

Emory United Methodist Church

BZA Application No. 21474

1459 Columbia Road, NW (Square 2672, Lot 718)

*Applicant's Hearing PowerPoint
July 29, 2026*

Holland & Knight

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Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 21474
EXHIBIT NO. 31

Ownership Team

Emory United Methodist Church (Emory Fellowship)

- Primary location at 6100 Georgia Avenue, NW
- Founded: 200 years ago
- Congregation: 550 Members
- Mission: Serve our Community such to where people live a WHOLE life.
- Prior real estate development experience: In partnership with its mission arm, Emory Beacon of Light, Emory Fellowship developed the 180,000 SF multi-purpose Beacon Center campus in Brightwood in April 2019 that now provides 99 affordable housing apartments to DC residents.



Ownership Team

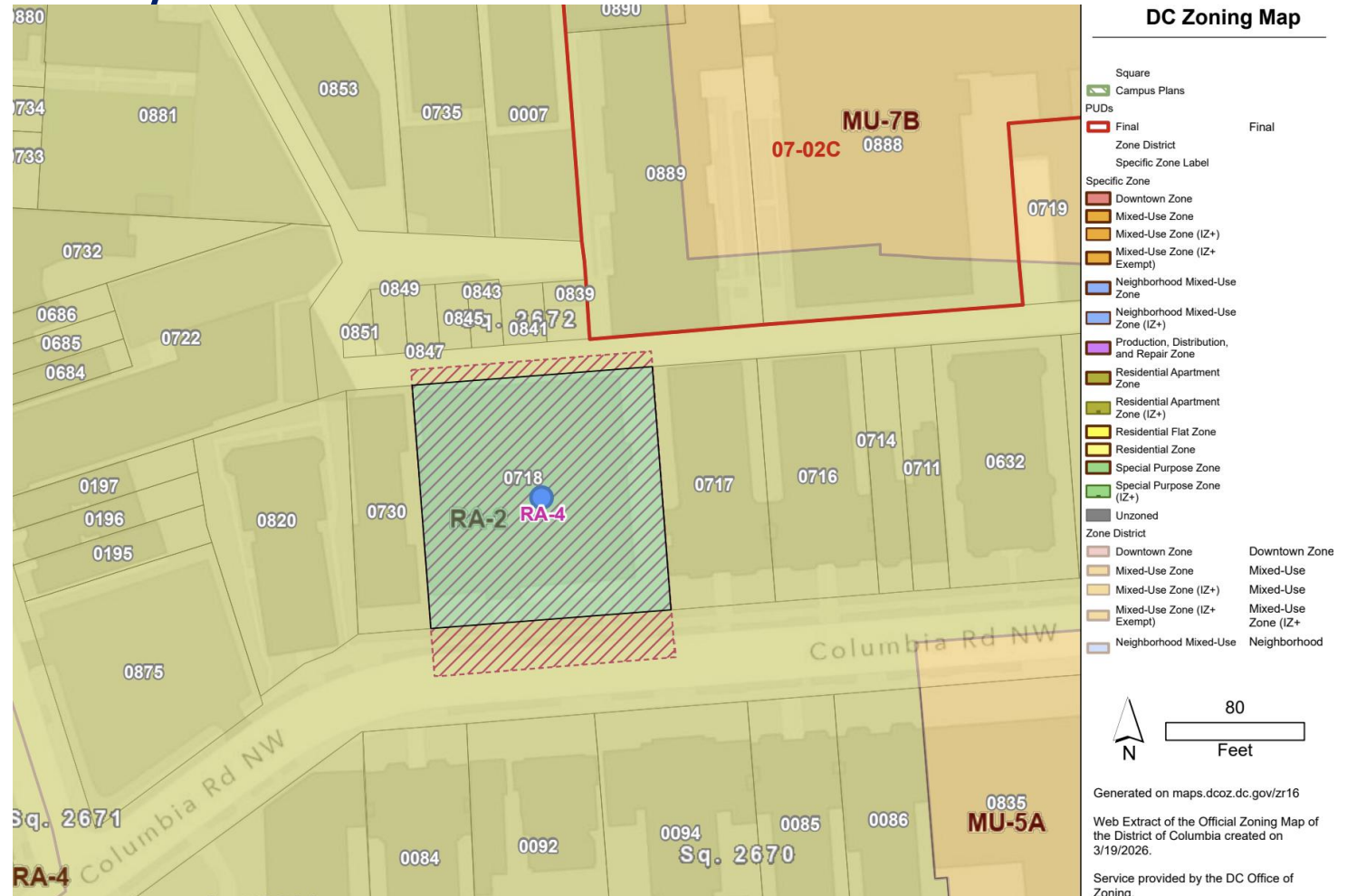
Beacon Properties

- Washington, DC based 501(c)(3) formed in 2019 as a non-profit affiliated organization under Emory Fellowship
- Vision and Mission:
- Empowering the marginalized and disenfranchised by preserving and creating real estate opportunities
- Engaging in social justice action through real estate development



Property Location – 1459 Columbia Road, NW (Square 2672, Lot 718)

- Located within the Columbia Heights neighborhood.
- Bounded by Irving Street NW (north), Columbia Road NW (south), 15th Street NW (west), and 14th Street NW (east).
- Zoned RA-4.



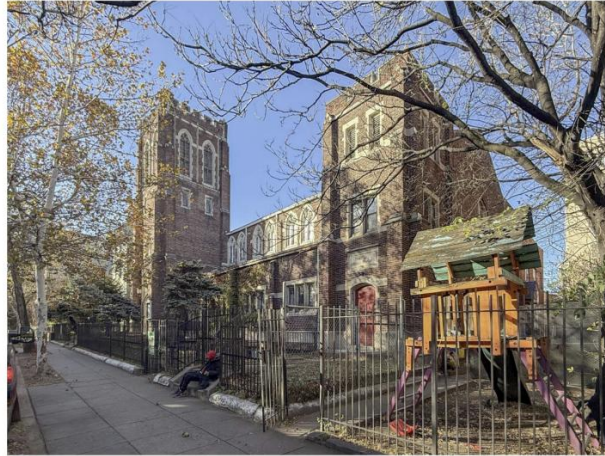
Overview of BZA Application and Zoning Relief Requested

- BZA Application **No. 21474** filed on March 30, 2026.
- Request for:
 1. **Area variance** pursuant to Subtitle X § 1000.1 from the rear yard requirement of Subtitle F § 207.1.
- Proposed Residential Development:
 - Multifamily residential building with 87 units, including IZ+ units.
 - Portion of existing church structure to be integrated into building design.
 - 2,700 sq. ft. of amenity space.

