

BEFORE THE D.C. BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT

1518 Residences at Metropolitan AME Church

Case No. 21428

1518 M Street NW · Square 0197, Lot 86 · D-6 Zone

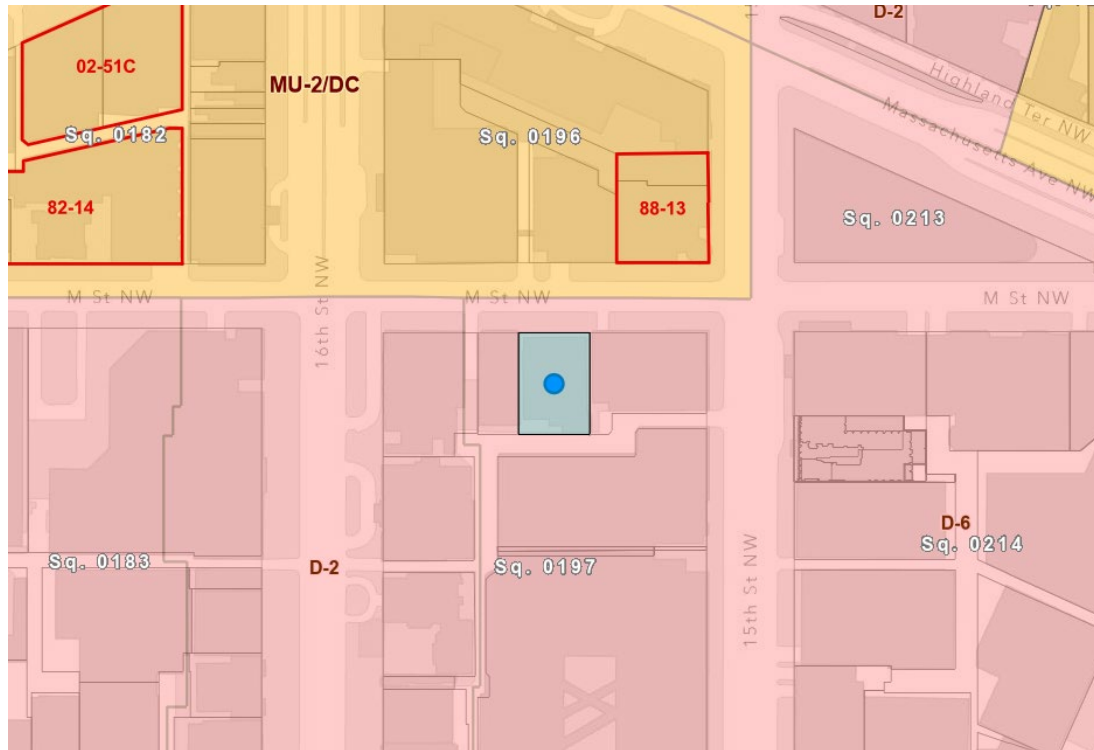
HEARING DATE June 10, 2026

PRESENTED BY Eric DeBear · Cozen O'Connor



PROPOSED ADDITION BEHIND THE CHURCH

Zoning Map



SUBJECT PROPERTY — SQUARE 0197, LOT 86 (D-6 ZONE)

D-6

High-density downtown zone

- Mid-block on M Street NW, between 15th and 16th Streets NW
- Bordered by D-6, MU-2/DC, and D-2 zones
- Surrounded by 11–12 story downtown buildings
- Transit-rich, highly walkable location (Walk Score 98)

Existing Conditions



METROPOLITAN AME CHURCH — LANDMARK (1886)



AERIAL VIEW — 1518 M STREET NW

Landmarked sanctuary

The 30,000 sf gothic-revival church (1886) is a designated historic landmark occupying most of the lot.

Constrained buildable area

Only a shallow, narrow area remains at the rear, fronting a 28-ft public alley.

■ THE CHURCH

Metropolitan AME Church

One of the oldest historically Black congregations in Washington, DC that has been a sacred witness committed to worship, liberation, and service to the most vulnerable for nearly 190 years .

■ WHY HOUSING FOR VETERANS

- D.C.'s population of unhoused military veterans is growing, and they face steep barriers to housing including mental health, affordability, and trauma.
- Permanent, dignified housing reflects the Church's mission to empower the marginalized and restore dignity — to “care for the least of these.”
- Metropolitan has always reached beyond its sanctuary walls to meet the community's social, spiritual, and material needs.
- Using church-owned land advances the District's goals: affordable housing, reduced number of unhoused veterans, and new downtown housing.



“To care for the least of these.”

The gospel imperative guiding the Church's mission

■ THE APPLICANT

Daniel Alexander Payne Community Development Corporation

Metropolitan AME's community development arm since 1998, operating as a separate nonprofit organization.

DAPCDC's mission is to strengthen communities through education, economic empowerment, community development, and service initiatives. Over the years it has sponsored a broad range of community-serving programs, including those listed on the right.

Metropolitan owns the property associated with the proposed development site, while DAPCDC has served as the lead entity for project exploration and pre-development activities. This partnership reflects the shared commitment of both organizations to balancing mission impact with responsible stewardship.

In this capacity, the CDC is authorized to act on behalf of the Church in connection with this zoning application.

