

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: October 9, 2026

SUBJECT: BZA case 21456 – To permit a new 18-unit apartment building in the RA-1 zone at 1444, 1452, and 1454 Alabama Avenue, SE

I. OFFICE OF PLANNING RECOMMENDATION

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

- Subtitle U § 421, New Residential Developments (all new residential development with more than 6 units must be reviewed by the Board of Zoning Adjustment).

II. LOCATION AND SITE DESCRIPTION

Address	1444, 1452, and 1454 Alabama Avenue, SE
Applicant	Cox Development Group, LLC Representation: Sullivan & Barros
Legal Description	Square 5889, Lots 53, 54, 815
Ward, ANC	Ward 8; ANC 8C
Zone	RA-1
Historic Districts	N/A
Lot Characteristics	The nearly rectangular-shaped subject property consists of three lots that would be consolidated into one lot for this application. The combined property is 12,963 sq. ft. in area and contains about 122 feet of frontage along Alabama Ave. SE. The majority of the lot is 107 feet deep with the exception of an angular notch in the northwest corner of the property caused by the curvature of the 16-foot public alley that traverses along the rear of the parcel.
Existing Development	The subject property is vacant land with one tree.
Adjacent Properties	The neighboring lots to the east and west, as well as some rear-facing lots to the northwest contain single-unit, semi-detached dwellings also zoned RA-1. Two-story, multi residential buildings are located to the north on lots 47 and 48 (the one on lot 48 is vacant and blighted), zoned RA-1. A multi-unit residential building is located to the southwest on lots 49 and 50, on land also zoned RA-1 and a one-story commercial building containing a restaurant use on land zoned MU-5.

Surrounding Neighborhood Character	A moderate density neighborhood containing a mix of single unit dwellings and multi-unit buildings surround the subject property. A shopping center is located to the southeast of the property on land zoned MU-5 and the Bard High School Early College DC with its associated recreational facilities is located about 0.1 miles to the southeast also on Alabama Ave. The lot is located approximately 0.2 miles from the Congress Heights Metro station.
Proposed Development	The applicant proposes to construct a three-story with cellar, multi-unit residential building containing 18 units with IZ at 1.08 FAR and 35 feet, 2 inches in height. The proposal meets all development standards for the RA-1 zone. The proposal would include: - 2, one-bedroom units at 529 sq. ft. area; - 11, two-bedroom units, ranging from 701-823 sq. ft. in area; and - 3, three-bedroom units, ranging from 984-1,069 sq. ft. in area. While 2 of the units would be designated as IZ, the applicant has provided an affordable housing covenant draft in the record at Exhibit 11, enumerating that 9 of the units would be income restricted. The façade would consist of brick with metal and synthetic panel siding with fenestration on all elevations. Trash and recycling would be located at the northwest rear corner of the lot, adjacent to the alley. 10 on-site parking spaces would be provided at the rear, including one ADA-accessible space, exceeding the reduced zoning requirement of two spaces; bicycle parking would be provided with 6 long-term and 4 short-term spaces.

III. ZONING REQUIREMENTS and RELIEF REQUESTED

Zone: RA-1	Regulation	Existing	Proposed*	Relief
Apartment House U § 421	More than 6 Units Permitted by sp. ex.	N/A	18 units	Special Exception Requested
Density, F § 201	FAR 0.9 max.; 1.08 max with IZ.	N/A	1.08 (IZ units incl.)	None Requested
Lot Width, F § 202	N/A	122.24 ft.	No Change	None Requested
Lot Area, F § 202	N/A	12,963 sq. ft.	No Change	None Requested
Height, F § 203	40 ft. max.; 3 stories	N/A	35 ft. 2 in.; 3 stories	None Requested
Rear Yard, F § 207	20 ft. min.	N/A	41.6 ft.	None Requested
Side Yard, F § 208	8 ft. min on two sides	N/A	19 ft., 11 ½ in. (East and West)	None Requested

Zone: RA-1	Regulation	Existing	Proposed*	Relief
Lot Occupancy, F § 210	40% max.	N/A	36.3%	None Requested
GAR, F § 211	0.4 min.	N/A	0.416	None Requested
Vehicular Parking, C § 701	1 space per 3 units, above 4 units with 50% reduction if within < 0.5 miles from Metro. (2 spaces required)	N/A	9 spaces	None Requested
Bicycle Parking C § 802	1 long-term space per 3 units (6 spaces required) 1 short-term space per 20 units (1 space required)	N/A	6 long-term spaces 4 short-term spaces	None Requested

*As provided by the applicant

IV. OFFICE OF PLANNING ANALYSIS

A. Subtitle U § 421, NEW RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS (RA-1)

421.1 In any of the RA-1 zones, the following residential developments shall be reviewed by the Board of Zoning Adjustment as special exceptions pursuant to Subtitle X, Chapter 9, in accordance with the standards and requirements in this section:

(a) Multiple Dwelling developments that do not meet the standards set in Subtitle U § 401.2; and

(b) Residential developments seeking flexibility pursuant to Subtitle F § 202.3.

The applicant proposes to construct an 18-unit apartment building where Subtitle U § 401.2 only permits multiple dwellings up to 6 units as a matter-of-right. The applicant does not request any flexibility.

