

**BEFORE THE BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT
OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

Application of Alabama Apartments LLC
ANC 8B

STATEMENT OF THE APPLICANT

This is the application of Alabama Apartments LLC (the “**Applicant**”) for special exception relief to allow the redevelopment of the property located at 2483-2491 Alabama Avenue SE (Square 5730, Lots 7, 9, 11, 118-126, 800, 801, 861, 863, 865, 867, 869, 871, 918) (the “**Property**”) into a new all-affordable multifamily apartment building.¹ The Property is located in the RA-1 zone.

I. NATURE OF RELIEF SOUGHT

The Applicant requests that the Board of Zoning Adjustment (“**Board**”) approve a special exception under Subtitle U § 421 for new residential development in the RA-1 zone.

II. JURISDICTION OF THE BOARD

The Board has jurisdiction to grant the relief requested pursuant to Subtitle X § 900.2 of the Zoning Regulations (11-X DCMR § 900.2).

¹ Alabama Apartments LLC is an affiliate of Durrani Development.

III. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPERTY AND SURROUNDING AREA

The Property is located in the Knox Hill neighborhood in Ward 8. It contains approximately 60,787 square feet of land area. The Property is mostly unimproved but contains a small building formerly used as a church. The Property is an irregularly-shaped tract bordered by Alabama Avenue SE to the west, a 16-foot wide public alley to the east, a small apartment building and unimproved land to the north, and semi-detached dwellings to the south. The Property is partially bisected by a portion of an unimproved 20-foot wide alley that the Applicant intends to close and incorporate into the Property.

The Property exhibits a varied topography with a change in grade of approximately 19 feet across the site. The site slopes downward from west (Alabama Avenue) to east (16-foot alley). This grade change strongly influences site planning, building design, and access.

The surrounding area is a mix of residential and institutional uses. Across Alabama Avenue to the west are two churches and a small three-story apartment building. Across the 16-foot alley to the east are multiple two-story apartment buildings. Further to the north along Alabama Avenue and 25th Street SE are large three story apartment buildings. Stanton Elementary School is located approximately 1/3 mile to the north between 25th Street and Alabama Avenue, and on the south side of the school is a large recreational field and baseball diamond. The Skyland redevelopment project is located approximately ½ mile to the north.

IV. PROPOSED PROJECT

As shown in the architectural plans attached as Exhibit A (the “**Plans**”), the Applicant proposes to construct a new all-affordable apartment building with 86 units and 14 surface parking spaces (“**Project**”). The three-story plus cellar building will have a “U” shape with a large courtyard opening to the north. The 14 parking spaces and loading facilities will be located within the courtyard, which will be accessed from the north via the 20-foot public alley, much of which the Applicant will improve. However, trash pick-up will occur from the 16-foot alley to the east so that it is separated from the rest of the building’s operations. To the northeast of the building will be a large landscaped area and tot lot. The Project will be three above-grade stories, but it will step down to the east as the topography slopes downward toward the 16-foot alley. The roof of the building will contain both green roof and solar panel arrays.

As shown in the Plans, the Project will have a high-quality design that is articulated on all sides. The material and color selections will reflect a superior design not typical of affordable projects. The quality design will wrap all sides of the building so that rear (alley) elevation does not appear to be less designed than the front.

The Project will add 86 affordable units to a site where no housing currently exists. The Project will accommodate multiple household types, from singles to families: approximately 37% of the units will be one-bedrooms, 33% two-bedrooms, and 30% three-bedrooms.

The Project will conform to all of the development standards for the RA-1 zone. Except for the relief requested herein, the Project will be matter-of-right.

V. THE APPLICATION SATISFIES THE CRITERIA FOR THE REQUESTED SPECIAL EXCEPTION RELIEF

Under Subtitle U § 421 of the Zoning Regulations, new residential development is permitted in the RA-1 zone if approved by the Board as a special exception, subject to the applicable criteria. As described below, the Project satisfies the applicable criteria.

1. The Area Schools Can Accommodate the Number of Students Expected to Reside in the Project (U § 421.2(a)).

The Project is in-boundary for Stanton Elementary School, Kramer Middle School, and Anacostia High School, and it is expected that all of them will be able to accommodate school-aged children residing in the Project. This application will be forwarded to the D.C. Public Schools for review and comment, and the Applicant will address any issues that they identify.

2. The Public Streets, Recreation, and Other Services Are Adequate to Accommodate the Residents of the Project (U § 421.2(b)).