COMMUNITY-SERVING PROGRAMS

- **Financial & Economic Empowerment**
Building wealth and economic stability
- **Visual & Literary Arts**
Cultural and creative programming
- **Public Affairs & Civic Engagement**
Promoting civic participation and economic justice
- **Health & Wellness**
Improving access to care
- **Youth STEM Education**
Expanding opportunity in science and technology

■ THE PROJECT

Project Overview

The 1518 Residences at Metropolitan is a proposed development to create 27 permanent supportive housing units for formerly unhoused veterans on church-owned property behind Metropolitan AME Church.

The 1518 Residences at Metropolitan represents the most significant real estate development effort undertaken by DAPCDC and reflects the organization's commitment to addressing community challenges through innovative and mission-centered approaches. The proposed building would be a 12-story residential structure of 17,393 square feet, designed to provide safe, stable housing along with access to supportive services that help veterans maintain long-term housing stability. The project is currently in the pre-development phase, during which the Church and DAPCDC are evaluating the project's feasibility, risks, governance implications, and alignment with the Church's mission and stewardship responsibilities.

27

APARTMENT UNITS

17,393

SF OF NEW GFA

109 ft

BUILDING HEIGHT

12

STORIES



PROPOSED RESIDENCE — STREET VIEW

■ COMMUNITY & AGENCY OUTREACH

ANC 2C

VOTED UNANIMOUSLY IN SUPPORT

Presented for background on Dec. 9, 2025, and for a vote on Jan. 13, 2026. The ANC voted unanimously in support. Exhibit 17, FILED.

Office of Planning (OP)

SUPPORTS ALL THREE AREAS OF RELIEF

OP filed its report recommending approval of all three areas of relief. Exhibit 24, filed May 29, 2026.

HPRB

CONCEPT REVIEW APPROVED

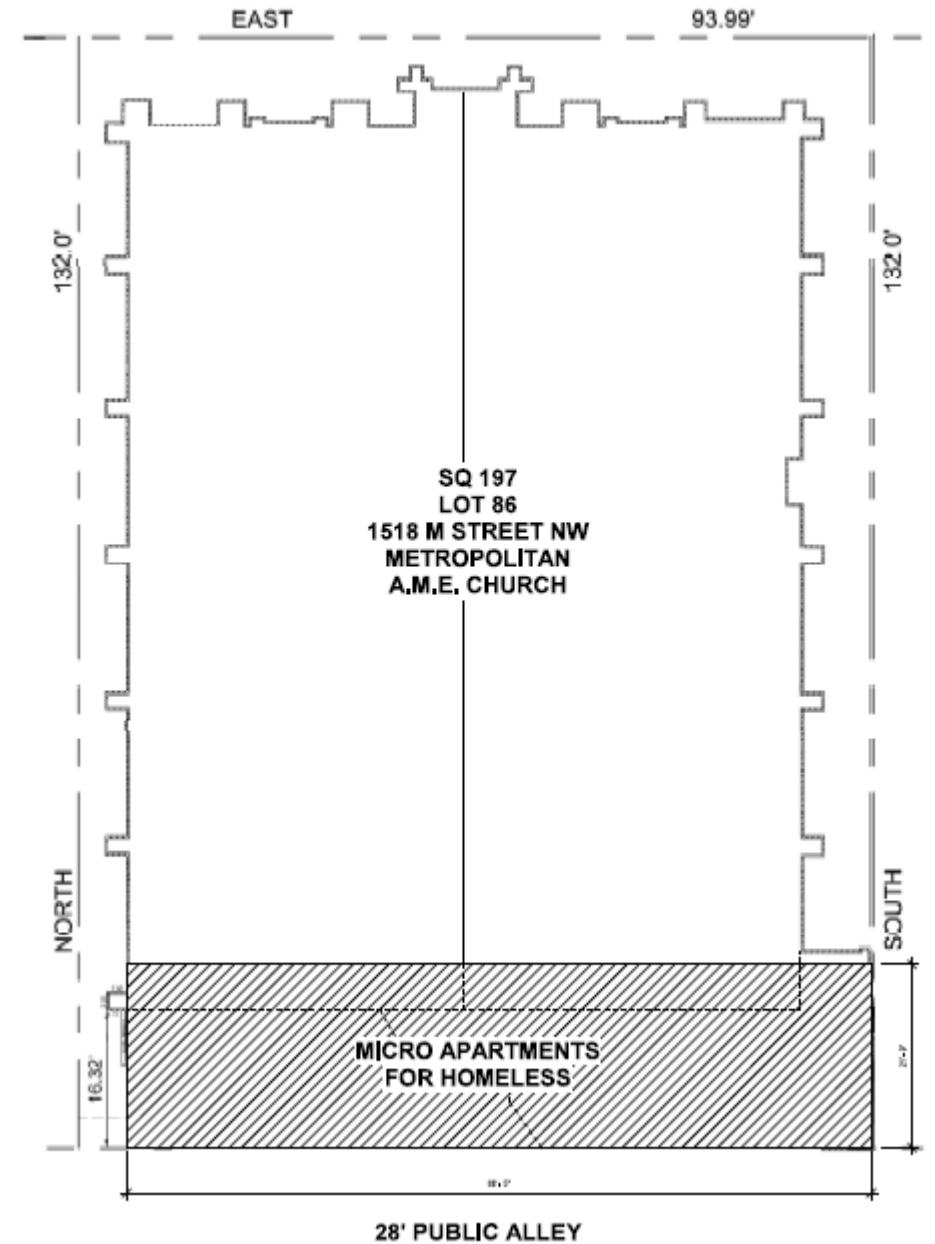
The Historic Preservation Review Board approved concept review for the Project at its December 2025 meeting.

