

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Board of Zoning Adjustment for the District of Columbia  
**FROM:** Philip Y. A. Isaiah, Development Review Specialist  
MBR  
 Maxine Brown-Roberts, Associate Director, Development Review  
**DATE:** April 29, 2026

**SUBJECT:** BZA Case 21436, Request for area variance and special exception relief to permit expansion of a structure associated with a religious-based institution and a theoretical lot subdivision at 313 2<sup>nd</sup> St, NE.

**I. OFFICE OF PLANNING RECOMMENDATION**

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

- Subtitle C § 302.1, Subdivision Regulations, (1 primary building permitted per record lot; 4 primary buildings proposed) pursuant to Subtitles C § 305.1 and X § 901.

The Office of Planning (OP) recommends **approval** of the following area variance relief:

- Subtitle C § 305.3 (a). theoretical subdivision rear yard requirements, (4 in. per foot, minimum 15 ft. required; N/A existing; 7 ft. 3 in. (church) and 6 feet (parish hall) proposed) pursuant to Subtitle X § 1002; and
- Subtitle C § 305.3 (b), theoretical subdivision vehicular ingress/egress width requirements, (24 ft. required; 12 ft. existing; 12 ft. proposed) pursuant to Subtitle X § 1002.

**II. LOCATION AND SITE DESCRIPTION**

Address	313 2 <sup>nd</sup> Street, NE
Applicant	St. Joseph’s on Capitol Hill Catholic Church, Inc. represented by Goulston & Storres
Legal Description	Square 756, Lots 47, 52, 827, and 828
Ward, ANC	Ward 6; ANC 6C
Zone	RA-2/CAP
Historic District	Capitol Hill Historic District
Lot Characteristics	The subject property has an area of 46,088 square feet and currently consists of multiple parcels, including Tax Lot 827, Tax Lot 828 (formed pursuant to alley closing SO 24-00310, approved April 24, 2025), and Record Lots 47 (adjacent to the rear alley) and 52 (fronting C St. NE).

<p>Existing Development</p>	<p>The property is developed with five main structures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a contributing brick and stone sided St. Josephs church built in 1888;</li> <li>- the Madonna House, a notable-contributing, three-story, brick-sided building constructed in 1921;</li> <li>- a two-story brick-sided rectory built in 1887 with a 1925 southeastern addition;</li> <li>- the current Parish Center, originally a garage built in the 1920s; and</li> <li>- Carriage House, a two-story structure built in 1903.</li> </ul> <p>The northern portion of the property contains a surface parking lot with vehicular access provided by an existing 12-foot-wide driveway from 2nd Street, NE that traverses around the rectory. It should be noted that the rear of the existing church is located 7 ft. 3 in. from the side of the existing Madonna House and that the existing carriage house is located 6 feet from the eastern lot line adjacent to Walter Alley.</p>
<p>Adjacent Properties</p>	<p>To the east, north, and south of the site are rowhouses and low-rise apartment buildings. The property to the southwest is federally owned and contains the Hart Senate Office Building with its associated surface parking directly to the west of the subject property.</p>
<p>Surrounding Neighborhood Character</p>	<p>The surrounding area is located in the Capital Interest District (CID). The area is also located in the northeastern corner of the Capital Hill Historic District. While the surrounding area to the south and east is predominately residential and zoned RA-2/CAP, the character along D Street and Massachusetts Avenue to the north transitions to a more commercial setting with retail, service, and eating and drinking establishments zoned MU-4/CAP/CHC.</p>
<p>Proposed Development</p>	<p>The applicant proposes to remove the existing one-story parish center and expand the existing two-story carriage house to create a new Parish Hall. The structure would be 29 ft. 2 in. tall and contain red brick façade with vertical elements and an adjoining courtyard. The structure will contain a community hall, kitchen, choir room, and meeting rooms.</p> <p>The applicant also proposes to combine the subject property into a single Record Lot with four theoretical lots for the church building, rectory, Madonna House, and the new parish hall, respectively.</p> <p>To create the theoretical lot subdivision, the applicant requests variance relief to retain 3 already existing aspects on the property that do not meet the required development standards under Subtitle C § 305.3 of the Zoning Regulations: 1) to permit the church building 7 ft. 3 in. from the rear lot line of theoretical Lot A where the required rear yard is at least 15 feet; 2) to permit the new parish hall 6 feet from the rear lot line of theoretical Lot D where the required rear yard is at least 15 feet; and, 3) to permit the means of vehicular ingress/egress to remain at 12 feet in width where the minimum required width is 24 feet.</p>

