

MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment
FROM: Crystal Myers, Development Review Specialist
JL Joel Lawson, Associate Director Development Review
DATE: January 21, 2022
SUBJECT: BZA Case 20608 to permit an addition to a public library.

I. OFFICE OF PLANNING RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning (OP) recommends **Approval** of the following area variance relief pursuant to Subtitle X § 1000:

Subtitle E § 204.1 Pervious Surface (50% required; 17% existing; 4.4% proposed)

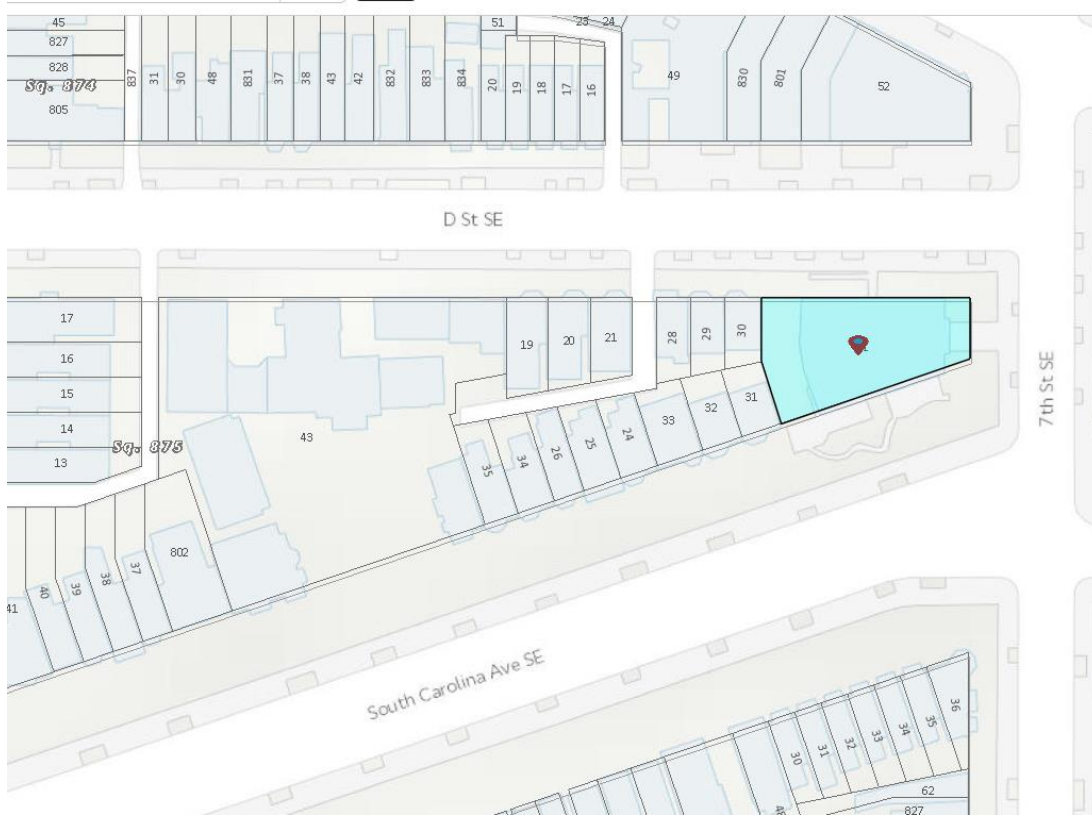
The Office of Planning (OP) recommends **Approval** of the following special exception relief pursuant to Subtitle X § 900:

Subtitle E § 304.1 Lot Occupancy (40% permitted; 65% existing; 92% proposed)

II. LOCATION AND SITE DESCRIPTION

Address	403 7 th St. SE
Applicant	Goulston & Storrs, PC on behalf of DC Public Library
Legal Description	Lot 1, Square 875
Ward, ANC	Ward 6, ANC 6B
Zone	RF-1
Historic District	Capitol Hill Historic District and a Landmark site
Lot Characteristics	Triangular corner lot between D St. SE, 7 th St SE, and South Carolina Ave. SE.
Existing Development	Southeast Neighborhood Library, historic building that covers most of the existing lot.
Adjacent Properties	Two rowhouses are to the west of the library, in the rear.
Surrounding Neighborhood Character	Mixed Use neighborhood with attached Single-family residential houses along D ST. NE and commercial establishments along Pennsylvania Ave. SE
Proposed Development	DCPL’s modernization plans for the library include a rear addition for locating mechanical systems and providing ADA-compliant access and circulation