DDOT

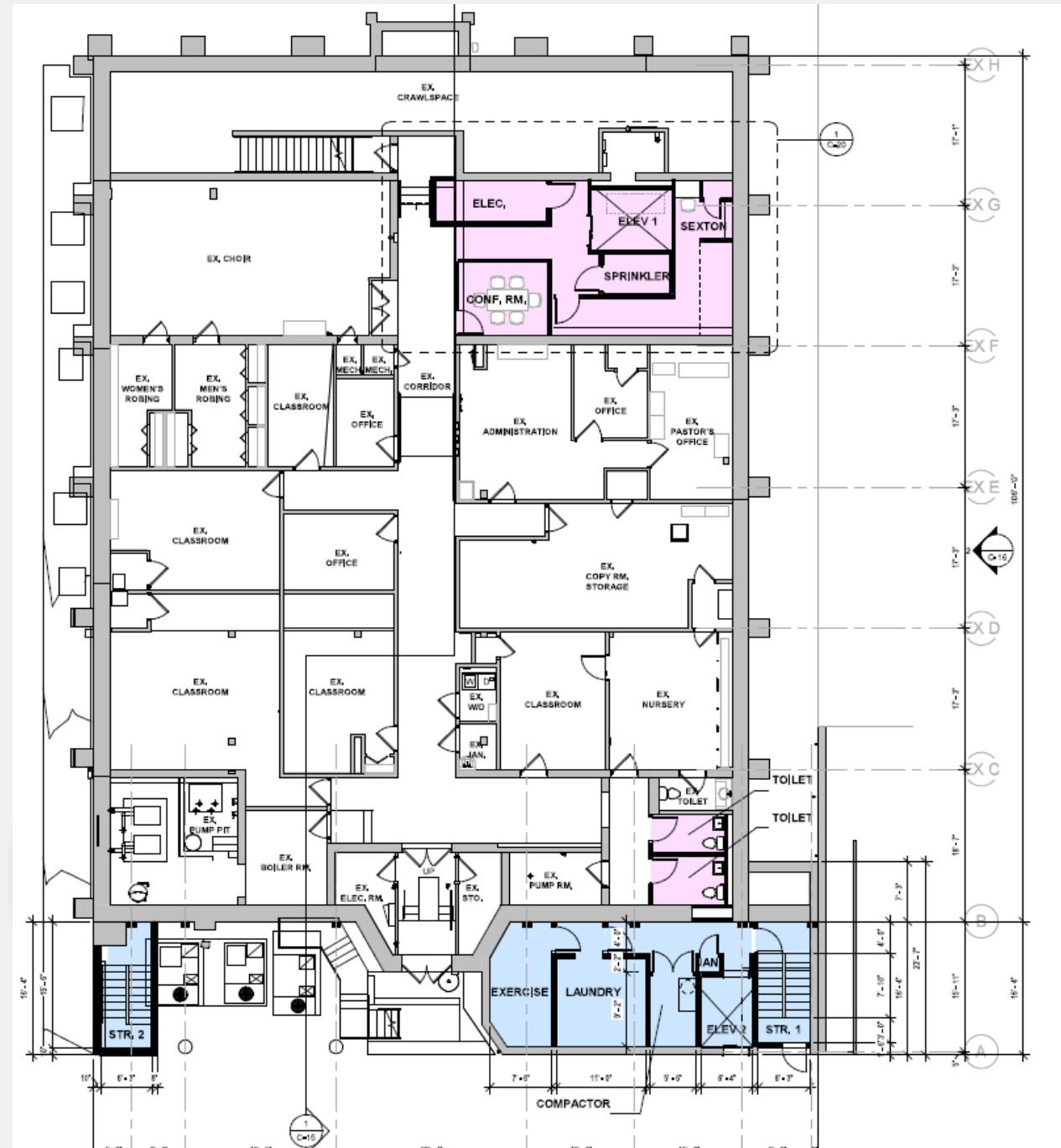
No Objection

DDOT filed its report on June 3rd, 2026. The Applicant agrees to DDOT's condition to add a fourth short-term bicycle parking space. Exhibit 25.

