



MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment

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

DATE: November 26, 2025

SUBJECT: BZA #21393 – 655 South Carolina Avenue SE – Request for relief to construct a two-story with basement rear addition (dogleg infill + deck expansion) to an existing, attached, two-story with basement flat.

I. RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning (OP) recommends **approval** of the requested area variance and special exception relief:

- Area Variance - E § 210.1, pursuant to X § 1000 – Lot Occupancy (60% maximum; 70% permitted by special exception; 74% existing; 84% proposed)
- Special Exception - E § 207.1, pursuant to E § 5201 and X § 900 – Rear Yard (20 ft. required; 10.5 ft. existing/proposed)

II. LOCATION AND SITE DESCRIPTION

Applicant	Ulysses Glee
Address	655 South Carolina Avenue SE
Legal Description	Square 876, Lot 30
Ward / ANC	Ward 6, ANC 6B
Zone	RF-1
Historic District / Resource	Capitol Hill Historic District
Lot Characteristics and Existing Development	Substandard rectangular lot measuring 812 sq. ft. in area and 16 feet in width, with no alley access. The lot is developed with an attached, two-story flat.
Adjacent Properties and Neighborhood Character	The area is primarily developed with row dwellings.
Proposed Development	Construct a two-story + basement dog-leg infill and expand the existing rear deck.

III. ZONING REQUIREMENTS AND RELIEF REQUESTED

Item	Regulation	Existing	Proposed	Relief
Density E § 201	Two principal dwellings	Two dwellings	No change	None requested
Lot Area E § 202	1,800 sq. ft. min.	812 sq. ft.	No change	None requested (Existing Non-Conforming)
Lot Width E § 202	18 ft. min.	16 ft.	No change	None requested (Existing Non-Conforming)
Height E § 203	35 ft. 3 stories max.	28 ft. 2 stories + basement	No change	None requested
Rear Yard E § 207	20 ft. min.	10.5 ft.	7.8 ft.	Special Exception Requested
Lot Occupancy E § 210	60% max. 70% permitted by special ex.	74%	84%	Area Variance Requested

IV. ANALYSIS

Area Variance from Lot Occupancy – Subtitle E § 210, pursuant to X § 1002

i. Extraordinary or Exceptional Situation or Condition Resulting in Peculiar and Exceptional Practical Difficulties to the Property Owner

a. Extraordinary or Exceptional Situation

Section E § 210.1 states that the maximum lot occupancy on a lot used for an attached dwelling is 60%, and 70% is permitted by a special exception pursuant to E § 5201. In this case, the property currently exceeds the maximum lot occupancy allowed by special exception at 74%, and with the proposed additions, the lot occupancy would total 84%.

The applicant cites the exceptionally small lot size and resulting small building size, with the lot measuring less than 50% the minimum lot size in the RF-1 zone and less than the minimum lot width. Although this lot is part of a small row of similarly sized lots, lots on the square and in the zone are typically larger than the subject lot. This has resulted in a correspondingly small house that currently exceeds lot occupancy limits.

b. Exceptional Practical Difficulties

While the applicant has not provided a robust argument for the requested relief, they are proposing only very modest additions to the building and the size of the exterior deck. Without area variance relief, no expansion of the building would be possible. The small building addition would allow for a more logical layout meeting current expectations for living space.

OP notes that the Zoning Commission is currently considering changes to lot occupancy regulations which would result in the proposed deck not counting towards lot occupancy since it would not exceed 200 sq. ft. Even if approved, area variance relief would remain required for the proposed infill of the dog-leg on the property.

ii. No Substantial Detriment to the Public Good

The requested lot occupancy relief and proposed expansion should not be detrimental to the public good. The addition would only have views towards the rear yard, and the small deck off the main level of the building is open and does not cast significant shadows on the adjacent properties.

iii. No Substantial Impairment to the Intent, Purpose, and Integrity of the Zoning Regulations

The requested relief and proposed additions would not appear to result in a building form, bulk, height or use unanticipated in the RF-1 zone. As such, the proposal does not appear to result in significant impairment to the intent or integrity of the zoning regulations.

Special Exception from Rear Yard – Subtitle E § 207, pursuant to E § 5201 and X § 901

5201.1 For an addition to a principal residential building 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 up to a maximum of seventy percent (70%) for all new and existing structures on the lot;*
- (b) Yards, including alley centerline setback;*
- (c) Courts; and*
- (d) Pervious surface.*

The application requests special exception relief for the rear yard.

5201.2 and 5201.3 Not applicable

5201.4 An applicant for special exception under this section shall demonstrate that the proposed addition, new building, or accessory structure 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 light and air available to adjacent properties should not be unduly affected. The dog-leg infill would not create significant shadows on the adjacent property, and the proposed deck is uncovered and should not obstruct light and airflow for the neighboring properties.

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

The proposed addition should not unduly impact the privacy available to neighboring properties. Views from the proposed infill addition would be directed to the rear of the subject property and not into the neighboring properties. The proposed deck is limited to the first floor of the dwelling and should not impact privacy and use of the neighboring property.

(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

The proposed rear additions would not be visible from the street and the property is not located along a rear alley. The applicant has provided photos of other properties in the area with similarly sized rear decks off the main level of the building.

(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 application materials include plans, elevations, photos and site plans.

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 recommends no special treatments.

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.*

Granting relief would not result in the introduction of a nonconforming use. The applicant plans to maintain the existing residential flat.

Subtitle X § 901.2

901.2 (a) *[Granting the special exception] Will be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps;*

The proposed dog leg infill would not extend beyond the existing rear wall of the building. The proposed deck would not extend beyond the depth of the existing stair landing. Granting the requested rear yard relief should not impair the intent of the Regulations - to ensure open space on a lot, and to facilitate adequate light and

air both to the subject property and to adjacent properties. Granting the relief should not diminish those factors. The building with the proposed addition would remain within the permitted height, should not result in undue impacts to light, air or privacy, and would not result in a scale or intensity of use beyond that anticipated by the zone. Similarly, the proposed deck would not be covered or enclosed, and should not impact light and air for surrounding properties.

901.2(b) *[Granting the special exception] 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 for rear yard would not appear to adversely affect the use of the neighboring property. There should be no undue impacts regarding factors such as light, air or privacy.

V. COMMENTS OF OTHER DISTRICT AGENCIES

As of the filing of this report, there are no comments from other District agencies in the record.

VI. ANC COMMENTS

There is a letter of support from ANC 6B in [Exhibit 22](#).

VII. COMMUNITY COMMENTS

There are two letters of support from community members at Exhibits 10 and 21.

VIII. VICINITY MAP