Existing Conditions



1. COLUMBIA RD NW - VIEW OF BELL TOWER



2. COLUMBIA RD NW - VIEW OF 1914 ADDITION



3. COLUMBIA RD NW - VIEW OF 1914 ADDITION



4. PUBLIC ALLEY - NE CORNER



5. PUBLIC ALLEY - NW CORNER

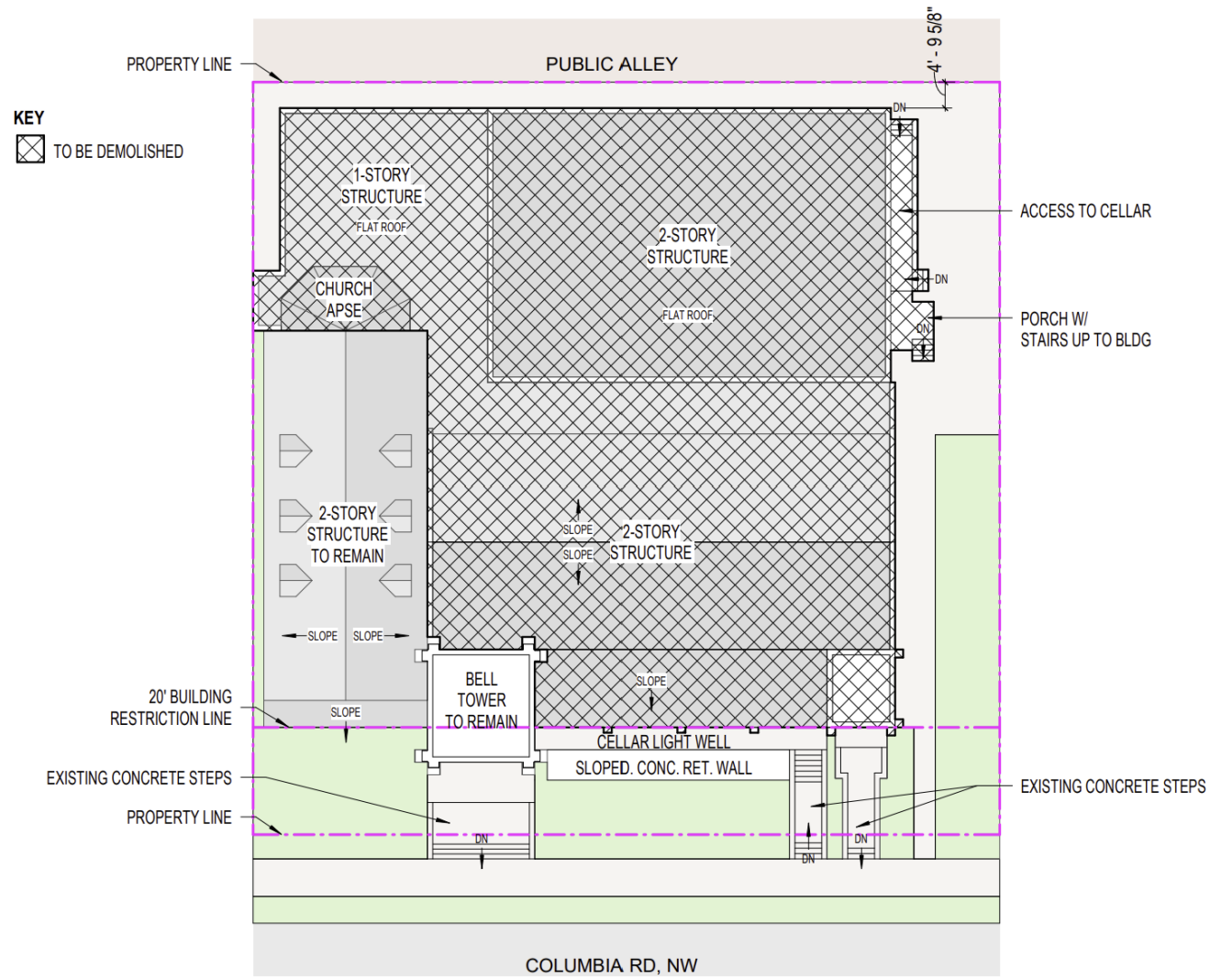


KEY PLAN

Proposed Residential Development - Renderings



Existing Conditions



Proposed Site Plan

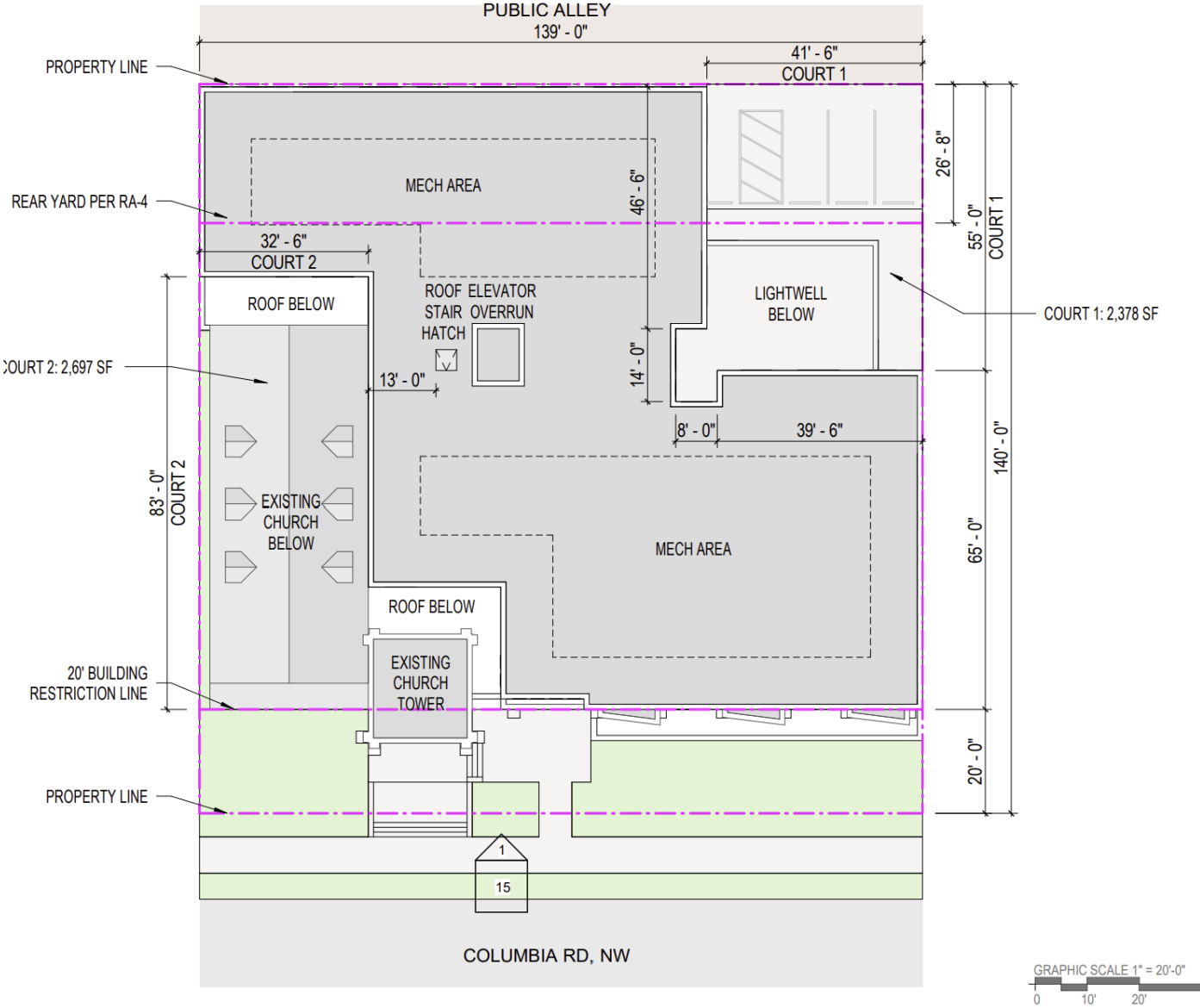
1459 COLUMBIA RD NW, BUILDING FAR/ GSF AREA CALCULATIONS					
	Residential				
Floor	Existing Church	Gross Residential	TOTAL SF		TOTAL
Cellar		8,568	8,568		8,568
1st Floor	2,763	11,277	14,040		14,040
2nd Floor		10,943	10,943		10,943
3rd Floor		10,943	10,943		10,943
4th Floor		10,943	10,943		10,943
5th Floor		10,943	10,943		10,943
6th Floor		10,943	10,943		10,943
7th Floor		10,943	10,943		10,943
TOTAL GSF	2,763	85,503	88,266		88,266
TOTAL GFA in FAR	2,763	76,935	79,698		79,698
				Site Area (SF)	19,460
				FAR	4.10

*Exterior Covered Area is not included in GSF;

