



MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment

FROM: Matt Jesick, Case Manager

JL Joel Lawson, Associate Director, Development Review

DATE: June 4, 2025

SUBJECT: BZA #21302 – 4921 1st 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.

OP's recommendation is subject to the applicant providing a site plan to the record showing where the trash bins for the project would be located, and how they would be screened. OP has raised this question with the applicant.

II. LOCATION AND SITE DESCRIPTION

Applicant	Tyler Mott, owner
Address	4921 1 st Street, NW
Legal Description	Square 3401, Lot 14
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 building. The existing units are on the first and second floors. Vacant cellar space not been used for residential units. The property slopes slightly down from south to north. There is no alley at the property.
Adjacent Properties and Surrounding Neighborhood Character	This side of the block appears to be exclusively small apartment buildings nearly identical to the subject property. Across the street are rowhouses. 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	0.95	No change	Existing Non-conforming
Lot Area F § 202	As prescribed by the Board	3,734 sq.ft.	No change	Conforming
Lot Width F § 202	As prescribed by the Board	43.5 ft.	No change	Conforming
Lot Depth	n/a	North side – 88 ft. South side – 83 ft.	No change	Conforming
Height F § 203	40 ft. and 3 stories max.	25 ft. 2 stories + cellar	No change	Conforming
Rear Yard F § 207	20 ft. min.	21.3 ft.	No change	Conforming
Side Yard F § 208	1 side yard required; 8 ft. min.	6.5 ft. – north side	No change	Existing Non-conforming
Lot Occupancy F § 210	40%	47%	No change	Existing Non-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 30. 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 30. The application was referred to the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) at Exhibit 30, and OP defers to DPR to comment on neighborhood recreation facilities. OP does not anticipate that the addition of two units would significantly 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.

It does not appear that any of the submitted site plans show where trash would be collected on site. The application should include a site plan that shows the location for the trash bins, and indicate how the bins would be screened.

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 the relevant required information.

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

As of this writing the record contains no comments from the ANC.

VII. COMMUNITY COMMENTS

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

VIII. VICINITY MAP

