



MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment

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

DATE: March 25, 2025

SUBJECT: BZA #21271 – 5113 2nd Street, NW – Special Exception relief to add two units to an existing multifamily dwelling

I. RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning (OP) recommends **approval** of the following requested relief:

- U § 421 – Special exception review for all new multi-family projects in the RA-1 zone.

II. LOCATION AND SITE DESCRIPTION

Applicant	Biemmet S. Eshete, owner
Address	5113 2 nd Street, NW
Legal Description	Square 3399, Lot 25
Ward / ANC	4, 4D
Zone	RA-1, low to moderate density residential zone, apartment use is permitted by special exception
Historic Designation	None
Lot Characteristics and Existing Development	The property is currently developed with a 4-unit multifamily dwelling. The existing units are on the first and second floors of the building. Vacant cellar space not been used for residential units. The property is relatively flat, and has a 16 foot wide alley at the rear.
Adjacent Properties and Surrounding Neighborhood Character	This block of 2 nd Street appears to be exclusively developed with small apartment buildings. The surrounding neighborhood is a mix of small apartment buildings and rowhouses.
Proposed Development	Add two units to the cellar level of the existing building. No additions to the building are proposed.

III. ZONING REQUIREMENTS AND REQUESTED RELIEF

The site is zoned RA-1, a zone that requires special exception review for all new multifamily developments, including expansion of existing ones, subject to the criteria of Subtitle U § 421.

Section	Requirement	Existing	Proposed	Relief
Use U § 421	Multi family use permitted by special exception	4 unit apartment building	2 additional units	Sp. Ex. requested
FAR F § 201	0.9	0.88	No change	Conforming
Lot Area F § 202	As prescribed by the Board	4,150 sq.ft.	No change	Conforming
Lot Width F § 202	As prescribed by the Board	41.5 ft.	No change	Conforming
Lot Depth	n/a	100 ft.	No change	Conforming
Height F § 203	40 ft. and 3 stories max.	18.1 ft. 2 stories + cellar	No change	Conforming
Rear Yard F § 207	20 ft. min.	43.2 ft.	No change	Conforming
Side Yard F § 208	1 side yard required; 8 ft. min.	6.8 ft. – north side	No change	Existing Non-conforming
Lot Occupancy F § 210	40%	44%	No change	Existing Non-conforming
Vehicle Parking C § 701	1 per 3 units in excess of 4 units (1 space required)	4	No change	Conforming

IV. ANALYSIS

Subtitle U § 421 requires special exception review for “all new residential developments” (§ 421.1) in the RA-1 zone, subject to the criteria listed below. The Zoning Administrator has determined that the addition of dwelling units qualifies as a new residential development for the purposes of this section. OP’s analysis of the relevant criteria is below.

Special Exception for New Residential Development – U § 421

421 NEW RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS (RA-1 and RA-6)

421.1 In the RA-1 and RA-6 zones, all new residential developments, except those comprising all one-family detached and semi-detached dwellings, shall be reviewed by the Board of Zoning Adjustment as special exceptions under Subtitle X, in accordance with the standards and requirements in this section.

The application proposes to add two units to an existing four-unit multifamily development, for a total of six units.

421.2 *The Board of Zoning Adjustment shall refer the application to the relevant District of Columbia agencies for comment and recommendation as to the adequacy of the following:*

- (a) *Existing and planned area schools to accommodate the numbers of students that can be expected to reside in the project; and*

The application was referred to the Office of the State Superintendent for Education (OSSE) at Exhibit 15. While comments were not received, the 2023 DC Public Education Master Facilities Plan, published March 2024, presents the following utilization data for the relevant public schools:

Barnard Elementary – 78% utilization
MacFarland Middle – 73% utilization
Roosevelt High – 81% utilization

- (b) *Public streets, recreation, and other services to accommodate the residents that can be expected to reside in the project.*

OP defers to the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) to comment on the adequacy of the public streets and transportation infrastructure. The application was referred to DDOT at Exhibit 15. The application was referred to the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) at Exhibit 15, and OP defers to DPR to comment on neighborhood recreation facilities. OP does not anticipate that the addition of two units would negatively impact city infrastructure or amenities.

421.3 *The Board of Zoning Adjustment shall refer the application to the Office of Planning for comment and recommendation on the site plan, arrangement of buildings and structures, and provisions of light, air, parking, recreation, landscaping, and grading as they relate to the surrounding neighborhood, and the relationship of the proposed project to public plans and projects.*

The addition of two units to the cellar level would not result in significant changes to the exterior of the building. The only changes would be the addition of window wells or areaways to comply with egress requirements. The mass of the building would not change, and the window wells should have only limited visual impacts at the front, rear and side of the building. The degree of privacy for adjacent properties should not change, and there should be minimal impacts to landscaping or grading on the site. OP supports the applicant's commitment to use permeable pavers for the four parking spaces. To further improve water infiltration on the site, the applicant should consider removing some of the concrete at the rear of the building, which from the plans appears to occupy most of the remaining rear yard. The applicant should also consider creating an enclosure for the trash bins to minimize their view from adjacent properties and public space.

421.4 *In addition to other filing requirements, the developer shall submit to the Board of Zoning Adjustment with the application a site plan and set of typical floor plans and elevations, grading plan (existing and final), landscaping plan, and plans for all new rights-of-way and easements.*

The record appears to contain most of the required information. There does not appear to be a grading plan in the record, but no changes to the existing grade are proposed.

Subtitle X § 901.2

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 RA-1 zone provides for areas predominantly developed with low- to moderate-density development, including low-rise apartments, which are permitted with the approval of a special exception, as has been requested in this case for the proposed internal expansion of the existing apartment building. The proposal would not include additions to the building, so the height, bulk and form would remain consistent with the intent of the zone. Therefore, the request is in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and Zoning maps.

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

As addressed in the above analysis, the requested special exception would not appear to adversely affect the use neighboring property.

V. COMMENTS OF OTHER DISTRICT AGENCIES

As of this writing there are no comments in the record from other District agencies.

VI. ANC COMMENTS

At Exhibit 20 is a memo in support from ANC 4D.

VII. COMMUNITY COMMENTS

As of this writing the record contains no comments from members of the community.

VIII. VICINITY MAP

