


MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment

FROM: Shepard Beamon, Development review Specialist
 Joel Lawson, Associate Director Development Review

DATE: March 14, 2025

SUBJECT: BZA Case 21245: Request for special exception relief to construct a detached, two-story accessory garage for an attached dwelling at 1227 Independence Avenue SE.

I. RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning (OP) recommends **approval** of the following special exceptions pursuant to Subtitle E § 5201 and Subtitle X § 901:

- Lot Occupancy E § 210.1 (60% required, 57% existing; 68% proposed)

II. LOCATION AND SITE DESCRIPTION

Address:	1227 Independence Avenue SE
Applicant:	Putnam Architects
Legal Description:	Square 509, Lot 116
Ward / ANC:	6B
Zone:	RF-1
Historic Districts	Capitol Hill
Lot Characteristics	Rectangular, interior lot measuring 1,700 sq. ft. in area with rear alley access
Existing Development:	Two-story plus cellar single-family dwelling
Adjacent Properties:	Two-story single-family dwellings on either side with a detached, accessory building at 1225 Independence Avenue SE.
Surrounding Neighborhood Character:	The surrounding neighborhood consists of two- to three-story row dwellings.
Proposed Development:	Construct a two-story rear accessory building, with office/studio space on the second floor.

III. ZONING REQUIREMENTS and RELIEF REQUESTED

RF-1 Zone	Regulation	Existing	Proposed	Relief:
Density E § 201	2 principal units max.	1 dwelling	No change	None requested

RF-1 Zone	Regulation	Existing	Proposed	Relief:
Lot Width E § 202	18 ft. min. (Row dwelling)	17 ft.	No change	None requested
Lot Area E § 202	1,800 sq. ft. min. (Row dwelling)	1,700 sq. ft.	No change	None requested
Height (Accessory buildings) E § 203	22 ft. max.	N/A	21 ft.	None requested
Front Yard E § 206	Within the range of existing front setbacks	N/A	No change	None requested
Rear Yard E § 207	20 ft. min.	41.3 ft.	24.6 ft.	None requested
Side Yard E § 208	None required, but 5 ft. min. if provided	N/A	N/A	None requested
Lot Occupancy E § 210	60% max. 70% sp. ex.	57%	68%	Relief requested
Parking C § 701	1 per principal dwelling	N/A	1 space	None requested

IV. OP ANALYSIS

Subtitle E Chapter 5201 ADDITION TO A BUILDING OR ACCESSORY BUILDING

5201.1 *Not applicable*

5201.2 *For a new or enlarged accessory building to a residential building on a non-alley lot, the Board of Zoning Adjustment may grant relief from the following development standards as a special exception, subject to the provisions of this section and the general special exception criteria at Subtitle X, Chapter 9:*

- (a) ***Lot occupancy under Subtitle E § 5003 up to a maximum of seventy percent (70%) for all new and existing structures on the lot;***

The applicant proposes a new accessory building on a non-alley lot, which would not result in the property exceeding the maximum lot occupancy allowed by 70%.

- (b) *Yards, including alley centerline setback;*
(c) *Courts; and*
(d) *Pervious surface.*

5201.3 *Not applicable.*

5201.4 *An applicant for special exception under this section shall demonstrate that the proposed addition, new building, or accessory building shall not have a substantially adverse effect on the use or enjoyment of any abutting or adjacent dwelling or property, in particular:*

- (a) *The light and air available to neighboring properties shall not be unduly affected;*

The requested relief should not result in an accessory building that would have an adverse impact on neighboring properties. The structure should not significantly interfere with airflow for adjacent properties. The structure may cast some shadow on the rear yard of the properties to the west, where there is currently no garage, but this should not result in an undue impact on quality light and air, and that neighboring resident has provided an email ([Exhibit 18](#)) stating no concerns.

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

The proposed structure is designed to have no windows on either side so should not result in significant direct views into the adjacent rear yards. The proposed second floor would have windows facing the principal dwelling; these may also provide some visibility into the neighboring properties, but should not result in an undue impact on privacy, particularly due to the proposed studio use of the second floor.

- (c) *The proposed addition or accessory building, together with the original building, or the new principal building, 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 street or alley frontage; and*

The structure would not be visible from the street but would be visible from the alley. As demonstrated in the applicant's application, several homes along the alley have detached garages or garage-like structures or equipment. The proposed structure would have a building footprint that would not significantly differ from other accessory buildings on the same alley. Although the proposed structure would be two stories, which is not common on the alley, OP does not anticipate this feature would be visually intrusive when viewed from the rear alley.

- (d) *In demonstrating compliance with paragraphs (a), (b), and (c) of this subsection, the applicant shall use graphical representations such as plans, photographs, or elevation and section drawings sufficient to represent the relationship of the proposed addition or accessory building to adjacent buildings and views from public ways.*

The applicant has provided sufficient graphical representation, including plans, photographs, elevations, and renderings.

- 5201.5 *The Board of Zoning Adjustment may require special treatment in the way of design, screening, exterior or interior lighting, building materials, or other features for the protection of adjacent and nearby properties.*

OP does not recommend any special treatment as it relates to the requested lot occupancy.

- 5201.6 *This section shall not be used to permit the introduction or expansion of a nonconforming use, lot occupancy beyond what is authorized in this section, height, or number of stories, as a special exception.*

The applicant does not propose the introduction of a use or development standards beyond what is authorized in this section.

Subtitle X Section 901 SPECIAL EXCEPTION REVIEW STANDARDS

- 901.2 *The Board of Zoning Adjustment is authorized under § 8 of the Zoning Act, D.C. Official Code*

§ 6-641.07(g)(2), to grant special exceptions, as provided in this title, where, in the judgment of the Board of Zoning Adjustment, the special exceptions:

- (a) *Will be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps;*

The requested relief would be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations as it would not exceed the maximum occupancy allowed by special exception. The proposed accessory structure would not exceed the maximum height and building area for accessory buildings and would not be in the required rear yard.

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

As noted above, the proposed building and use should not unduly adversely impact the neighboring properties.

V. OTHER DISTRICT AGENCIES

DDOT has reviewed the application and has indicated to OP that they have no objection to the approval of the application.

According to the applicant, the Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRC) has reviewed and approved the structure.

VI. ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION

ANC 6B has filed a letter of support to the record, at Exhibit 21.

VII. COMMUNITY COMMENTS

A letter in support from the Capitol Hill Restoration Society (Exhibit 20) and from five neighbors, including an email from the adjacent property owner, have been filed to the case record.

LOCATION MAP

