

MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment
FROM: Stephen J. Mordfin, Case Manager
JL Joel Lawson, Associate Director Development Review
DATE: March 20, 2020

SUBJECT: BZA Case 20242, 3401 Water Street, N.W., to permit vehicle parking in a structure less than 20 feet from lot lines; reduced driveway width for two-way driveways; and reduced two-way drive aisle parking aisle width.

I. OFFICE OF PLANNING RECOMMENDATION

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

- Subtitle C § 711.6(a), Minimum Width Requirement for Two-Way Driveways (20-foot minimum two-way driveways width required; minimum 14 feet, 1 inch proposed); and
- Subtitle C § 712.6, Minimum Dimensions for Compact Parking Spaces and Aisles (20-foot minimum two-way drive aisle required; 16 feet, 2 inches proposed).

OP recommends **approval** of the following special exception relief:

- Subtitle C § 710.2(a), pursuant to Subtitle C § 710.3 (20-foot minimum from all lot lines required; none proposed).

II. LOCATION AND SITE DESCRIPTION

Address	3401 Water Street, N.W.
Applicant	IDI Water Street, L.C.
Legal Description	Square 1183, Lot 813
Ward, ANC	Ward 2, ANC 2E
Zone	MU-13
Historic Districts	Georgetown; and Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park
Lot Characteristics	Generally rectangular lot with no directly adjacent developable lots, and with a steep slope up from south to north.
Existing Development	Two-story commercial building with no off-street parking

Adjacent Properties	North: C & O Canal and tow path South: Across Water Street and the Whitehurst Freeway, the Potomac River East: Across 34 th Street, office and residential buildings West: Across 35 th Street and the Key Bridge, National Park Service parkland
Surrounding Neighborhood Character	Mixture of residential, commercial and office uses
Proposed Development	7-story plus penthouse mixed-use building with apartments, retail space and garage parking with 42 spaces at and above grade.

III. ZONING REQUIREMENTS and RELIEF REQUESTED

Zone: MU-13	Regulation	Existing	Proposed	Relief
Height G § 503.1	60-foot max.	25.5 feet	60 feet	None Required
Penthouse Height G § 503.2	12-foot max.	None	12 feet	None Required
Lot Width	None Prescribed	62.5 feet	62.5 feet	None Required
Lot Area	None Prescribed	20,320 sq.ft.	20,320 sq.ft.	None Required
Floor Area Ratio G § 502	4.00 max.	1.14	4.00	None Required
Lot Occupancy G § 504	75% max.	87%	61%	None Required
Rear Yard G § 505	12-foot min.	None	12-foot min. (varies)	None Required
Side Yard G § 506	8-foot min. if provided	0.8 to 6 feet	8 feet	None Required
Parking C § 701	17-space min.	None	42 spaces	None Required
Parking Setback from Lot Lines C § 710	20-foot min.	N/A	None	REQUIRED
Two-Way Driveway Width C § 711	20-foot min.	N/A	14 feet, 1 inch min.	REQUIRED
Two-Way Drive Aisle Width C § 712	20-foot min.	N/A	16-foot min.	REQUIRED
Loading C § 901	1 space @12 feet x 30 feet	None	1 space @12 feet x 30 feet	None Required

IV. OFFICE OF PLANNING ANALYSIS

a. Variance Relief from Subtitle C § 711.6(a), Minimum 20-Foot Two-Way Driveway Width

i. Exceptional Situation Resulting in a Practical Difficulty

The existing building is an historic structure, limiting the options available to the applicant to modify the façade to enlarge openings into the building to provide for vehicular access, and the need to retain existing interior columns wherever possible. The proposed entrance from Water Street is further complicated by the location of support columns for the Whitehurst Freeway, located immediately to the south of the subject property. These columns cannot be moved, restricting the width of the Water Street entrance. As a result, the applicant proposes a driveway width of 14 feet, one inch from 34th Street and 19 feet from Water Street.

ii. No Substantial Detriment to the Public Good

The two parking levels would not be interconnected, minimizing the number of vehicles entering or exiting from each individual driveway, reducing the potential for conflict. Twenty-nine spaces would be located on the upper level and thirteen on the lower.

iii. No Substantial Harm to the Zoning Regulations

The reduced driveway widths would allow the applicant to provide for off-street parking within the existing structure while maintaining the historic features of the building as directed by OGB.

b. Variance Relief from Subtitle C § 712.5, Minimum Two-Way Driveway Aisle Width

i. Exceptional Situation Resulting in a Practical Difficulty

The applicant is unable to provide the minimum required two-way drive aisle width due to the internal configuration of the existing historic building, which include columns internal to the structure. Movement or relocation of these columns would potentially have an adverse impact on the building, resulting in a practical difficulty.

ii. No Substantial Detriment to the Public Good

The provision of narrower than required drive aisles would allow the applicant to provide code compliant parking spaces. The two proposed levels of parking would not be connected internally and would be for the use of residents only, limiting the number of vehicles that would access the garage, while also limiting demand for on-street parking by the new residents of the building.

iii. No Substantial Harm to the Zoning Regulations

The requested reduction in the width of a two-way drive aisle would allow the applicant to provide the required on-site parking to serve the apartment building that is proposed to be constructed atop the existing historic structure.

c. Special Exception Relief from Subtitle C § 710.2, Location Restrictions

i. The Board of Zoning Adjustment shall determine that it is not practical to locate the spaces in accordance with Subtitle C § 710.2 for the following reasons:

- (1) Unusual topography, grades, shape, size, or dimensions of the lot;**
- (2) The lack of an alley or the lack of appropriate ingress or egress through existing or proposed alleys or streets;**
- (3) Traffic hazards caused by unusual street grades; or**
- (4) The location of required parking spaces elsewhere on the same lot or on another lot would result in more efficient use of land, better design or**

The subject property is a long narrow lot, with a width of 40 feet, 2 inches at its narrowest, making a minimum setback of 20 feet from all exterior walls of the building impractical. Due to the narrowness of the lot, the applicant is only able to design one double-loaded aisle, possible only if the Board also grants the requested area variance relief to minimum required two-way drive aisle width. Due to the size of the lot and the historic nature of the structure, the applicant is unable to expand the building to accommodate the minimum 20-foot requirement. Construction of a below-grade garage would not be possible due to the historic nature of the existing building, its location within the floodplain and the existence of bedrock below the building, making excavation difficult and resulting in the need for the applicant to locate above-grade parking less than twenty feet from the subject property's lot lines.

ii. The accessory parking spaces shall be located so as to furnish reasonable and convenient parking facilities for the occupants or guests of the building or structures that they are designed to serve; and

The proposed parking spaces would be located within the building, with internal access from within the building to the parking, making the spaces those reasonable and convenient to the residents.

iii. The Board of Zoning Adjustment may impose conditions as to screening, coping, setbacks, fences, the location of entrances and exits, or any other requirement it deems necessary to protect adjacent or nearby property. It may also impose other conditions it deems necessary to assure the continued provision and maintenance of the spaces.

The applicant proposes to preserve the existing building façade as directed by the Old Georgetown Board (OGB), which OP finds would protect adjacent and nearby property.

V. OTHER DISTRICT AGENCIES

DDOT, in a memorandum dated March 16, 2020, noted a number of concerns, but recommended approval of the application subject to a list of conditions. (Exhibit 33) No other District agency comments were submitted to the record as of the date of the filing of this report.

VI. ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION

At Exhibit 30 is a report from ANC 2E in support of the application.

VII. COMMUNITY COMMENTS TO DATE

No community comments were submitted to the record as of the date of the filing of this report.

Attachment: Location Map