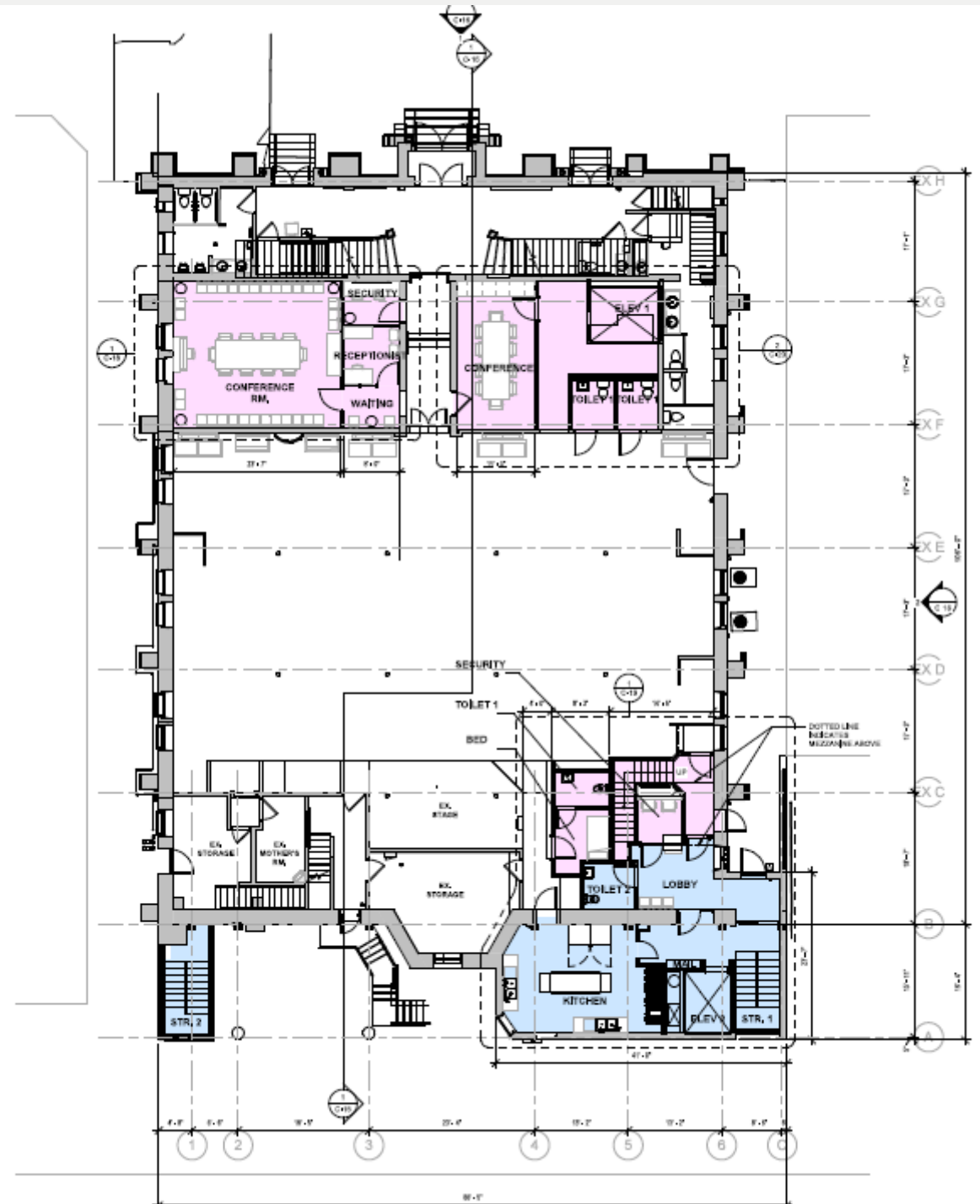
Site Plan



Basement Floor Plan



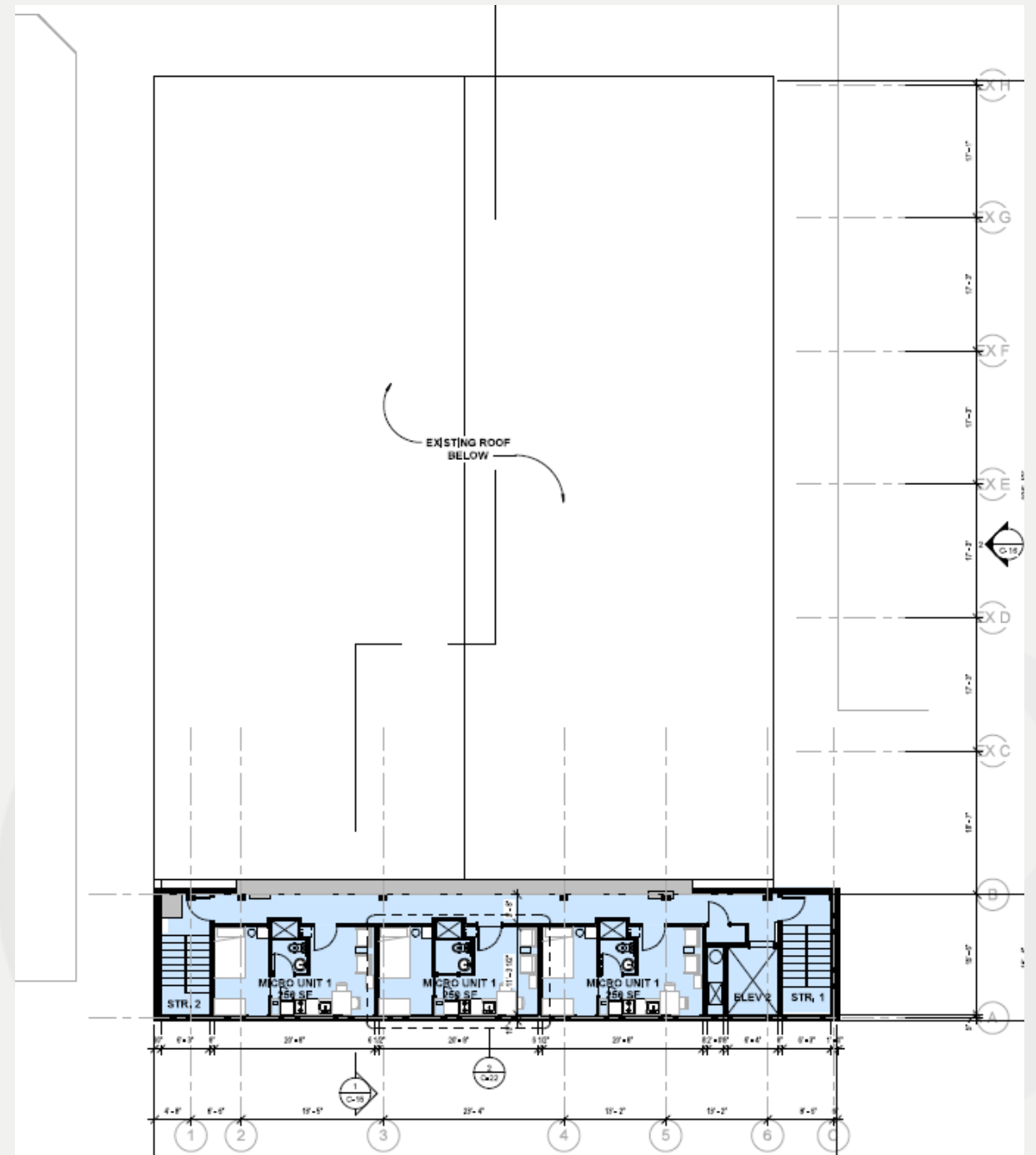
First Floor Plan



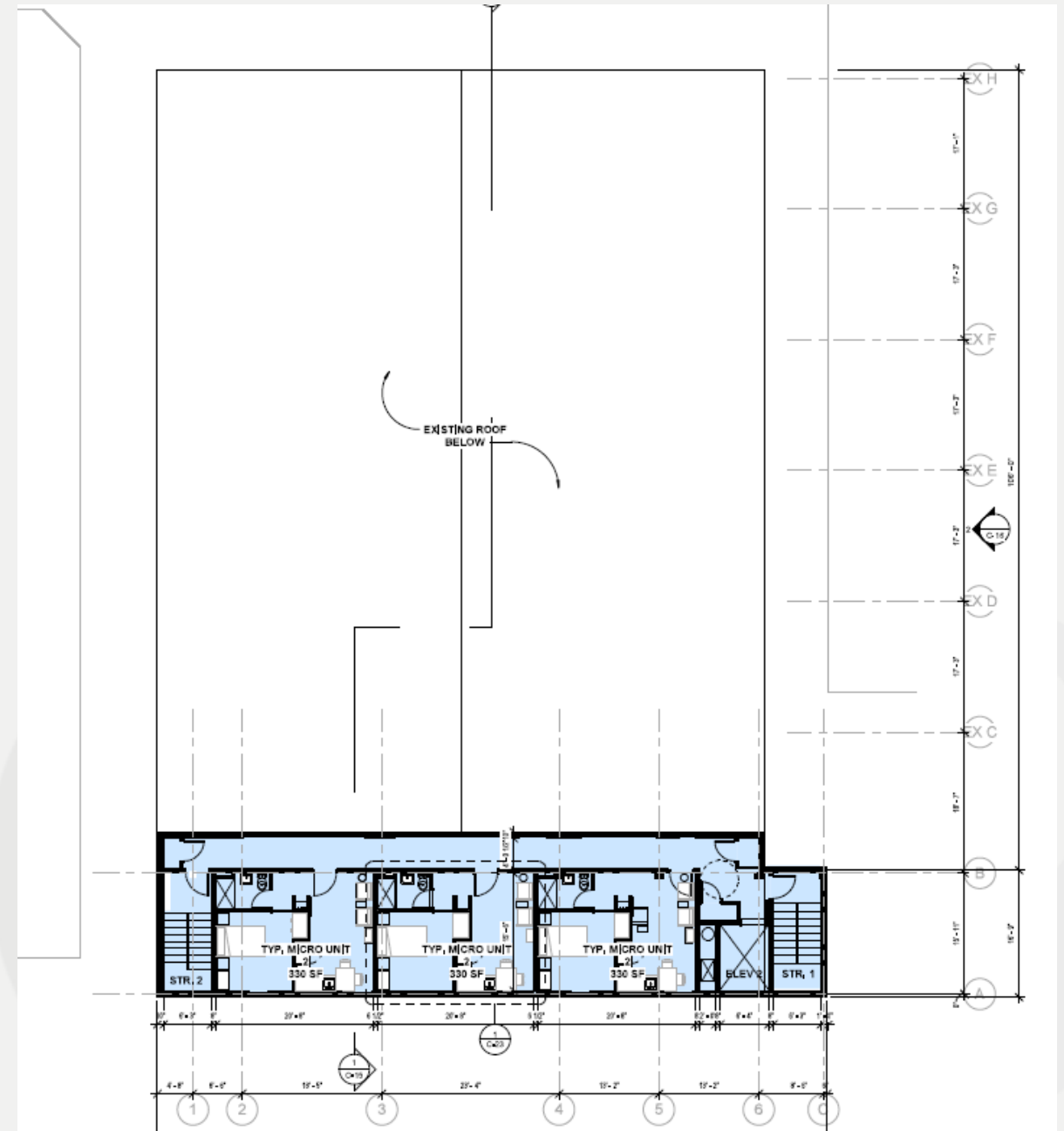




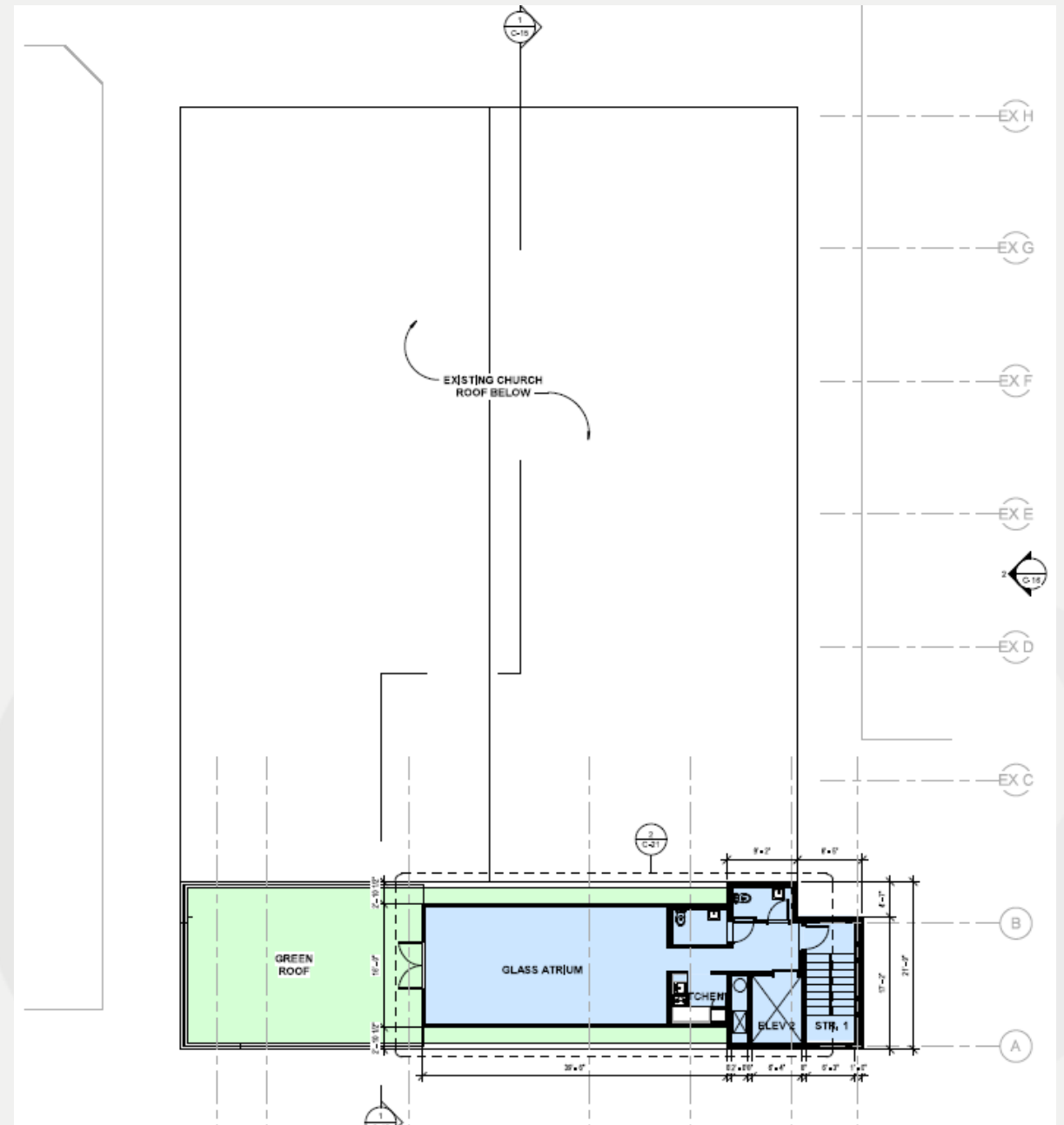
