

MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment
FROM: Michael Jurkovic, AICP, Development Review Specialist
 JL Joel Lawson, Associate Director Development Review
DATE: October 31, 2025

SUBJECT: BZA Case 21363, Request for special exception relief to permit new rooftop structure at 575 7th street, NW.

I. OFFICE OF PLANNING RECOMMENDATION

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

- C § 1503.1, pursuant to Subtitle C § 1506.1 and X § 901 (Penthouse Mechanical Equipment Enclosure Required; none proposed)

II. LOCATION AND SITE DESCRIPTION

Address	575 7th Street, NW
Applicant	Goulston & Storrs, PC on behalf of Terrell Place Property LLC
Legal Description	Square 456; Lot 844
Ward, ANC	Ward 2; ANC 2C
Zone	D-6-R
Historic District	Downtown HD
Lot Characteristics	Irregular corner lot
Existing Development	Ten-story commercial building
Adjacent Properties	Mixed-Use and Arts & Entertainment
Surrounding Neighborhood Character	High Density Downtown
Proposed Development	New rooftop HVAC unit

III. ZONING REQUIREMENTS and RELIEF REQUESTED

Zone- D-6-R	Regulation	Existing	Proposed	Relief
Enclosing Walls C § 1503.1	All penthouses and mechanical equipment shall be in one (1) enclosure.	HVAC unit not enclosed	Larger HVAC unit that is unenclosed	Relief Requested

IV. OFFICE OF PLANNING ANALYSIS

Special Exception Relief from Subtitle C § 1503.1

1506.1 Relief from the requirements of Subtitle C §§ 1503 and 1504 may be granted as a special exception by the Board of Zoning Adjustment subject to:

- (a) *The special exception requirements of Subtitle X, Chapter 9;*

Analysis is provided later in this report.

- (b) *The applicant's demonstration that reasonable effort has been made for the housing for mechanical equipment, stairway, and elevator penthouses to be in compliance with the required setbacks; and*

Should the applicant be required to adhere to the enclosure requirements, this would likely cause additional visually intrusion that this application does not introduce.

- (c) *The applicant's demonstration of at least one (1) of the following:*

- (1) *The strict application of the requirements of this chapter would result in construction that is unduly restrictive, prohibitively costly, or unreasonable, or is inconsistent with building codes;*

- (2) *The relief requested would result in a better design of the penthouse or rooftop structure without appearing to be an extension of the building wall;*

- (3) ***The relief requested would result in a penthouse or rooftop structure that is visually less intrusive; or***

- (4) *Operating difficulties such as meeting D.C. Construction Code, Title 12 DCMR requirements for roof access and stairwell separation or elevator stack location to achieve reasonable efficiencies in lower floors; size of Subtitle C § 115 building lot; or other conditions relating to the building or surrounding area make full compliance unduly restrictive, prohibitively costly or unreasonable.*

The applicant states that they have demonstrated items (1) through (3). However, based on the record, OP concurs that the requested relief would result in penthouse changes which would be less intrusive and meets condition (c)(3) above. The applicant has provided a series of renderings showing that the new HVAC unit would not be readily visible from the public ways, while the screening would introduce a visual intrusion.

Special Exception Relief from Subtitle X § 901

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 intent of the penthouse requirements are largely to reduce visual intrusion from the public realm. In this application the applicant states that without the granting of this relief, the replacement of the existing HVAC unit would then require relief to the 1:1 penthouse setbacks for the required screening. This application meets the intent of the regulations by limiting its impact by resulting in the least visually intrusive solution to resolve the needs of the building's occupants.

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

The requested relief to the screening requirements would not be for a structure which is positioned towards the building's frontage. Instead, the relief is for the proposed HVAC unit along the eastern edge of the structure. The applicant's renderings show that the new unit would not be visible from the street, as existing roof structure provides some screening.

- (c) *Subject in specific cases to the special conditions specified in this title.*

The applicant has addressed the relevant conditions in C § 1503.1 analysis as provided above.

V. OTHER DISTRICT AGENCIES

DDOT has informed OP that they have no objection to the approval of the application.

VI. ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION

ANC 2C as provided a resolution in support to the record at Exhibit 19.

VII. COMMUNITY COMMENTS TO DATE

As of the writing of this report, there are no comments in the record from the public.

