

MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment

FROM: Karen Thomas, Development Review Specialist
MBR
 Maxine Brown-Roberts, Associate Director, Development Review

DATE: June 19, 2026

SUBJECT: BZA Case 21452: Request for special exception relief to construct a one-story addition to the existing detached principal dwelling unit

I. RECOMMENDATION

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

- **Rear Yard, D § 207.1** (20 ft. min. required, 5.9 feet existing, no change proposed); and
- **Side Yard, D § 208.2** (8 feet. required, 2.7 feet existing (west side yard), no change proposed)

II. LOCATION AND SITE DESCRIPTION

Address	3817 Jenifer Street, NW
Applicant	Sarah and Carl O'Briant represented Peter Nettelbeck
Legal Description	Square 1855, Lot 038
Ward/ANC	Ward 3/ANC 3/4G 07
Zone	R-1B
Historic District	None
Lot Characteristics	The large 5,040 square foot lot is rectangular in shape and has 15 feet of frontage along Jenifer Street, NW and 5.9 feet the rear.
Existing Development	The lot is currently improved with a two-story, detached home.
Adjacent Properties	The property is bounded to the east and west by detached single-family homes.
Surrounding Neighborhood Character	The surrounding neighborhood can be characterized as primarily residential with 2-story detached homes. The Wisconsin Avenue corridor is west of the site with the Friendship Heights Metro at the corner of Jenifer and Wisconsin Avenue and a variety of commercial uses. To the east of the site is the Connecticut Avenue corridor which is within the R-3 zone.

Proposed Development	The Applicant is proposing an addition above an existing garage structure to connect to the living area of the existing home. (See page 16 of Proposed Plans – Exhibit 20A)
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III. ZONING REQUIREMENTS AND RELIEF REQUESTED¹

R-1B Zone	Regulation	Existing	Proposed	Relief:
Lot Width D § 202	50 ft. min.	60 ft.	No change	None requested
Lot Area D § 202	5,000 sq. ft. min.	5,040 sq. ft.	No change	None requested
Height D § 203	35 ft. max.	22.1 ft.	No change	None requested
Front Yard D § 206	Within range (15 feet building restriction line – same as block)	Within range	Within range	None requested
Rear Yard D § 207	25 ft. min.	5.9 ft.	No change	Special Exception
Side Yard D § 208	8 ft.	2.7 ft.	No change	Special Exception
Lot Occupancy D § 210	40% max.	27.9%	38.1%	None requested
Parking C § 701	1 parking space per 2 dwelling units	2 spaces	No change	None requested

IV. OFFICE OF PLANNING ANALYSIS

The property is improved with a two-story, detached principal structure and a garage located in the rear yard. The Applicant proposes a ground-floor addition above the existing below-grade garage. The proposed 510-square-foot addition would replace the existing open deck and increase the lot occupancy from 27.9% to 38.1%, which remains within the 40% matter-of-right limit and below the 50% maximum permitted by special exception in the zone.

The existing nonconforming rear yard and side yard conditions would be maintained, and the proposal would not reduce these dimensions below their current measurements. As the addition is constructed above the existing garage footprint, the project would not expand the building envelope closer to any property line.

Subtitle D § 5201 ADDITION TO A BUILDING OR ACCESSORY STRUCTURE

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

¹ Information on the existing and proposed were provided by Applicant

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 has requested special exception relief from the rear yard and side yard requirements since they are both existing nonconformities.

5201.2 Not applicable to the subject application.

5201.3 Not applicable to the subject application.

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 proposed one-story rear addition would be located above the existing below-grade garage and would not extend closer to any property line. The west side yard is conforming and measures 14.2 feet. The adjoining property to the west at 3819 Jenifer Street NW has no structure within its rear yard close to the addition, and the proposed massing would not appreciably alter the light or air available to that property. The neighbor most proximate to the addition has expressed support, as documented in [Exhibit 18](#).

Given the modest height, location above an existing footprint, and substantial side-yard separation to the east, the project would not result in undue impacts to light and air.

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

The addition would replace an existing open deck with an enclosed space of similar footprint. The project does not introduce new elevated outdoor areas or new vantage points that would increase visibility into adjoining rear yards. The enclosed nature of the addition would reduce, rather than increase, potential privacy impacts. The

project therefore would not unduly affect the privacy of use and 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*

The addition is located at the rear of the property and would not be visible from Jenifer Street. Along the alley, the proposed massing is consistent with the scale of other rear additions and accessory structures on the block. The addition maintains the existing building footprint and does not introduce height or bulk inconsistent with the established alley character. The project would therefore not unduly affect the character, scale, or pattern of houses along the street or alley.

- (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, new building, or accessory structure to adjacent buildings and views from public ways.*

The Applicant has provided photographs (Exhibit 4), revised plans (Exhibit 20A), and a plat (Exhibit 2) sufficient to represent the relationship of the proposed addition to adjacent homes.

- 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 does not recommend special treatment with respect to this relief.

- 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 special exceptions, if granted, would not permit the introduction or expansion of a nonconforming use. The existing nonconforming rear and side yards would not be reduced or expanded. The addition is constructed above the existing garage footprint and does not increase the degree of any nonconformity. The requested special exceptions relief should not compromise the ability of the subject property to continue its existing use as a single-family residential dwelling. The project complies with E §5201.5.

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 rear yard and side yard special exceptions, if granted, would be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the R-1B zone. The requested relief would not result in a dwelling that would be inconsistent with the intent of the zoning in terms of building height, massing or use.

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

As stated earlier in the report, the relief, if granted, would not adversely affect the use of neighboring property in accordance with the Zoning Regulations and the R-1B zone. The proposal neither introduces, nor expands an existing nonconforming use, and it does not compromise the subject property's ability to continue to function as a single-family residential dwelling use.

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

No special conditions have been specified in the case of the subject application.

Based on the above analysis, the proposed rear addition satisfies the criteria of Subtitle E §5201 and Subtitle X §901.2. The project would not result in undue adverse impacts on neighboring properties or the surrounding area and is consistent with the intent of the R-1-B zone.

V. OTHER DISTRICT AGENCIES

DDOT has asked OP to convey to the BZA that DDOT has no objection to the approval of the application.

VI. ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION

The property is within ANC 3/4/G. The ANC report is at [Exhibit 23](#).

VII. COMMUNITY COMMENTS

As of the filing of this report, there have been 8 letters in support at [Exhibit 18](#) and a related map of the support letters at [Exhibit 19](#).

Attachment: Location Map

LOCATION MAP