The 14 parking spaces included in the Project will balance the parking needs of the residents of the Project, while not overburdening the surrounding street network. While the Project will add trips to the surrounding streets, it will not be significant or adverse to the neighborhood; the existing street and alley network will be sufficient to accommodate the Project's residents and relatively few cars. To demonstrate this conclusion, the Applicant is preparing a traffic study in consultation with DDOT that will be submitted to the record prior to the public hearing.

Ample public recreation facilities are proximate and available to future residents of the Project. Hillcrest Recreation Center, which offers a fitness center, gymnasium, multipurpose room, community garden, outdoor playground, spray park, and other recreation facilities, is located approximately 0.9 mile by walking from the Property to the northeast. Fort Stanton Recreation Center is located approximately 0.6 mile by walking from the Property to the west; in addition to indoor facilities, it offers an outdoor pool, outdoor basketball courts, a baseball diamond, and outdoor chess/checker boards. Also, the recreation field and baseball diamond to the north are DCPS facilities but available for public use. Accordingly, with multiple public recreation facilities in such close proximity to the Property, such facilities should be able to accommodate the Project's residents. This application will be forwarded to the Department of Parks and Recreation for review and comment, and the Applicant will address any issues that they identify.

The Applicant's preliminary analysis indicates that utilities (electric, water) have sufficient capacity to accommodate the Project, and the Applicant will address any issues from such utilities.

3. *The Site Plan, Arrangement of Buildings, and Provisions of Light, Air, Parking, Recreation, Landscaping, and Grading Are Appropriate (U § 421.3).*

The siting and scale of the proposed building maximizes the light and air provided to the future residents and minimizes any potential adverse impact on the surrounding community. The site plan has been carefully configured to create a strong streetscape presence along Alabama Avenue, while still providing substantial

open space and landscaping. This will allow an improved pedestrian experience along the street while not adversely impacting neighboring properties. Specifically, the Project will be oriented toward the street with the front façade occupying most of the width of the lot along Alabama Avenue. This approach is consistent with modern urban planning best practices and signals a noteworthy shift from the current condition where much of the streetscape is undeveloped.

At the same time, the Project will incorporate open space and massing intended to maintain the surrounding development character and accommodate, rather than counteract, the Property’s sloping grade. The site plan will include two significant open spaces – the courtyard in the center of the building and the open green space at the northeast side of the site. This will allow for ample light and air available to both Project residents and residents of nearby properties. Also, the building will step down toward the rear as the grade slopes down in order to maintain a consistency of height and scale throughout the site. Finally, the roof of the building will have few visible elements, so the building’s overall massing will be minimized to preserve light, open space, and visual harmony.

As shown on the Plans, all of the building’s elevations will incorporate high-quality architectural design that will visually enhance the streetscape through articulation and varied materials. This design will wrap the entire building to avoid having distinct “sides” and “rear” of lower quality design. This important decision to extend the design to all of the building will allow for positive visual experience of the

building from every angle and make sure that the building is an architectural asset to the neighborhood.

Finally, the Project will include extensive landscaping meant to enhance the site for both the residents and the neighborhood. As shown on the Plans, the landscaping will incorporate varied plants and trees as well as other materials to create a visually pleasing experience. Residents will be able to enjoy passive recreation in the landscaped area on the northeast area of the site. In addition, the site plan will incorporate a small “tot lot” near the courtyard for children who reside in the Project.

4. *The Requested Relief Will Be in Harmony with the General Purpose and Intent of the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps and Will Not Tend to Affect Adversely the Use of Neighboring Property (X § 901.2).*

Because this application satisfies the specific criteria set forth in Subtitle U § 421, the proposed Project will be harmonious with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Map and will not adversely affect neighboring property. As a matter of policy, a project of the size and massing proposed is an appropriate use in the RA-1 zone, provided that it satisfies applicable criteria. Given the Project’s characteristics, nothing about the Project contravenes the intent of the Zoning Regulations. Rather, the Applicant seeks to improve the largely undeveloped site with an attractive new building. Further, the Project will advance the important goal of increasing the District’s supply of affordable housing on a site that currently has no housing.

The Project will not adversely affect neighboring property and, to the contrary, will complement and enhance the surrounding area by improving the Property's connection with the street, improving the Property's open space, and preserving ample light and air, as discussed above.

VI. CONCLUSION

For all of the above reasons, the Applicant is entitled to the special exception relief requested in this case.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/_____

Cary R. Kadlecek