**III. ZONING REQUIREMENTS and RELIEF REQUESTED**

<b>Zone- RA-2/CAP</b>	<b>Regulation</b>	<b>Existing</b>	<b>Proposed</b>	<b>Relief</b>
Density, F § 201	1.8 FAR max.	0.57 FAR	0.62 FAR	None requested
Lot Width, F § 202	40 ft. min.	224 ft	No change	None requested
Lot Area, F § 202	4,000 sq. ft. min.	46,088 sq. ft.	No change	None requested
Height, F § 401.1	40 ft. max.	22 ft. (Existing Carriage House)	29 ft. 2 in. (New Parish Hall)	None requested
<b>Rear Yard, F § 207</b>	<b>4 inches per 1 foot of principal building height – no less than 15 ft.</b>	N/A	<b>7 ft. 3 in. (Church)</b> 16 ft. 5 in. (Rectory) 15 ft. 6 in. (Madonna House) <b>6 feet (Parish Hall)</b>	<b>Area Variance Requested</b>
Side Yard, F § 208	None, or 4 ft. min. if provided	N/A	0 ft. (Church) 32 ft. 6 in. (Rectory) 9 ft. 3 in. (Madonna House) 22 ft. 1 in. (Parish Hall)	None requested
Lot Occupancy, F § 210	60 % max.	35.0%	38.0%	None requested
Vehicular Parking C § 701	1 space per 10 seats	57	No change	None requested
<b>Vehicular Ingress/Egress for Theoretical Lots C § 305.3 (b)</b>	<b>24 ft. min. width</b>	<b>12 feet</b>	<b>12 feet (no change)</b>	<b>Area Variance Requested</b>

#### IV. OFFICE OF PLANNING ANALYSIS

##### A. SPECIAL EXCEPTION FOR A THEORETICAL SUBDIVISION

###### i. C § 305 Theoretical Subdivisions Relief

305.1 *In the R, RF, and RA zones, the Board of Zoning Adjustment may grant, through special exception, a waiver of Subtitle C § 302.1 to allow multiple primary buildings on a single record lot provided that, in addition to the general special exception criteria of Subtitle X, Chapter 9, the requirements of this section are met.*

The applicant has applied for a special exception to permit 4 primary buildings on a single record lot. This standard is applicable.

305.2 *The number of buildings permitted by this section shall not be limited; provided, satisfactory evidence is submitted that all the requirements of this section are met based on a plan of theoretical subdivision where individual theoretical lots serve as boundaries for assessment of compliance with the Zoning Regulations.*

The applicant has provided a plan of theoretical subdivision where the 4 buildings are contained within their own theoretical lots.

305.3 *The following development standards shall apply to theoretical lots:*

(a) *Side and rear yards of a theoretical lot shall be consistent with the requirements of the zone;*

The applicant has applied for an area variance to permit substandard rear yards on Theoretical Lots A and D, for which OP analysis is provided below. All other yards meet the applicable standards for the RA-2/CAP zone.

(b) *Each means of vehicular ingress and egress to any principal building shall be at least twenty-four feet (24 ft.) in width, exclusive of driveways;*

The applicant has applied for an area variance to retain the existing 12 foot wide vehicular ingress/egress, for which OP analysis is provided below.

(c) *The height of a building governed by the provisions of this section shall be measured from the finished grade at the middle of the building façade facing the nearest street lot line; and*

The proposed Parish Hall will be 29 feet 2 in. and 2 stories in height where the maximum permitted height is 40 feet and 3 stories. This standard is met.

(d) *The rule of height measurement in Subtitle C § 305.3(c) shall supersede any other rules of height measurement that apply to a zone, but shall not be followed if it conflicts with the Height Act.*

The proposed Parish Hall meets height requirements for its zone.

