

MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment
FROM: Philip Bradford, AICP, Development Review Specialist
 JL Joel Lawson, Associate Director, Development Review
DATE: October 30, 2025

SUBJECT: BZA Case 21370: Request for special exception relief to allow for the construction of two new semi-detached three-story principal dwelling units in the R-2 zone.

I. OFFICE OF PLANNING RECOMMENDATION

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

- Side Yard Requirements, D § 208.3 (8 ft. required on one side, 4 ft. proposed); and
- Lot Occupancy Requirements, D § 210.1 (40% max. by right, 50% max by sp. ex. required, 50% proposed)

II. LOCATION AND SITE DESCRIPTION

Address:	618 55 th Street NE
Applicants:	Willis Capital Group, LLC
Legal Description:	Square 5218N, Lots 0010, 0011
Ward / ANC:	Ward 7 / ANC 7C
Zone:	R-2; low density residential
Historic Districts:	None
Lot Characteristics:	Rectangular lots 20 ft. wide 80 ft. deep with an unimproved 20 ft. alley at the rear.
Existing Development:	Unimproved lots.
Adjacent Properties:	Single unit dwellings.
Surrounding Neighborhood Character:	Low density residential development zoned R-2 with some MU-3A development one block west.
Proposed Development:	Two new semi-detached three-story principal dwelling units, each with an accessory dwelling unit, which could only be rented by the owner/occupant of the dwelling.

III. ZONING REQUIREMENTS and RELIEF REQUESTED

R Zone	Regulation	Existing	Proposed	Relief
Lot Width D § 202 (302)	30 ft. min.	20 ft.	20 ft.	Existing non-conforming
Lot Area D § 202	3,000 sq.ft. min.	1,600 sq.ft.	1,600 sq.ft.	Existing non-conforming
Height D § 203	40 ft. max.	N/A	31.4 ft.	None requested
Front Setback D § 206	Within range of existing setbacks on block.	N/A	3 ft.	None requested
Rear Yard D § 207	20 ft. min.	N/A	27 ft.	None requested
Side Yard D § 207.3	One side yard of 8 ft. min.	N/A	4 ft.	Special Exception requested
Lot Occupancy D § 210	40 % max. by right 50 % max by sp.ex.	0%.	50 %	Special Exception requested
Parking C § 701	None required per 702.4(a)	0	0	None requested

IV. OP ANALYSIS

Subtitle D § 5201 ADDITION TO A BUILDING OR ACCESSORY STRUCTURE

5201.1 For an addition to a principal residential building with one (1) principal dwelling unit on a non-alley lot or for a new principal residential building on a substandard non-alley record lot as described by Subtitle C § 301.1, the Board of Zoning Adjustment may grant relief from the following development standards of this subtitle 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 subject to the following table:*

TABLE D § 5201.1(a): MAXIMUM PERMITTED LOT OCCUPANCY BY SPECIAL EXCEPTION

Zones	Type of Structure	Maximum Percentage of Lot Occupancy (%)
All R-3 zones except R-3/GT	All Structures	70
R-3/GT	Row	
R-3/GT	Detached Semi-detached	50
All other R zones	All Structures	

(b) *Yards, including alley centerline setback; and*

(c) Pervious surface.

The applicant requests special exception relief for side yards and lot occupancy within what is allowed by special exception.

5201.2 & 5201.3 not relevant to this application

5201.4 An application for special exception relief under this section shall demonstrate that the proposed addition, new principal building, or accessory structure shall not have a substantially adverse effect on the use or enjoyment of any abutting or adjacent dwelling or property, specifically:

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

The proposed development should not have an undue impact on light and air available to neighboring properties. The homes are appropriate for the zone and meet the development standards related to height and rear yard, and are within the lot occupancy anticipated for this zone.

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

It is anticipated that new housing would be built on existing, undeveloped record lots. While these new semi-detached homes are proposed between two existing detached dwellings, the structures have been designed to respect the privacy of the adjacent dwellings and do not contain windows on the southern facades.

(c) The proposed addition or accessory structure, 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

Several of the developed lots appear to have the side of the principal dwelling unit facing the street, while others have the building entrance and front facing the street. The proposed development orients the front of both dwellings towards 55th Street NE with the entrance to the principal unit on the front, which improves the character and pattern of houses along the street frontage.

(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 structure to adjacent buildings and views from public ways.

The applicant has provided plans, photographs, elevations, and section drawings sufficient to represent the relationship of the proposed new semi-detached dwellings to adjacent buildings and views from public ways.

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.

No special treatment is recommended.

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 proposed use is residential, semi-detached dwellings as permitted by the R-2 zone and meets the height and number of stories permitted as a matter of right. The accessory dwelling unit is also permitted by right in the zone. The special exception request is for lot occupancy and side yards within what is authorized by this section.

Subtitle X § 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 purpose of the R-2 zone is stated in D § 101.7 “*intended to provide for areas predominantly developed with semi-detached houses on moderately sized lots that also contain some detached houses.*” The applicant proposes two semi-detached homes as envisioned for the zone. The lots are significantly undersized for the R-2 zone, thus necessitating the requested special exception relief.

- (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 approval of the special exception relief should not tend to adversely affect the use of neighboring properties. The new semi-detached dwellings will improve two vacant lots and result in an improved appearance and character when viewed from the street. The new homes will comply with all other development standards of the R-2 zone, therefore, should not unduly impact the adjacent properties.

V. OTHER DISTRICT AGENCIES

At the writing of this report, no comments from any district agency have been submitted to the record.

VI. ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION

At the writing of this report, no comments from ANC 7C have been submitted to the record.

VII. COMMUNITY COMMENTS

At the writing of this report, no comments from the community have been submitted to the record.

Attachment: Location Map

Location Map:

