

SUPPLEMENTAL MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment
FROM: Brandice Elliott, Case Manager
 JL Joel Lawson, Associate Director Development Review
DATE: May 10, 2019

SUBJECT: BZA Case 19929 (614 Otis Place, N.W.) to permit the conversion of a row dwelling into a three-unit apartment house in the RF-1 zone.

At the public hearing on March 14, 2019, the Board discussed at length the proposed conversion of an existing residential building to a three-unit apartment house, and the requested waivers. The Board expressed concerns regarding the design and nature of the meaningful connection and its compliance with the Zoning Regulations. The Board requested additional information from the applicant, as noted below. The BZA requested an OP response to this additional information.

1) Confirmation from DCRA that the proposed meaningful connection complies with the Zoning Regulations.

The applicant has provided new exhibits to the record (Exhibits 44 through 48), including detailed information regarding neighborhood outreach efforts, a set of architectural plans and elevations, a petition of support, additional context photographs, and architectural plans of similar conversions with “meaningful connections” that have been approved by the Board.

Since the public hearing, the applicant has met with DCRA to discuss the meaningful connection, and the applicant has indicated that DCRA agrees that, with the relief requested, it would comply with the Zoning Regulations and that a signed letter from the Zoning Administrator would be provided to the record when it becomes available.

As requested by the BZA, the applicant should further explain how the meaningful connection would comply with the definition of “Building, Separate,” which requires an enclosed connection that is fully above grade and it remains unclear if the connection is below or at grade. In addition, the floorplans do not clearly show how the connection provides entry into the rear third unit.

2) Alternatives for the third unit that include a reduction in size.

The applicant has not provided any smaller alternatives for the rear third unit, as requested by the Board. During the public hearing, the Board suggested that the rear third unit should be smaller in area and/or height, potentially similar in size to a detached structure. The development standards for detached structures would permit a structure with a height of 20 feet and two stories and a maximum lot occupancy the greater of 30% of the required rear yard area or 450 square feet.

3) Additional street and alley context.

The applicant has provided additional photographs demonstrating the context along Otis Place and the alley. The photographs show that there are taller structures in the alley, including row dwellings and two large apartment buildings. As provided in OP’s report at Exhibit 38, the rear portion of the addition should not substantially visually intrude upon the character, scale and pattern of houses along the subject street or alley. However, OP continues to recommend that a roof deck not be placed on

top of the rear portion of the addition in order to maintain the privacy of use and enjoyment of neighboring properties.

The subject property is located among a small group of intact row dwellings along Otis Place. Although dwellings along the north side of the street have incorporated dormer windows, OP continues to not support the incorporation of a taller mansard roof with a horizontal window element in the proposed design, as it would be inconsistent with the existing pattern of dwellings along the south side of the street. The applicant should provide a rendering demonstrating what the connection would look like from the neighboring property, including its height above the fence.