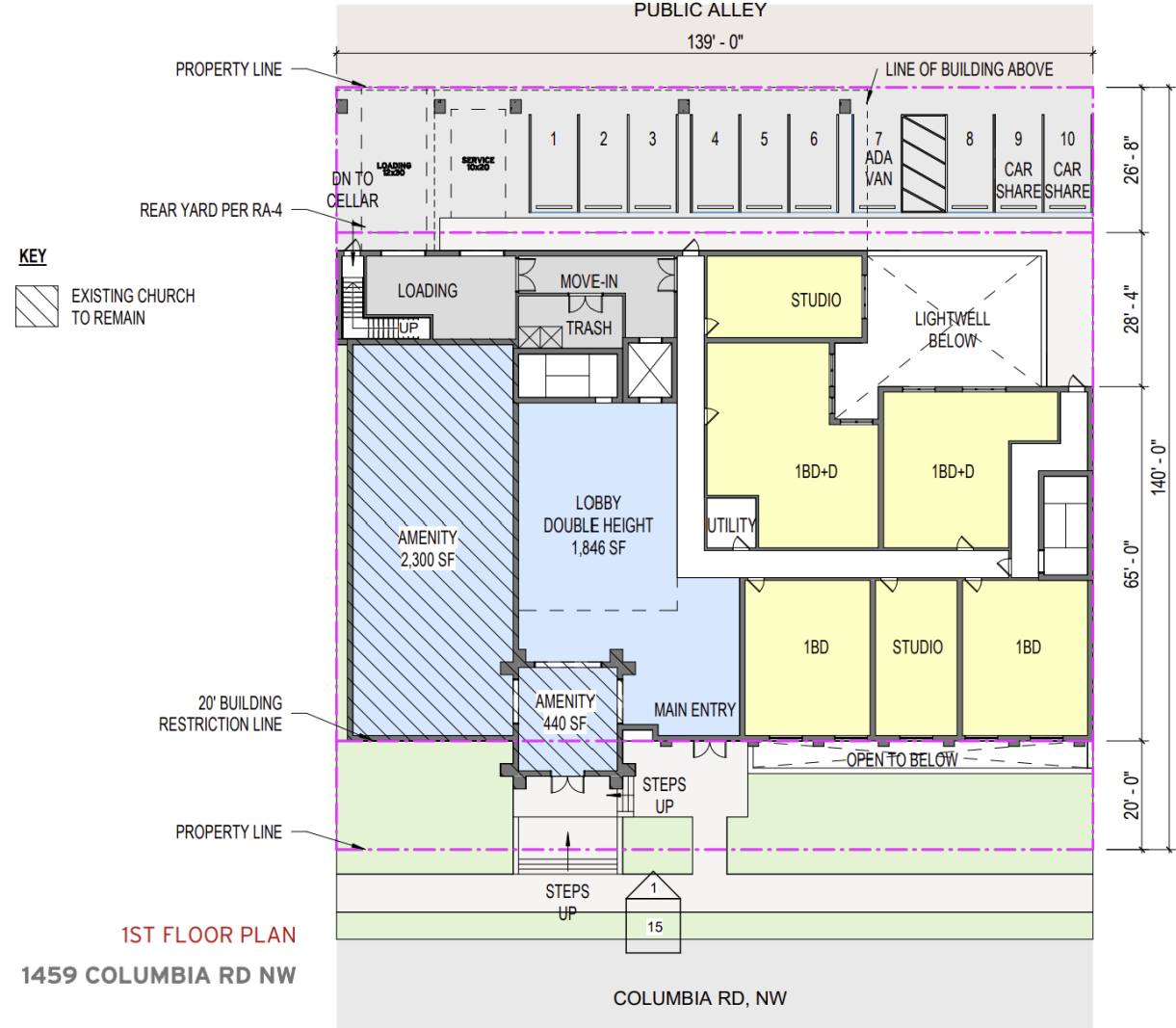
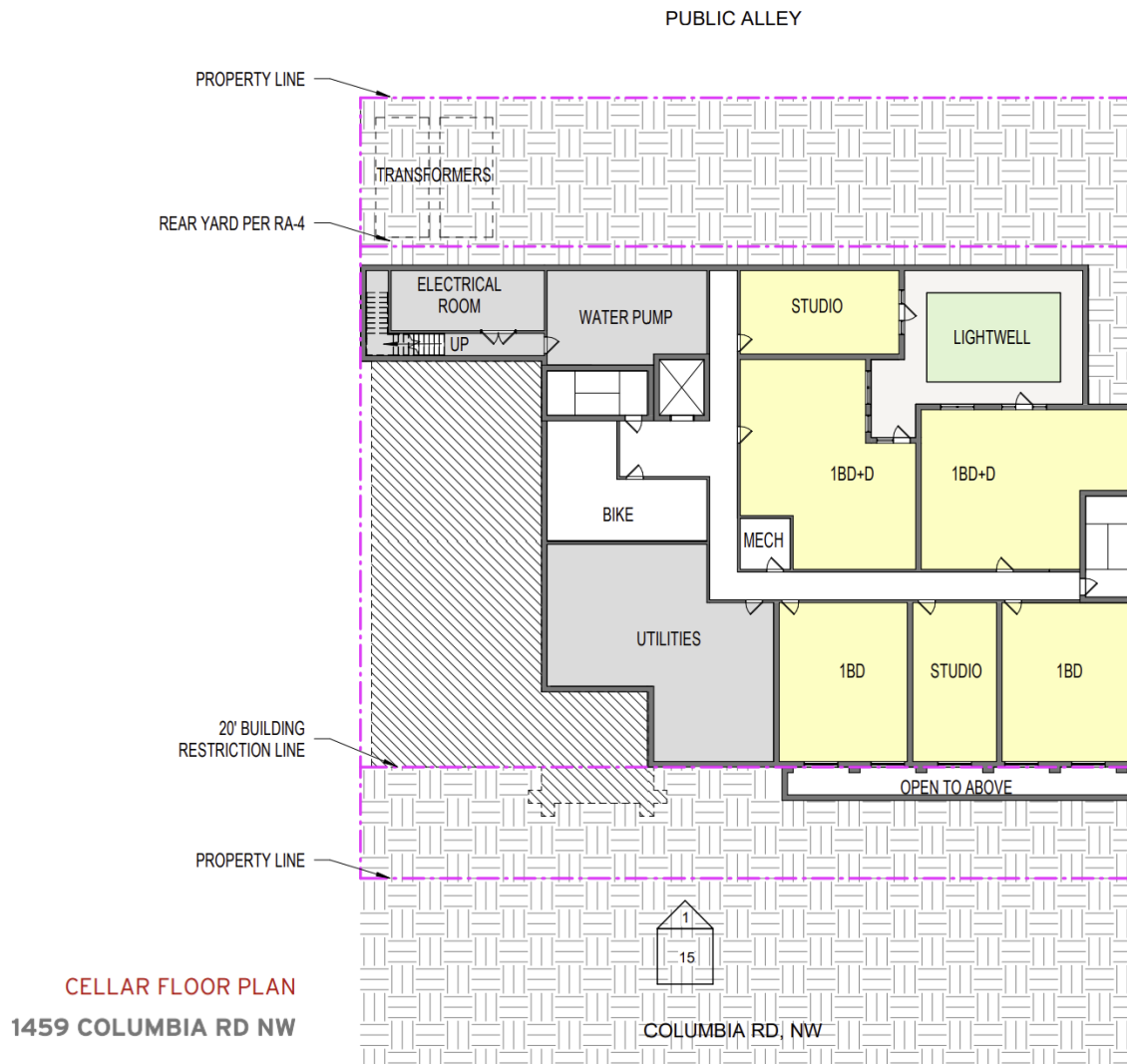
**Cellar & Penthouse Not included in FAR