305.4 *For a theoretical subdivision application, the following information is required to be submitted to the Board of Zoning Adjustment, in addition to other filing requirements pursuant to Subtitle Y § 300:*

- (a) *Site plans including the following information:*
- (1) *A plat of the record lots proposed for subdivision;*
  - (2) *The location of proposed streets and designated fire apparatus roads;*
  - (3) *Location of proposed easements;*
  - (4) *Lot lines of proposed theoretical lots, and the delineation of the lot lines shared by theoretical lots that will serve as private drives or easements;*
  - (5) *Existing grading and proposed grading plans;*
  - (6) *Existing landscaping and proposed landscaping plans, including the sizes and locations of all trees on or adjacent to the property on public or private lands;*
  - (7) *Plans for the location of building footprints on theoretical lots; and*
  - (8) *Required yards (rear, side and front) based on the regulations applicable to a zone or any modifications to regulations provided through this section;*
- (b) *Typical or individual floor plans and elevations for the proposed buildings and structures; and*
- (c) *A table of zoning information including required and proposed development standards.*

The applicant has supplied a site plan with a zoning table and floorplans to the record at Exhibits [4A1](#) and [4A2](#).

305.5 *Before taking final action on an application under this section, the Board of Zoning Adjustment shall refer the application to the Office of Planning for coordination, review, and report, including:*

- (a) *The relationship of the proposed development to the overall purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations, and other planning considerations for the area and the District of Columbia as a whole, including the plans, programs, and policies of other departments and agencies of the District government; provided, that the planning considerations that are addressed shall include, but not be limited to:*
- (1) *Public safety relating to police and fire concerns including emergency vehicle access;*

The subject property is a corner lot with additional access provided by a 10 foot public alley at the rear of the proposed Parish Hall as well as a 12 foot wide private driveway accessible from 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, NE, which should provide adequate access for fire and EMT services.

(2) *The environment relating to water supply, water pollution, soil erosion, and solid waste management;*

The project associated with this application is a modest expansion within an already developed site covered by significant impervious surface. This application should have no adverse effects on water supply, water quality, soil stability, or solid waste systems, and should not intensify environmental demands.

(3) *Public education;*

No new residences are proposed. No impact to the public education system is anticipated.

(4) *Recreation;*

While no public recreational amenities are located within a half mile of the site, no new residences are proposed under this application.

(5) *Parking, loading, and traffic;*

The existing surface parking lot provides adequate parking for the proposed uses.

(6) *Urban design; and*

The United States Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) reviewed the application at its regular meeting on April 17, 2025 and approved the concept design associated with this application finding it to be appropriate for its proximity to the Capital Hill Historic Campus.

(7) *As appropriate, historic preservation and visual impacts on adjacent parkland;*

The Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB) reviewed this application at its regular meeting on May 1, 2025, in which the Board approved the concept plan.

(b) *Considerations of site planning; the size, location, and bearing capacity of driveways; deliveries to be made to the site; side and rear setbacks; density and open space; and the location, design, and screening of structures;*

The modest southward expansion of the Parish Hall fits within the existing internal layout and preserves adequate separation between buildings and the alley network. The site's only driveway would continue to function at its 12-foot width (if the requested variance is approved), which is and will continue to be sufficient capacity for the limited, low-intensity deliveries associated with church operations. Density remains well below what is permitted in the RA-2/CAP zone, and open space is preserved, with no reduction to the existing landscaping onsite. The location and design of the new structure, consistent with HPRB and CFA approvals, would ensure

compatibility with the church campus and surrounding neighborhood character.

- (c) *Considerations of traffic to be generated and parking spaces to be provided, and their impacts;*

The project should generate minimal additional traffic or create little new parking demand, as the proposed Parish Hall will accommodate the same types of church and community activities that already occur on the site. The existing 57 parking spaces will remain unchanged, and the circulation pattern through the 12-foot driveway continues (if the requested variance is approved) to function adequately for the modest level of vehicle trips associated with church operations. As a result, the project is not expected to create adverse impacts on the surrounding street network or parking conditions.