III. LOCATION



IV. ZONING REQUIREMENTS and RELIEF REQUESTED¹

Zone: RF-1	Regulation	Existing	Proposed	Relief
Lot Area	N/A	6,438 sq.ft.	6,438 sq.ft.	
Height	35 ft.	27.8 ft.	27.8 ft.	none
Lot Occupancy	40% max	65%	92%	Special Exception Requested
Pervious Surface	50% min.	17%	4.4%	Variance Relief Requested

V. OFFICE OF PLANNING ANALYSIS

X§1000 Variance Relief from Subtitle E § 204.1, Pervious Surface Requirements

Extraordinary or Exceptional Situation

Though most of the renovation work would be underground, a small above-grade addition is needed to provide the required mechanical equipment and ADA-compliant access and circulation space. Today the library does not conform to the pervious surface requirements of the RF-1 zone so the proposed expansion would further this nonconformance.

There are no practical alternative options to preserve or increase pervious surface on the site. Expanding the building vertically would harm the historic integrity of the building, which is a

¹ Information provided by Applicant

Landmark building. Adding additional pervious surface to the site is not possible due to the nature of the existing building. A green roof cannot be reasonably be added to the addition due to screening and maintenance issues, cannot be added to the existing historic library building, as the roof is almost entirely sloped.

Resulting in a Practical Difficulty

If the variance were not approved the mechanical equipment and ADA-compliant circulation space necessary for the project could not be provided. This would unreasonably hinder the modernization project from occurring.

No Substantial Detriment to the Public Good

The proposal should not result in a substantial detriment to the public good. The proposed addition is designed to minimize potential impacts to neighbors through the raising and screening of the mechanical equipment to minimize potential noise impacts. Rather, the proposed addition would allow for the library to modernize and provide better accessibility, which would benefit the public good.

No Substantial Impairment to the Zoning Regulations

Granting the requested variance relief would not substantially impair the zoning regulations. The existing building already covers much of the property. An intent of the pervious surface requirements is to address providing stormwater management on the site, but on- and off-site stormwater management will be reviewed by the Department of Energy and Environment at the building permit phase. On-site options the Applicant is considering include installing a non-traditional green roof, adding micro-bioretenion planters, enhancing the landscaping, and harvesting rainwater.

X§900 Special Exception Relief from Subtitle E § 304.1, Lot Occupancy Requirements

Will be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps;

The proposed addition would be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the RF-1 zone. The RF-1 zone allows for public libraries to locate in residential neighborhoods. In this case, the library's existing lot occupancy is nonconforming so any expansion of the building would require relief. The proposed lot occupancy would be the minimum needed to provide the mechanical equipment, ADA-compliant access and circulation, and restrooms necessary to the project.

Will not tend to affect adversely, the use of neighboring property in accordance with the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps;

The proposed addition should not adversely impact the neighboring properties. The western end of the site, which is adjacent to residential properties, is the only available location for the addition. The mechanical equipment would be raised and screened to minimize potential noise impacts. Along the south side of the site, lighting would be limited to downlighting to minimize potential impacts on the neighbors.

VI. HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

Historic Preservation staff reviewed the submitted plans and have no objection. The Historic Preservation Review Board approved the project on November 18, 2021.

VII. OTHER DISTRICT AGENCIES

The Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE) met with the Applicant on January 10, 2022 to discuss the project's stormwater management strategy. After the meeting, in an email DOEE expressed optimism that the project will meet the District's stormwater management requirements. They have no objection to the proposal.

VIII. ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION

ANC 6B submitted a report recommending approval, (Exhibit 18).

IX. COMMUNITY COMMENTS TO DATE

As of the writing of this report, no comments from the community have been filed into the record.