Floors 6–9 Typical Residential



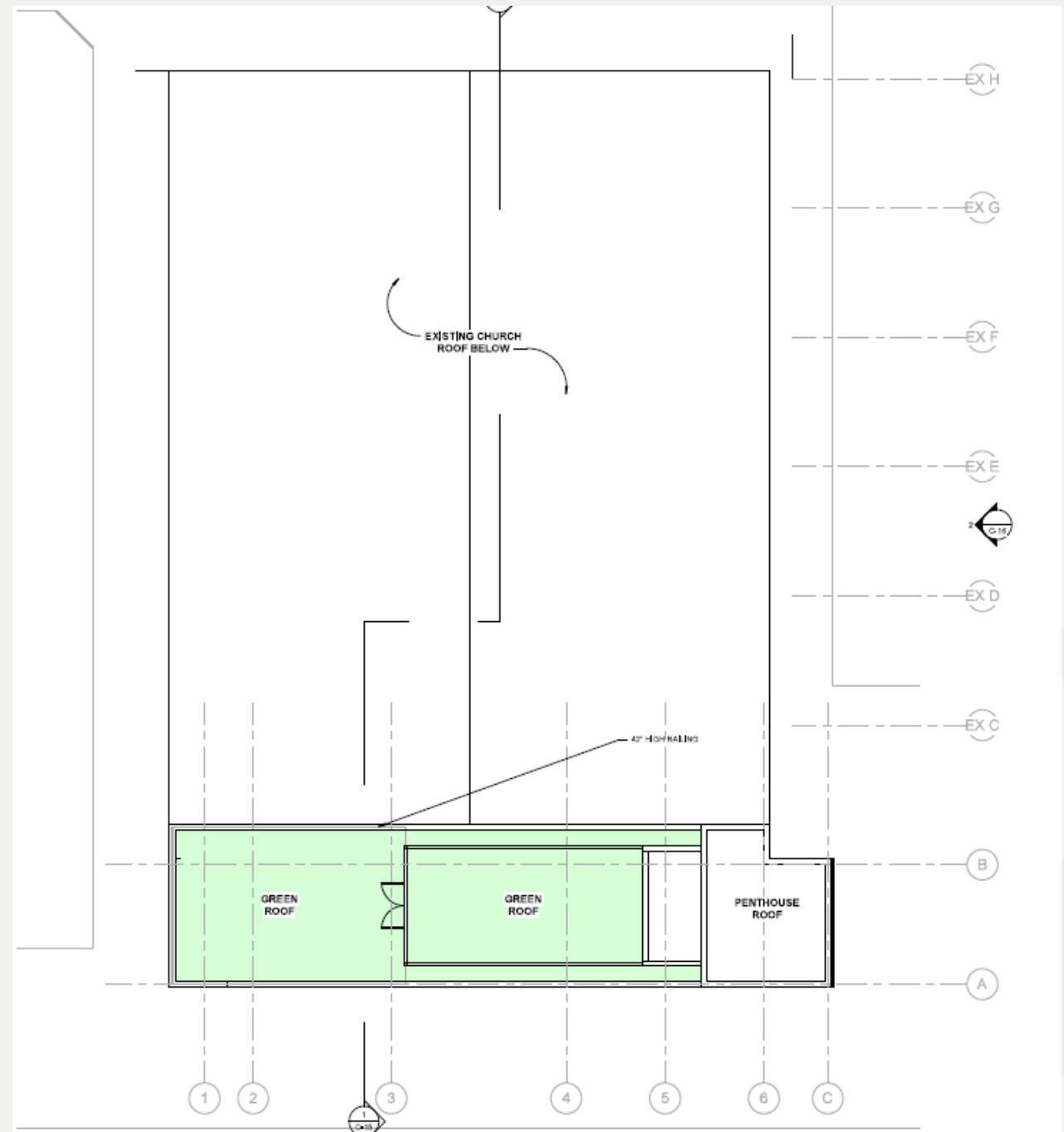
Floors 10–12 Typical Residential



Penthouse Floor Plan



Roof Plan



Proposed Residence Renderings



REAR ADDITION — STREETScape CONTEXT



ADDITION BEHIND THE LANDMARKED CHURCH

■ SUMMARY

Relief Requested

AREA VARIANCE

Rear Yard

Subtitle I § 205.1

17.5 ft

REQUIRED

12 ft

PROVIDED (TO ALLEY CL)

5.5 ft

RELIEF

SPECIAL EXCEPTION

Penthouse Setbacks

Subtitle C §§ 1502.1(c), 1506.1

16 ft

REQUIRED (1:1)

0 ft

PROVIDED

16 ft

RELIEF

SPECIAL EXCEPTION

Long-Term Bicycle Parking

Subtitle C § 807.2

9

REQUIRED (1 PER 3 UNITS)

0

PROVIDED (4 SHORT-TERM)