- (d) *The impact of the proposed development on neighboring properties; and*

The proposed development is not expected to adversely impact neighboring properties, as the project maintains existing building relationships, preserves established setbacks, and introduces only a modest increase in building area within a fully developed church campus. The new Parish Hall remains well below the permitted height, does not intensify activity beyond long-standing church functions, and has received concept approval from both HPRB and the CFA for its compatibility with the surrounding historic context.

- (e) *The findings, considerations, and recommendations of other District government agencies.*

The subject project has received concept approval from both HPRB and CFA in 2025. The District Department of Transportation will provide a report under separate cover. OP's recommendation would be subject to any conditions recommended by DDOT.

- 305.6 *The proposed development shall comply with the substantive intent and purpose of this title and shall not be likely to have an adverse effect on the present character and future development of the neighborhood.*

The proposed development would be substantially in compliance with the intent and purpose of the Zoning Regulations because it maintains the longstanding institutional use of the site, respects established building patterns within the historic church campus and introduces only modest improvements that are compatible with the surrounding RA-2/CAP neighborhood. The Parish Hall's scale, height, and design, affirmed through HPRB and CFA concept approvals, ensure continuity with the area's character and would result in a limited increase in density and height. As a result, the proposal is consistent with the goals of the RA-2/CAP zone and is not likely to negatively impact the present or future character of the neighborhood.

305.7 *The Board of Zoning Adjustment may impose conditions with respect to the size and location of driveways; floor area ratio; height, design, screening, and location of structures; and any other matter that the Board determines to be required to protect the overall purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations.*

OP proposes no conditions pertaining to the above standard.

305.8 *Any modification to a theoretical subdivision application resulting from an addition to a one (1) dwelling unit building may be reviewed as an expedited review, pursuant to Subtitle Y, Chapter 4.*

Not applicable also this proposed application.

**ii. 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 and intent of the RA-2/CAP zone is to protect the public welfare of the U.S. Capitol precinct by providing heightened development controls for properties adjacent to the Capitol and ensuring uses and structures do not adversely affect the nationally significant area. The proposed development harmonizes with this purpose by maintaining a long-standing institutional use, remaining well within permitted height and density limits, and presenting a design that has received HPRB and CFA concept approval, thereby ensuring it respects the historic context and contributes positively to the character and function of the Capitol area.

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

The proposed development would not tend to adversely affect the use of neighboring properties, as it maintains established building relationships and activity levels on the church campus, Any additional shadow from the expanded Parish Hall would fall on other portions of the church property rather than on adjacent residential uses. While the increase in height may have some additional shadow on the structure on Lot 813, it should not be considered undue relative to the existing structure.

(c) *Will meet such special conditions as may be specified in this title.*

OP does not recommend special conditions for this application.

**Subtitle F § 403.1 SPECIAL EXCEPTION REVIEW STANDARDS FOR THE CAPITAL INTEREST RESIDENAL APARTMENT ZONE**

*403.1 In reviewing an application for a special exception in the RA-2/CAP zone, in addition to the applicable criteria of this subtitle and of Subtitle X, Chapter 9, the Board of Zoning Adjustment shall consider whether the proposed development is:*

- (a) Compatible with the present and proposed development of the neighborhood;*
- (b) Consistent with the goals and mandates of the United States Congress in title V of the Legislative Branch Appropriation Act, 1976 (Master Plan for Future Development of the Capitol Grounds and Related Areas), approved July 25, 1975 (Pub. L. No. 94-59, 89 Stat. 288); and*
- (c) In accordance with the plan promulgated under the Act.*

The proposed Parish Hall would maintain the existing institutional character of the church campus and remain compatible with the surrounding neighborhood. The addition is modest in height, consistent with nearby contributing buildings, and situated toward the interior of the property so that its visibility from public streets is limited, with primary views occurring from the alley where similar service-oriented and secondary structures are already present. The project will be reviewed by the Architect of the Capitol to ensure consistency with the goals and mandates of the Master Plan for Future Development of the Capitol Grounds and Related Areas.

