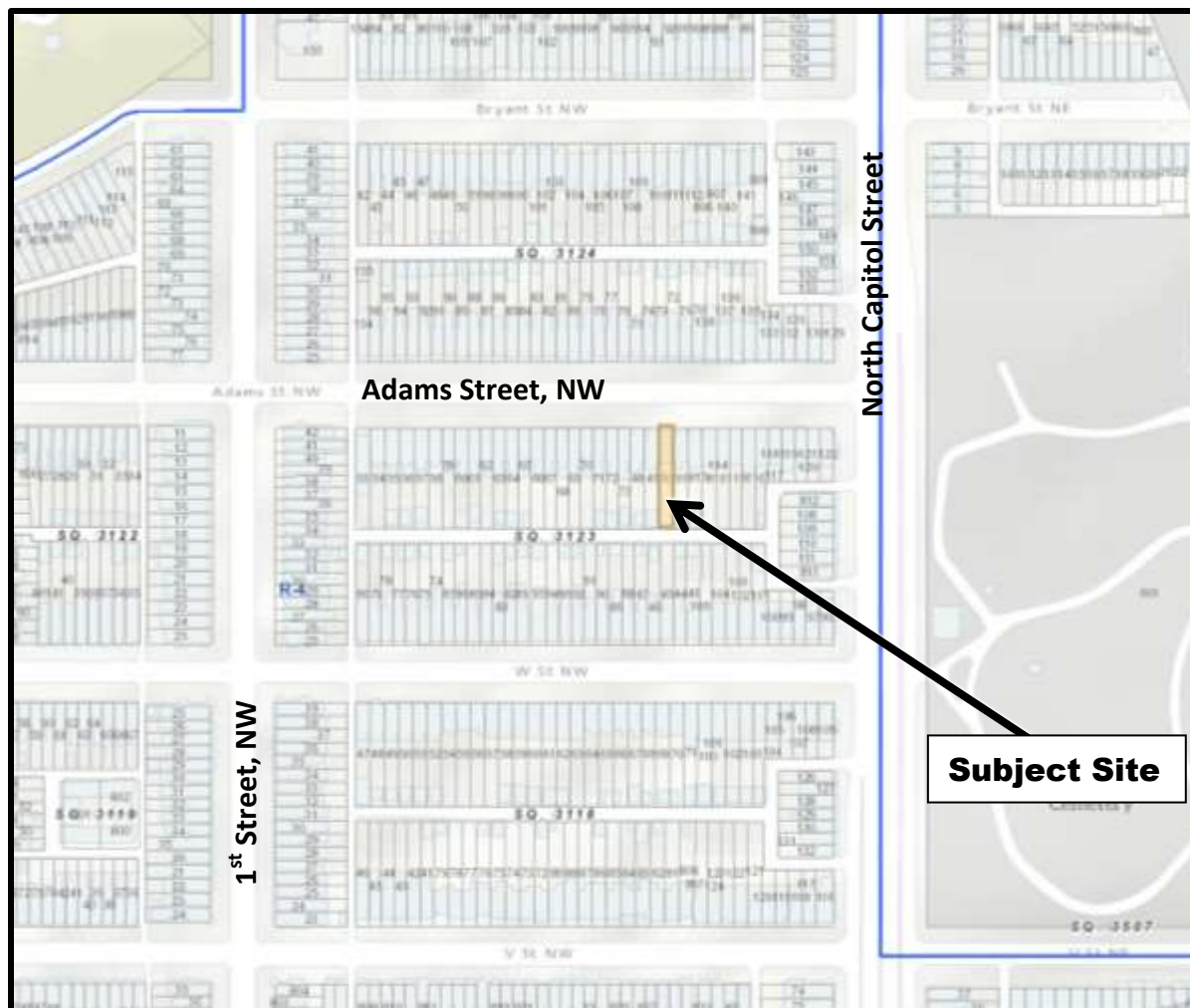
- § 400.24(a) Rooftop Architectural Elements (Original architectural elements may not be altered, slight alterations proposed).

II. LOCATION AND SITE DESCRIPTION

Address	26 Adams Street, NW
Legal Description	Square 3123, Lot 50
Zoning	R-4
Ward and ANC	5, 5E
Historic District	None
Lot Characteristics and Existing Development	2,800 square foot rectangular rowhouse lot; 20' x 140'; Existing 3-story rowhouse with approved deck at rear of the third story.
Adjacent Properties and Neighborhood Character	Adjacent rowhouses are practically identical to the subject site. The surrounding neighborhood is almost exclusively rowhouses.

III. PROJECT DESCRIPTION IN BRIEF

The applicant has an approved building permit to construct a rear deck at the third floor, together with new door to the deck. The applicant now proposes to add to that design a slider door and a dormer with clerestory windows. Those changes have triggered the need for special exception relief. The front of the house would not be altered at all.



IV. ZONING REQUIREMENTS AND ANALYSIS

The applicant proposes a slight change to the rear of the structure including adding a sliding door and a clerestory window. Those changes have been determined by the Zoning Administrator to require special exception relief from § 400.24, which governs changes to the rooftop features of structures in the R-4 zone. While not specifically stated in the DCRA determination letter, the specific section requiring relief is § 400.24(a), while the project would comply with §§ 400.24(b) and (c).

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;**

400.25 In an R-4 Zone District, relief from the design requirements of § 400.24 may be approved by the Board of Zoning Adjustment as a special exception under § 3104, subject to the conditions of § 400.23(a), (b), and (c). [...]

The following is OP's analysis of § 400.23.

400.23 In an R-4 Zone 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;

The addition of a 32" dormer to the roof of the dwelling would not impact the light and air available to adjacent houses. The level of the dormer would be lower than the roof peak at the front of the house, and would not create a significant source of new shadow. Impacts to airflow would be negligible or non-existent.

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

The privacy of nearby properties should not be impacted. The home already includes windows on the rear wall. The newly proposed slider door and clerestory window would not decrease the privacy of adjacent properties.

(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;

The proposed dormer would be removed from the party walls, so would not impact the functioning of chimneys or vents on adjacent property.

(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

The application includes a shadow study that indicates the dormer, which has a minimal height, should not significantly impact adjacent properties. See Exhibit 12.

- (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 alteration would result in a very slightly modified roofline on the alley face of the subject property, but would not substantially visually intrude on the character of the rear façades of the block. The proposal would not modify the front of the building.

- (b) The applicant shall demonstrate that overall building or structure height or an upper addition resulting from the additional five feet (5 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**

This subsection is not applicable since the alteration to the façade features is not a result of an increase from 35' to 40'. The proposed height of the building, including the slight alteration, is only $34' 4\frac{3}{8}"$.

- (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.**

The application includes plans, elevations and photographs of the property.

V. COMMUNITY COMMENTS

As of this writing OP has received no comments from the community.