9

RELIEF

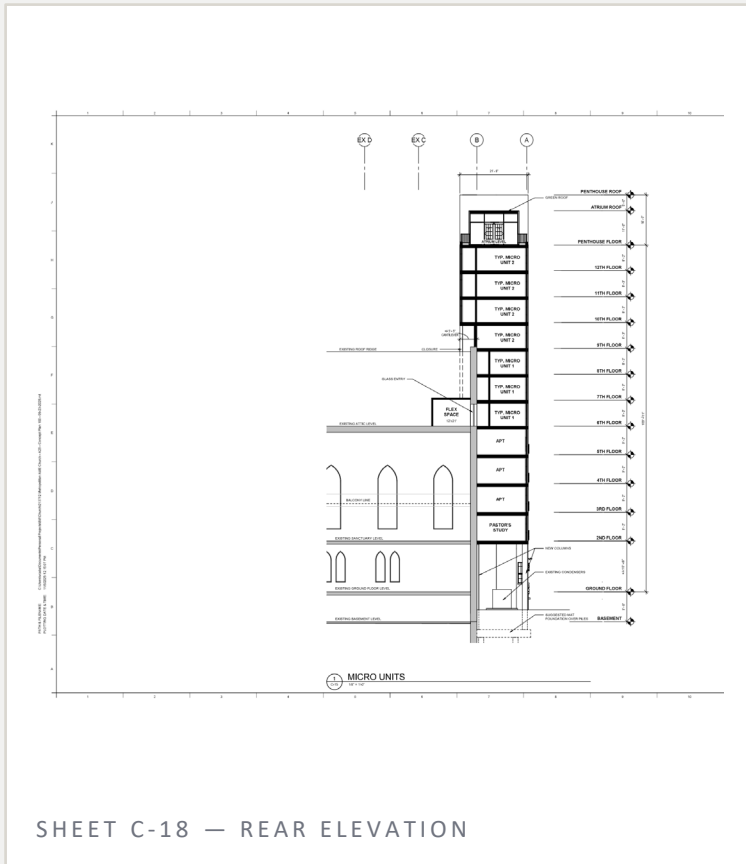
Variance Standard

Under 11-X DCMR § 1002.1, the Board may grant area-variance relief where the applicant demonstrates all three:

- 1 The Property is affected by an extraordinary or exceptional situation or condition;
- 2 Strict application of the Zoning Regulations would result in a practical difficulty to the applicant; and
- 3 The relief can be granted without substantial detriment to the public good and without substantially impairing the intent, purpose, and integrity of the zoning regulations and map.

A more flexible standard applies. As a public-service project, the Board may apply a more flexible standard in weighing the variance. *Neighbors for Responsive Gov't v. D.C. BZA*, 195 A.3d 35, 56 (D.C. 2018); *Monaco v. D.C. BZA*, 407 A.2d 1091, 1097 (1979).

Rear Yard Relief — Required Findings



1

Exceptional situation or condition

A landmarked historic church occupies most of the lot, leaving an unusually shallow, narrow buildable area for any new construction — in a high-density downtown zone.

2

Strict application imposes practical difficulty

Compliance with the full rear-yard requirement would shrink the already narrow footprint, eliminate inhabitable units, and render the project infeasible.

3

No detriment / no impairment of the Zone Plan

The relief supports high-density residential use in the D-6 zone, aligns with the District's downtown-housing policy, mirrors relief otherwise available by special exception, and is consistent with recent BZA precedent for constrained historic sites.

Special Exception Standard

Under Subtitle X § 901.2, the Board must find that the requested relief:

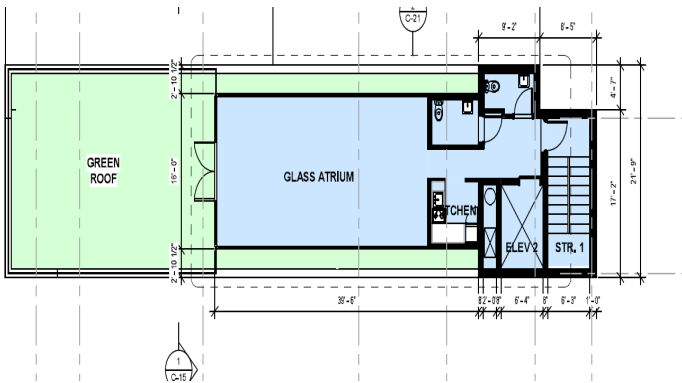
1 Is in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and Maps;

2 Will not tend to adversely affect the use of neighboring property; and

3 Complies with the special conditions specified in the Zoning Regulations for the relief.

Relief meeting these conditions is presumed appropriate and compatible — once the applicant meets its burden, the Board must ordinarily grant the application.

Penthouse Setback — Required Findings



SHEET C-13 — PENTHOUSE FLOOR PLAN

1

Harmony with zoning purpose and intent

The relief enables a high-density residential project on a constrained historic site — including an atrium needed for supportive-housing programming — without increasing height, bulk, or visible massing beyond what the zone anticipates.

2

No adverse impact on surrounding properties

The penthouse sits at the rear, is not visible from M Street, and is surrounded by tall downtown office buildings — no material impact to light, air, or privacy.

3

Meets special conditions (Subtitle C § 1506.1)

A 1:1 setback would limit the penthouse to ~7 ft — insufficient for code-compliant mechanical space. The proposed height is the shortest feasible configuration for required life-safety, elevator, and resident-service functions.

Bike Parking Relief — Required Findings

1

Harmony with zoning purpose and intent

The relief lets limited building area serve housing and supportive services rather than unused parking — supporting high-density residential use in a transit-rich D-6 zone.

2

No adverse impact on surrounding properties

Residents are predominantly older veterans unlikely to use bicycles. Given the downtown location, extensive transit access, and the short-term spaces provided, the absence of long-term parking has no adverse effect.

3

Meets special conditions (Subtitle C § 807.3)

The relief is limited to what the site's physical constraints and the minimal demand of the resident population require, while retaining short-term bicycle parking — including a fourth short-term space added per DDOT's condition.



Questions?

The Applicant respectfully requests that the Board grant the requested variance and special-exception relief.