

## **MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Board of Zoning Adjustment for the District of Columbia

**FROM:** Philip Isaiah, Development Review Specialist *PA*

**DATE:** January 22, 2026

**SUBJECT:** BZA Case 21407: Request for special exception relief to allow a rear open deck on a rowhouse.

### **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:

- Subtitle D § 207.1, Minimum required rear yard (20 ft. required, 30.0 ft. existing; 14.0 ft. proposed)

### **II. LOCATION AND SITE DESCRIPTION**

<b>Address:</b>	1325 Sheridan Street, NW
<b>Applicants:</b>	Michael and Nicole Murali
<b>Legal Description:</b>	Square 2788, Lot 91
<b>Ward / ANC:</b>	Ward 4 / ANC 4A
<b>Zone:</b>	R-3
<b>Historic Districts:</b>	N/A
<b>Lot Characteristics:</b>	This interior lot has an area of 1,656 sq. ft. and a lot width of 18 feet which is undersized for its zone where the requirements are 2,000 sq ft and 20 feet, respectively.
<b>Existing Development:</b>	The subject property is developed with a two-story, brick single family, row dwelling built in 1936. There is an existing doorway on the west side of the rear wall in the location where the rear deck is proposed.
<b>Adjacent Properties:</b>	The subject property is the middle unit on a row of 5 dwellings. Several of the neighboring dwellings also contain rear wood or composite open decks at approximately 8 feet in height. The subject rear yard is separated from adjacent properties with a 6-foot wooden, board on board fence.

<b>Surrounding Neighborhood Character:</b>	The block contains single family, row and semi-detached dwellings in the R-3 zone. North of the subject property are single family detached dwellings zoned R-1B. These properties have longer required rear yards as well as visual separation from the subject property's rear yard by existing fencing, vegetation, and detached garages.
<b>Proposed Development:</b>	The applicant requests a special exception to construct an open deck, 14.0 feet from the rear lot line where the required rear yard is 20 feet. The proposal includes a 12 ft. by 16 ft. deck with a 4 foot by 16-foot staircase to the east that leads down to ground level (16 ft. by 16ft. in total). The open deck would be 8 feet in height with a 3-foot fascia atop.

### III. ZONING REQUIREMENTS and RELIEF REQUESTED

<b>R-3 Zone</b>	<b>Regulation</b>	<b>Existing</b>	<b>Proposed</b>	<b>Relief</b>
Lot Width D § 202.1	20 ft. min.	18 ft.	No change	None requested
Lot Area D § 202	2,000 sq. ft. min.	1,656 sq. ft.	No change	None requested
Height D § 203	40 ft. max.	26.0 ft.	26.0 ft.	None requested
Front Setback D § 206	In-line with neighboring properties	30 ft.	No Change	None requested
Rear Yard D § 207	20 ft. min.	30.0 ft.	14.0 ft.	<b>Relief Requested</b>
Lot Occupancy D § 210	60% max.	44%.	60%	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.*
- (b) Yards, including alley centerline setback; and*
- (c) Pervious surface.*

The applicant requests to reduce the required rear yard from 20-feet to 14-feet. Standard (b) is applicable.

*5201.2 & 5201.3 not applicable*

*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 deck would be open in nature with no roof, screens, or walls and measure 16x16 feet in area including the proposed stairs. Thus, the proposed addition is small enough such that no further offsite shadows are anticipated other than that already caused by the existing dwelling. This standard is met.

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

Rear open decks are customary along the subject block at the same height as the subject proposal. The subject deck would not interfere with the use or enjoyment of neighboring properties.

*(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*

While the subject deck will be visible from the rear public alley, the deck would be in a similar location, height, and design as the open decks on adjacent dwellings. Thus, significant visual impact is not anticipated from the proposed relief.

*(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 and elevations at Exhibit 5 of the record and photographs at Exhibit 7.

*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.*

The subject proposal is open in nature and similar to existing decks. OP does not propose any special treatment.

*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 property will be used as a residential dwelling, which is a permitted use in the R-3 Zone. This standard is met.

#### **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 applicant proposes to construct a slightly larger rear open deck than that which formally existing on the site. The enlargement would not create more density than otherwise permitted in the zone, nor establish any otherwise nonpermitted use. This standard is met.

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

The proposed open rear deck would encroach 6 feet into the required rear yard and be located at the elevated first floor of the dwelling in a typical location compared to the neighboring dwellings on a lot substandard for its zone. Other than the required rear yard, the proposal meets all other applicable development standards for its zone. This standard is met.

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

The subject application has adequately addressed the criteria for special exception review.

#### **V. OTHER DISTRICT AGENCIES**

While no other District agency has filed comments in the record at the filing of this report, The District Department of Transportation (DDOT) has notified OP staff that it takes no objection to the subject application.

#### **VI. ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION**

No testimony from ANC 4A has been supplied to the record.

#### **VII. COMMUNITY COMMENTS**

No community testimony has been supplied to the record.

**Location Map:**