**B. AREA VARIANCE RELIEF FROM SUBTITLE C § 305.3 (a) & (b)**

- i. Extraordinary or Exceptional Situation or Condition Resulting in Peculiar and Exceptional Practical Difficulties / Exceptional or Undue Hardship to the Property Owner*
  - a. Extraordinary or Exceptional Situation*

**REAR YARDS**

The rear wall of the church is located 7 feet 3 inches from the side wall of the Madonna House, and this application does not propose any alterations to either structure Exhibit 4A1, Sheet A004. Although only the Madonna House was constructed after the 1920 Zoning Enabling Act, the zoning regulations in effect at that time did not establish yard requirements, and thus the existing condition predates today’s zoning standards. Likewise, the carriage house on theoretical Lot D, built in 1903, also reflects the same condition. While the new Parish Hall would expand the old carriage house southward, the addition will not place the structure any closer to the rear lot line of theoretical Lot D than the existing building does today. Thus, location of the buildings on the lots predates current regulations. To meet the current standards would require reducing the building area, which is an exceptional situation for the applicant as it would damage the contributing building and due to its historic designation would likely not be permitted to move or reduce the size of the building.

**DRIVEWAY**

Access to the property from C Street is not possible due to the location of the church and the rectory and would require a new curb cut along C Street. For vehicular access, the sole 12-foot driveway is bordered by mature landscaping, trees, required mechanical equipment to service the church, and the rectory garden, making widening driveway infeasible without

substantial disturbance to site and building features Exhibit 4A1, Sheets A100 and A101. In addition to these physical constraints, the church's need to modernize its aging facilities with the needed additions Together, the historic, physical, and institutional constraints establish an exceptional situation affecting the property owner.

*ii. No Substantial Detriment to the Public Good*

#### REAR YARDS

The addition to the Parish Hall would be located at the rear of the theoretical subdivision behind several existing buildings and would remain subordinate in scale to the adjacent religious institution buildings. While the renovated structure will be taller in height, it would remain shorter in height than the church, rectory, and Madonna House. The expanded building would face an existing rear garage on Lot 804, and a 15-foot alley separates the rear lot line of Theoretical Lot D and the rears of Lots 19, 20, and 21, where garages and roll-up doors face the subject property. Thus, maintaining the current rear yard for the expansion should provide minimal visual impact to neighboring properties. Because this expansion projects to the west and south, minimal additional shadow should be cast on alley Lot 813, which appears to contain an office use.

No changes are proposed to the church building for which rear yard relief is requested. The non-conforming portion of the church building is located in the interior portion of the theoretical subdivision and the side lot line adjacent to C Street. will continue show corner of the church's street-facing wall about 28 feet away from the Madonna House, giving the appearance of a conforming setback from the street frontage.

#### DRIVEWAY

The vehicular entrance would continue to provide access to the surface parking lot for the religious institution and no other use or property. As curb-cut and driveway width would remain as it currently exist, there would be no detriment to the existing rectory, landscaping, sidewalk, or the special tree in the right-of-way. Neither would there be any impact to vehicular and pedestrian traffic along 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, NE.

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

The intent of the RA-2/CAP zone is to protect the U.S. Capitol area by applying stricter controls on development and land uses to safeguard public welfare, reflect the area's national importance, and limit uses that could negatively impact the Capitol precinct. A religious-based institution and clerical residence are uses which are permitted as a matter-of-right in this zone. The rear yard relief allows for the preservation of the layout of the existing legacy buildings on the site, would not introduce adverse light, air, or privacy impacts or compromise the integrity of the Capital Interest District. Maintaining the existing 12-foot wide vehicular ingress/egress driveway avoids the removal of mature trees and established landscaping that contribute to neighborhood aesthetics and environmental quality, while preserving a circulation pattern that has functioned for decades.

## **V. OTHER DISTRICT AGENCIES**

The District Department of Transportation (DDOT) will provide a report under separate cover.

## **VI. HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

The United States Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) reviewed the proposal on April 17, 2025 and approved the concept design finding it to be appropriate for its proximity to the Capital Hill Historic Campus.

The Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB) reviewed this proposal at its May 1, 2025 meeting, in which the Board approved the concept plan.

## **VII. ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION**

No report from ANC 6C has been provided to the record at this report's submission.

## **VIII. COMMUNITY COMMENTS**

No community comments have been supplied to the record at this report's submission.

Attachment 1: Site Location