Max FAR (IZ)
Requires IZ

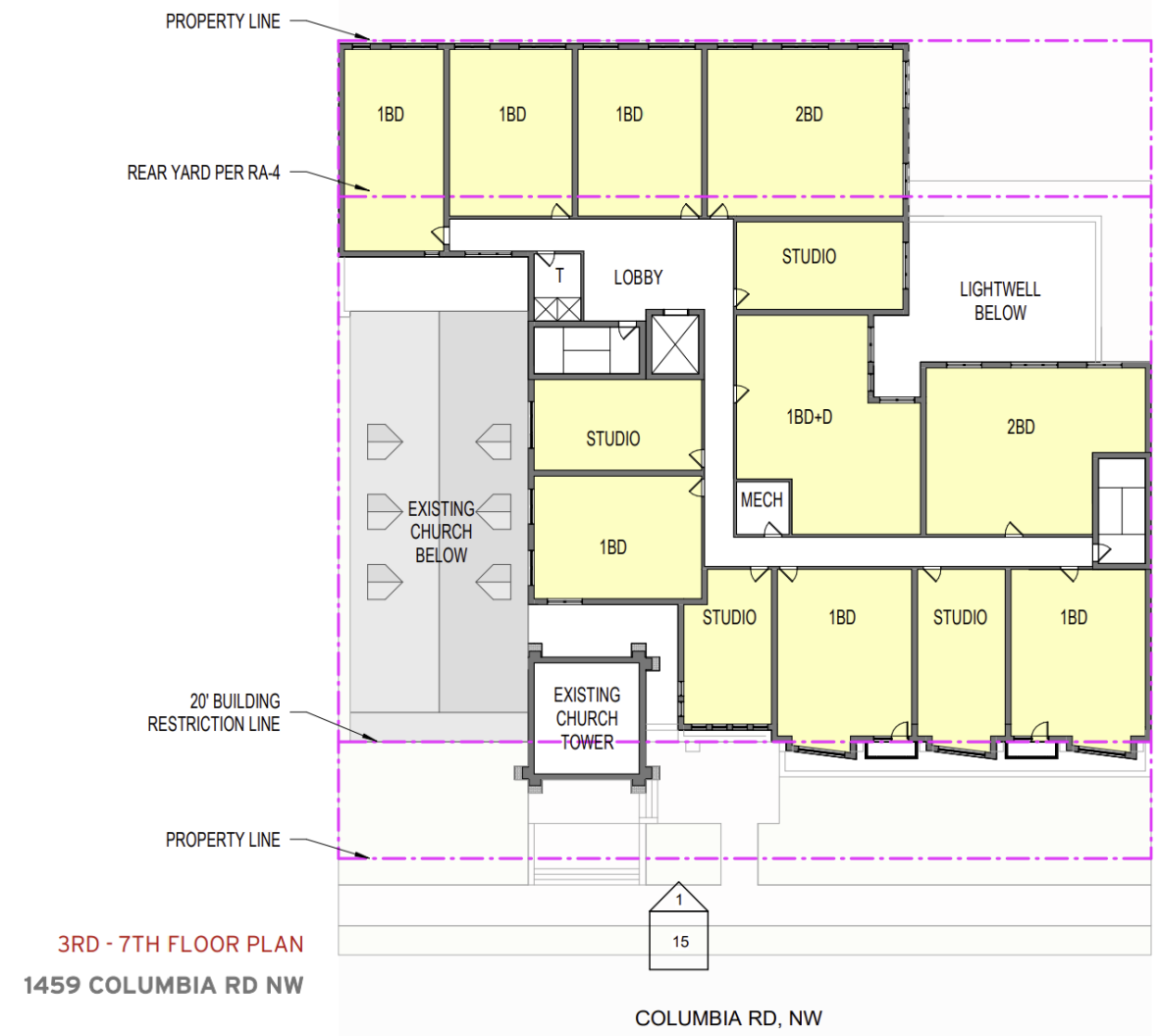
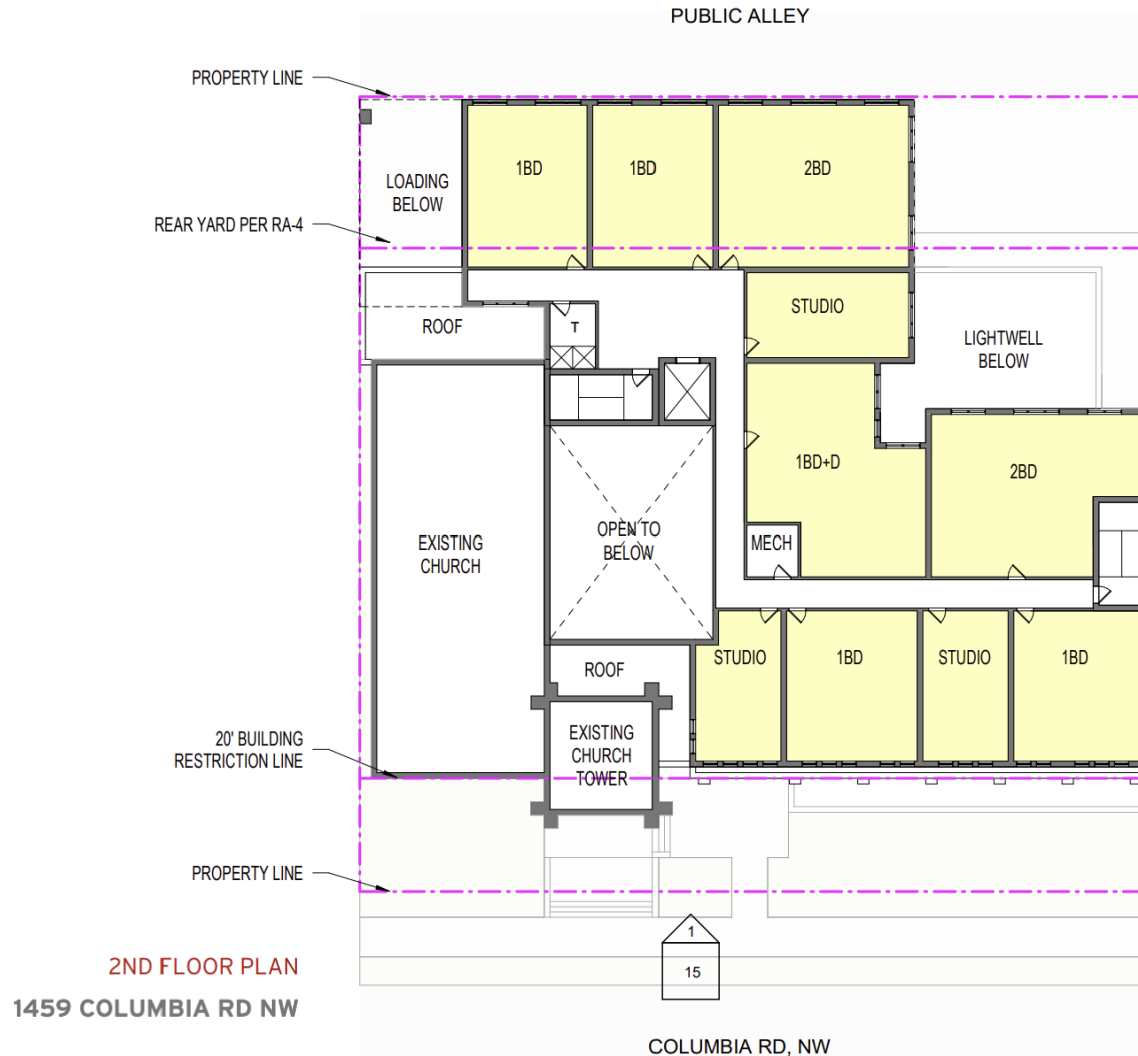
UNIT TYPE	STU.	1BD	1BD+D	2BD	UNIT #
					TOTAL
Cellar	2	2	2		6 UNITS
1st Floor	2	2	2		6 UNITS
2nd Floor	3	4	1	2	10 UNITS
3rd Floor	4	6	1	2	13 UNITS
4th Floor	4	6	1	2	13 UNITS
5th Floor	4	6	1	2	13 UNITS
6th Floor	4	6	1	2	13 UNITS
7th Floor	4	6	1	2	13 UNITS
	27	38	10	12	87 UNITS
	31%	44%	11%	14%	100%