421.2 When seeking relief pursuant to Subtitle U § 421.1, in addition to filing requirements of Subtitle Y § 300, the applicant shall submit the following at the time of initial filing:

(a) Existing and proposed site plans of the entire property, showing:

- (1) Existing and proposed buildings and structures;*
- (2) Building Restriction Lines and easements;*
- (3) All heritage trees and all trees to be retained or removed;*
- (4) All impervious surface materials;*
- (5) Location and screening of trash enclosures;*
- (6) Location and screening of any surface parking spaces;*

- (7) *Screening or fencing along common lot lines; and*
- (8) *Exterior lighting.*

The applicant provided Items (1), (4), (5), (6), and (7) on sheet A1.08 of Exhibit 24A1. Items (2), (3), and (8) are not provided, as the site contains no BRLs, easements, or trees, and it appears no exterior lighting is proposed.

(b) *Architectural Plans, including but not limited to;*

- (1) *Floor plans of each level and roof;*
- (2) *Elevations, including door and window locations and exterior building materials;*
- (3) *Sectional drawings through the entire building; and*
- (4) *Any other renderings relevant to this or other relief associated with the application;*

The applicant provided Item (1) show on Sheets A1.09-A1.12 and A103 of Exhibit 24A1; Item (2) at Sheets A1.13-A1.17 and Sheets A300-A301 of Exhibit 24A2. Item (3) is shown on Sheets A400 and A1.18 of Exhibit 24A2; and Item (4) is not relevant to this application as no other relief is requested.

(c) *Streetscape and alley-scape photos;*

Provided at Exhibit 8.

(d) *Shadow study, or supplemental representation, comparing existing, by-right, and proposed development at the equinox, longest, and shortest days of the year; and*

Provided at Exhibit 24A2, Sheet A1.20

(e) *Other plans or illustrations demonstrating the proposed development in relation to adjacent properties including, but not limited to the alignment of windows, doors, trash enclosures, parking, and screening in relation to adjacent residential buildings.*

Illustrations comparing the features of the proposed development compared to the neighboring dwellings are shown on Sheet A1.08 of Exhibit 24A1, and Sheets A1.14 and A1.16 of Exhibit 24A2.

421.3 *In addition to the filing requirements of Subtitle U § 421.2, when seeking relief from F § 202.3, or for a proposal with more than one principal building, or for a property exceeding twenty thousand square feet (20,000 sq. ft.), the applicant shall submit the following at the time of initial filing:*

- (a) *An existing and proposed Grading Plan, with the limit of disturbance shown;*
- (b) *Plans for all new public or private rights-of-way and easements;*

(c) *A statement of justification which examines the proposed development in relation to adjacent properties and the surrounding neighborhood context regarding the proposed:*

- (1) *Arrangement of buildings and structures;*
- (2) *Landscaping, grading, and storm-water management;*
- (3) *Vehicle parking; and*
- (4) *Recreation and outdoor space.*

The subject proposal is not seeking relief, from Subtitle F § 202.3, as the proposal contains one principal building, and the subject property is 12,963 sq. ft. in land area. This standard is therefore not applicable.

421.4 *In addition to the notification requirements of Subtitle Y §400.4, the Board of Zoning Adjustment shall refer any application subject to review under Subtitle U § 421.3 to the following District of Columbia agencies for comment:*

- (a) *District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) to review whether the existing and planned area schools can accommodate the number of students that can be expected to reside in the project;*
- (b) *Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) to review the potential impacts on nearby recreational facilities; and*
- (c) *Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE) to review the proposed grading and stormwater management plan.*

The subject application is not subject to review under Subtitle U § 421.3 and therefore this standard is not applicable.

421.5 *The Board of Zoning Adjustment may require special treatment for the mitigation of undue impacts to adjacent properties.*

OP proposes no special treatment.

B. 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 RA-1 zone permits moderate density development including low-rise apartments with more than 6 units through Special Exception. The proposal is consistent with the provisions of the Regulations, and the building would be within the development requirements of the zone and not be inconsistent with the intended use or building bulk or height. Therefore, the proposed apartment building meets the intent of the RA-1

zone.

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

The subject proposal complies with all applicable bulk and height requirements of the RA-1 zone, including providing side yards and a rear yard that exceed the minimum standards by more than double. As shown in the applicant's shadow study (Sheet A1.20 of Exhibit 24A2), the additional shadow cast on the rear yards of neighboring Lots 55 to the west and 52 to the east occurs primarily during the winter solstice. Because the buildings on this block are oriented slightly askew from true north, the resulting shadow impact on Lot 52 during this period is further reduced. Additionally, Lot 55 already contains several mature trees near the shared property line that currently produce shadow in the same general direction.

The trash and recycling will be located at the rear of the property adjacent to the alley and vehicular parking spaces and separated from Lot 52 by a 7-foot-tall fence. Additional fencing would be provided along both side lot lines separating the rear yard from the neighboring lots. While fenestration is provided on the sides of the proposed building, it is minimized towards the rear portion of the side elevations where they would otherwise have direct views into adjacent rear yards, further reducing potential impacts. Therefore, the subject proposed buildings are not expected to cause adverse impacts to neighboring property, which meets this standard.

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

The proposal would meet the requirements of Subtitle U § 421, as provided above.

V. OTHER DISTRICT AGENCIES

A report from the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) is contained in the record as Exhibit 28.

VI. ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION

No report from ANC 8C is present in the record at this report's publication.

VII. COMMUNITY COMMENTS

No comments from the public are contained in the record at this report's publication.

Location Map:

