

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

Application of
555 E Street Hotel SW, LLC

BZA Application No:
ANC 6D01

STATEMENT OF THE APPLICANT

This application is made by 555 E Street Hotel SW, LLC (the “**Applicant**”) to the Board of Zoning Adjustment (the “**Board**”) for special exception relief pursuant to Subtitle C § 1500.3(c) to permit a rooftop bar and restaurant for the proposed hotel located at 550 School Street SW (Square 494, Lot 36) (the “**Property**”) in the D-5 zone. The Project will conform to the Zoning Regulations in all other respects.

I. JURISDICTION OF THE BOARD

The Board has jurisdiction to grant the relief requested pursuant to Subtitle X § 901.1 of the Zoning Regulations.

II. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPERTY, SURROUNDING AREA, AND PROJECT

The Property is zoned D-5 and is located in Southwest Washington, east of L’Enfant Plaza and one (1) block north of Highway I-395. The Property is located in Square 494, which is bounded by 6th Street SW to the west, School Street SW to the north, 4th Street SW to the east, and E Street SW to the south. The surrounding area consists primarily of U.S. federal government office buildings with ground-floor retail uses, as well as hotels. The adjacent property to the east is improved with an office building occupied by the D.C. Department of Forensic Sciences. In addition, St. Dominic Catholic Church is located across the street from the Property, at the southwest corner of E and 6th Streets SW. The Property is approximately 0.3 miles walking distance southeast of the L’Enfant Plaza Metrorail Station.

The Property was previously improved with the Engine Company 13 fire station, which has since been relocated. Pursuant to a long-term ground lease from the District government, the Property is being redeveloped with a mixed-use project consisting of a mixed-income, mixed-age multifamily residential use and hotel, as well as ground-floor retail (the “**Project**”). The residential use will consist of 194 units, including 58 affordable senior housing units. The hotel will be a boutique, European-style hotel with approximately 252 rooms (the “**Hotel**”) developed and operated by the Applicant, separate from the residential use. The Applicant is an affiliate of CitizenM, which has hotels in select cities throughout the world, and this will be the first CitizenM hotel in D.C.

The Project will include a penthouse level with space split between the residential use and the Hotel, as shown on the architectural plans attached as Exhibit A (“**Plans**”). The Applicant is proposing a rooftop bar and restaurant to occupy the Hotel portion of the penthouse, which will consist of approximately 3,934 gross square feet of penthouse floor area, as shown in the Plans.

III. THE APPLICATION SATISFIES THE CRITERIA FOR THE REQUESTED RELIEF

Eating and drinking establishments are permitted as a matter of right with no restrictions in the D-5 zone in which the Property is located, pursuant to Subtitle I § 302.1 and Subtitle U § 515.1(e). However, under Subtitle C § 1500.3(c), special exception relief is required to locate such uses in a penthouse. Accordingly, the Applicant requests special exception relief for approval of the proposed rooftop bar and restaurant for the Hotel.

Pursuant to Subtitle C § 1500.3(c) and Subtitle X § 902.1, a rooftop bar and restaurant may be approved provided the Applicant demonstrates that the use is 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. There are no additional standards for approval specific to this particular use. The Project satisfies this criteria, as discussed below.

The proposed rooftop bar and restaurant is in harmony with the Zoning Regulations. As noted above, a bar or restaurant is permitted in the D-5 zone in which the Property is located, and accordingly the use is presumed to be compatible with the mix of uses permitted in the zone. Further, bar and dining services are a customary amenity provided as part of a hotel, which is also permitted as a matter of right in the D-5 zone. Here, the proposed rooftop bar and restaurant will serve as a place for hotel guests to socialize and relax during their stay, as well as providing an additional destination for gatherings for nearby residents, area office workers, and others visiting the District. This amenity will offer attractive views of the surrounding cityscape and will also, in combination with the residential use and underlying Hotel, contribute to the activation of the surrounding pedestrian network by generating additional foot traffic in the area.

The Project and proposed rooftop bar and restaurant are also in line with the goals of the D zones, and the D-5 zone specifically, to promote a high-density mix of uses, including lodging, entertainment, and residential uses. *See* 11 DCMR Subtitle I §§ 100.1(b) and 538.1. The Project will provide new hotel, retail, eating and drinking, and residential uses in the immediate area, which currently is largely predominated by federal office complexes. By doing so, the Project will bring a new dimension to the vicinity and capitalize on its central location — the Property is less than half a mile from the National Mall and Smithsonian museums to the north and roughly half a mile from the burgeoning Wharf development along the Southwest waterfront.

While the site is well-located, the immediate area is also bordered by I-395 to the south and the CSX rail overpass along Virginia Avenue to the north, both of which effectively serve as a barrier — either physical in the case of I-395 or visual in the case of the CSX overpass — that

can create a sense of detachment from neighboring areas. Adding a new gathering point to this location, such as the proposed rooftop bar and restaurant, will create a destination that enables the Project to achieve a greater degree of engagement with the existing development and surrounding uses, also thereby strengthening the area's connection to and continuity with the amenities in adjacent neighborhoods. Accordingly, the proposed bar and restaurant will not adversely affect neighboring properties, but to the contrary will complement the surrounding development and create a more dynamic mix of uses, as is intended in the D zones. We note also note that, because the rooftop use will require a liquor license, the ABRA licensing process will provide a forum for the Applicant to work with the Advisory Neighborhood Commission ("ANC"), in this case ANC 6D, and the surrounding community to address specific operational issues such as hours of operation, etc.

IV. CONCLUSION

For all of the above reasons, the Applicant has satisfied the standards for the requested special exception relief in this case and requests approval for such relief.

Respectfully submitted,

John T. Epting

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