Proposed Residential Development – Cellar and 1st Floor Plan



Proposed Residential Development – 2nd and 3rd-7th Floor Plan



Rear Yard Practical Difficulty

- Rear Yard Compliance Impact on Proposed Building

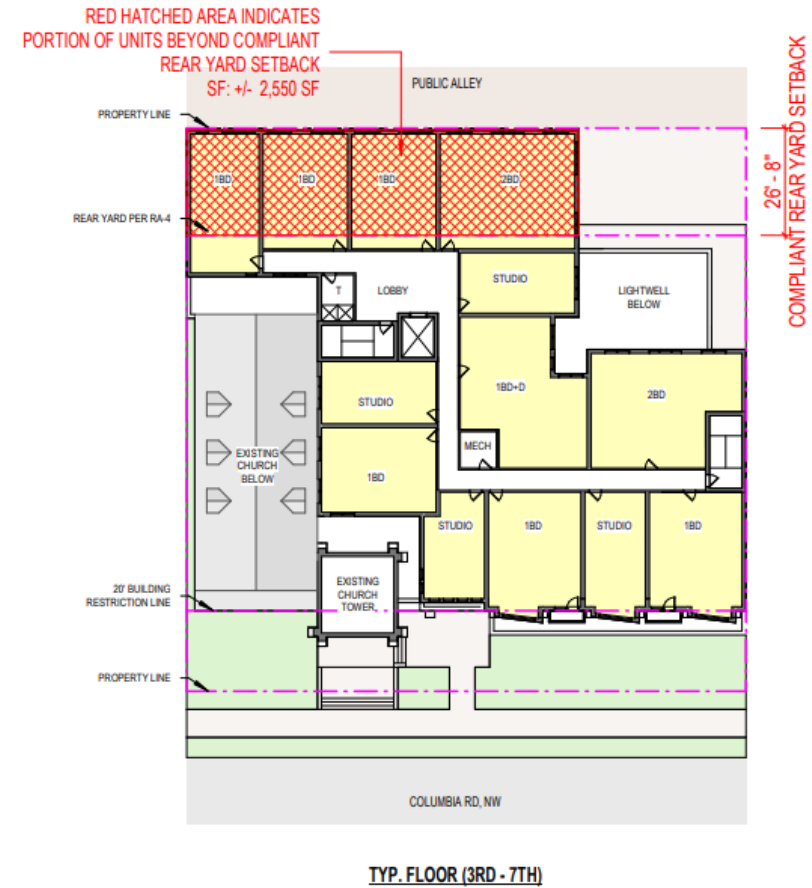
- The Applicant proposes no rear yard, where a rear yard of 26 ft. 8 in. is required.
- To provide a compliant rear yard, approximately 17,850 sq. ft. of GFA would have to be removed from the overall building (22% of total GFA) and loss of approximately 23 residential units.
- Given the property's constraints, rear yard compliance would reduce the building's efficiency to approximately 79%, whereas 85% is typical. This would have detrimental impacts on proposed units:
 - Deep units;
 - Bedrooms far from windows;
 - Living spaces requiring artificial lighting during daytime;
 - Awkward, inefficient layouts;
 - Increased dependence on mechanical ventilation;
 - Higher energy use; and
 - Increased risk of stagnant interior air and thermal discomfort.

Proposed Development – Building Section

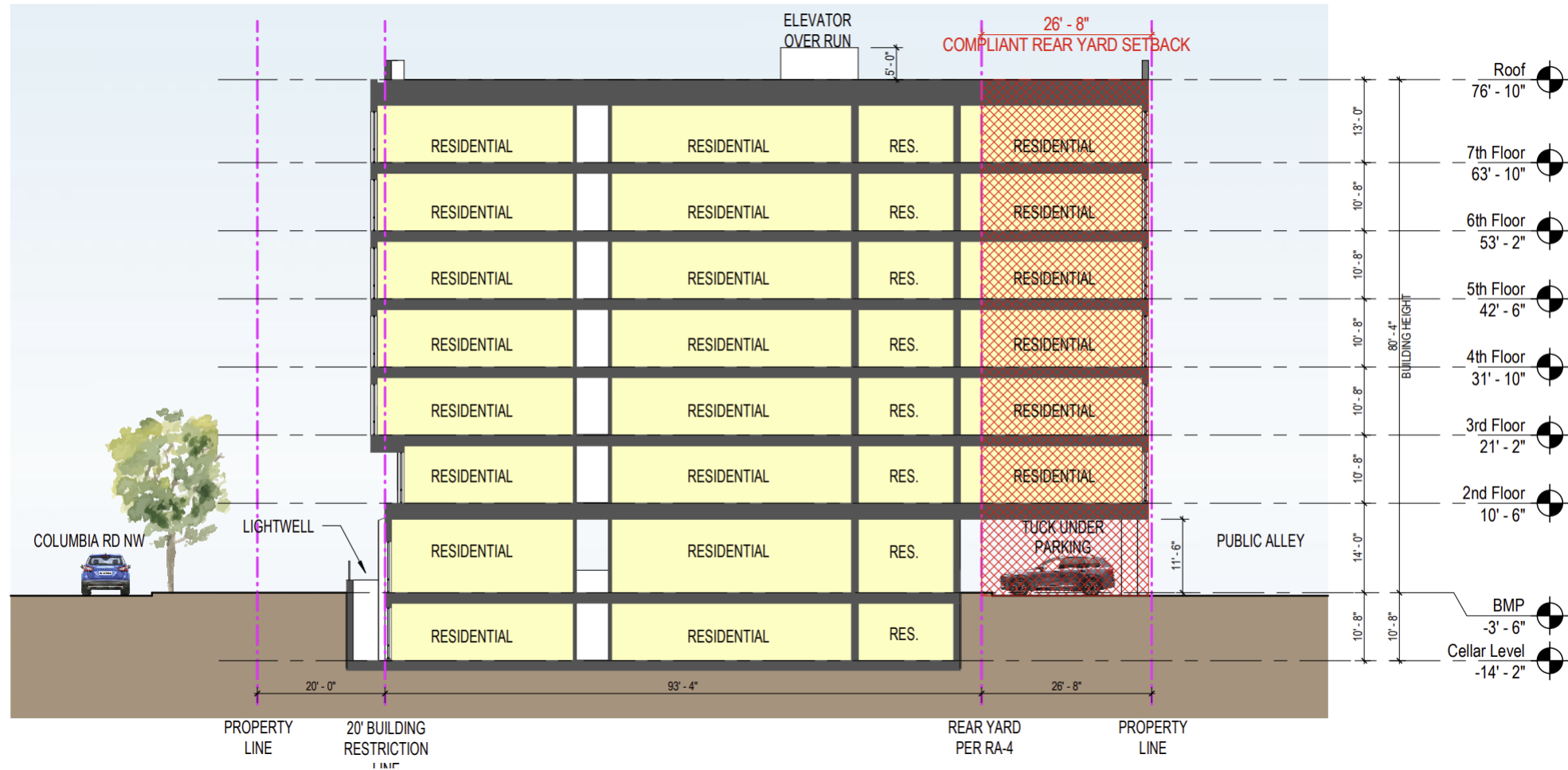
PRACTICAL DIFFICULTY:

FOR COMPLIANT REAR YARD SETBACK:

1. TO ACCOMMODATE A COMPLIANT REAR YARD, APPROXIMATELY 17,850 SF OF PROGRAM AREA ($\pm 2,550$ SF PER FLOOR) WOULD BE REMOVED FROM THE OVERALL BUILDING DESIGN, RESULTING IN THE LOSS OF APPROXIMATELY 23 DWELLING UNITS. THE EXISTING BUILDING, AS WELL AS ADJACENT BUILDINGS, ARE CURRENTLY BUILT TO THE PUBLIC ALLEY PROPERTY LINE AND DO NOT PROVIDE A REAR SETBACK.



Proposed Development – Practical Difficulty



BZA Authority & Variance Criteria

Subtitle X § 1000.1 – BZA Authority to Grant a Variance

The Board of Zoning Adjustment is authorized under D.C. Code § 6-641.07(g)(3) and Subtitle X § 1000.1, to grant a variance from “the strict application of any regulation adopted under D.C. Official Code §§ 6-641.01 to 6-651.02” when the following conditions are met:

1. The property is affected by exceptional size, shape, or topography or other extraordinary or **exceptional condition or situation**;
2. The owner would encounter **peculiar and exceptional practical difficulties** or undue hardship if the zoning regulations were strictly applied; and
3. The variance would **not cause substantial detriment** to the public good and would not substantially impair the intent, purpose, and integrity of the zone plan as embodied in the Zoning Regulations and Map.

Area Variance Justification – Exceptional Condition

Subtitle X §§ 1000.1; 1002.1 (a) – Area Variance Review Standards

1. **The property is affected by exceptional size, shape, or topography or other extraordinary or exceptional condition or situation;**
 - Size and Footprint of Existing Church Building
 - The portion of existing church building to remain, coupled with the building restriction line along the southern property line, results in 5,520 sq. ft. or approximately 28% of the land area being unusable.
 - Preservation of Existing Element
 - The existing church building, including the bell tower, has architectural features that are being preserved, which increases the construction costs:
 - (i) the original interior floors and ceilings;
 - (ii) exterior windows and walls;
 - (iii) existing roof and dormers; and
 - (iv) the overall structure of the bell tower.

Area Variance Justification – Practical Difficulty

Subtitle X §§ 1000.1; 1002.1 (a) – Area Variance Review Standards

2. The owner would encounter peculiar and exceptional practical difficulties if the zoning regulations were strictly applied; and

- Existing Church Building
 - Although not historic, HPRB provides guidance on incorporating a structure like the existing church building into the project, which cites the principle that an addition should be subordinate to the historic building to which it is being added or convincingly separate to the rear or side of the historic building if the addition is larger.
- Shifted Massing of Proposed Building
 - Consistent with this design guidance, the proposed development and density will be shifted to the northeast side of the Property, away from the existing church building.

Area Variance Justification – No Substantial Detriment

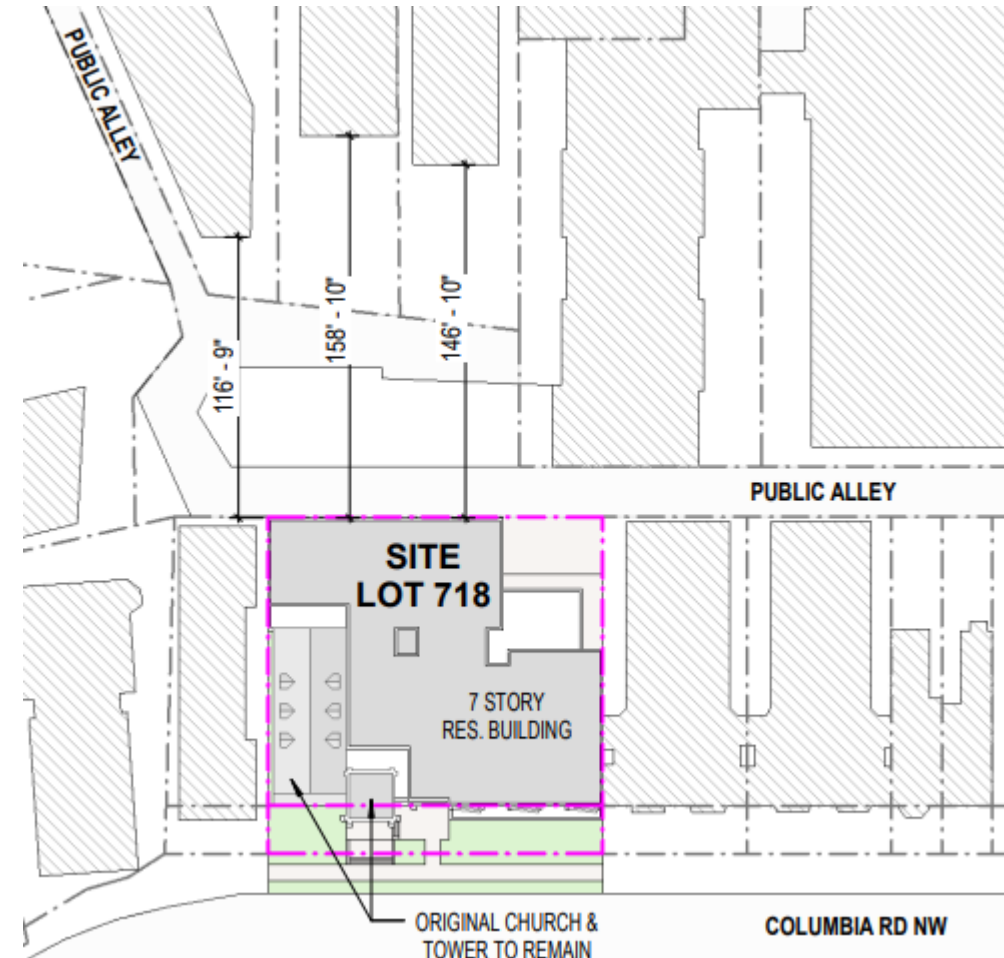
Subtitle X §§ 1000.1; 1002.1(a) – Area Variance Review Standards

- 3. The variance would not cause substantial detriment to the public good and would not substantially impair the intent, purpose, and integrity of the zone plan as embodied in the Zoning Regulations and Map.**
- **Contributes to Affordable Housing Stock**
 - Delivers 87 new residential units, including a mix of studio, one-bedroom, one-bedroom plus den, and two-bedroom units in a transit-accessible location.
 - **Supports Purpose and Intent of RA -4 Zone**
 - The requested relief would not alter the character of the surrounding neighborhood and advances the goals of the RA-4 zone, which is intended for areas with predominantly medium- to high-density residential.
 - **Open Court**
 - Although no rear yard is proposed, the project includes a 2,378 sq. ft. open court on the Property, which is comparable in size to a compliant rear yard of 3,700 sq. ft. and would provide light, air, and ventilation to future residents.

Area Variance Justification – No Substantial Detriment

Subtitle X §§ 1000.1; 1002.1(a) – Area Variance Review Standards

3. **The variance would not cause substantial detriment to the public good and would not substantially impair the intent, purpose, and integrity of the zone plan as embodied in the Zoning Regulations and Map.**
- **Alley Buffer**
 - The rear lot line abuts a 20-foot-wide public alley, and to the immediate north of the public alley are vacant lots owned by the District. The closest buildings to the immediate north of the rear lot line are over 140 feet away.
 - **Consistent with Surrounding Development**
 - The Project is consistent with other nearby multifamily residential buildings of similar height, which are located on the property line and provide a court or open space in lieu of rear yard relief, such as the property located at 1444 Irving Street, NW.



Community Outreach

- May 7, 2026 – Presentation to ANC 1A
- ANC Report (Ex. 25) – Voted in support of application
- 6 Letters in Support (Ex. 17-22)
- No letters in opposition

Agency Review – OP Report (Exhibit 27)

- Recommends approval.
- Key Factors
 - Preservation of architecturally significant portions of church building
 - Building restriction line
 - No practical alternative location for density located where a compliant rear yard would be
 - Construction costs of retaining larger portion of church building
 - Limited design and layout of a feasible project due to site constraints

Agency Review – DDOT Report (Exhibit 29)

- Does not object to the application.
- Key Factors
 - “The proposed action will not have adverse impacts on the District’s transportation network.” (pg. 1)
 - Notes the area between the property line and 20-foot building restriction line should remain “park-like” with landscaping.
 - Expects the Applicant to work with the Ward 1 Arborist regarding the preservation and protection of the 3 special trees located on the property.

An architectural rendering of a multi-story building featuring a historic brick church tower on the left and a modern multi-story structure on the right. The church tower has a crenellated roofline, arched windows, and a large arched wooden door. The modern building has a mix of dark brown and light beige panels, large windows, and balconies. The scene is set on a street with cars, pedestrians, and trees under a clear sky.

Questions?