



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment

**FROM:** Matt Jesick, Case Manager  
*JL* Joel Lawson, Associate Director Development Review

**DATE:** July 7, 2015

**SUBJECT:** BZA #19011 – 129 Varnum Street, NW – Supplemental Report

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### **I. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION**

Since the Office of Planning (OP) issued its initial report, the applicant has made significant adjustments to the building and site design proposed with the application. Based on the most recent changes, seen in Exhibit 30, OP **recommends approval** of the application. The major changes which addressed OP's previous concerns include:

- Creating an entrance on the front of the building to increase the residential character of the development, in keeping with the rest of the street;
- Pushing the building back to be in line with the existing houses on the street;
- Relocation of the trash bins from next to proposed residential units and close to the neighboring house to a position adjacent to the alley;
- Reduction in the size of the "4<sup>th</sup> floor" so that it no longer constitutes a story but is rather a rooftop structure.

Provided DDOT does not raise objections, OP also supports the newly requested variances to drive aisle width and parking space width:

- § 2115.1 Size of Parking Spaces (9' width required, 8'6" provided for three of the six spaces);
- § 2117.8(c)(2) Driveway Width (12' required, 11' provided).

### **II. ANALYSIS**

Section 353 requires special exception review for new residential developments in the R-5-A zone. OP's analysis focused on ensuring that the proposed development would be compatible with the residential character of the neighborhood and immediately adjacent residences. Based on the revised design, OP comments favorably on the "site plan, arrangement of buildings and structures, and provisions of light, air, parking, recreation, landscaping, and grading as they relate to the future residents of the project and the surrounding neighborhood" (§ 353.4).

The façade of the revised design would be in line with the building line established by other homes on the street. Also, the newly proposed entrance on the front of the building would

improve the development's residential appearance, making it more compatible with the character of the neighborhood. Moving the trash to the alley would mean fewer impacts to future residents of this project and the neighbor to the east. And reduction of the size of the rooftop structure means that it does not count as a story and the building would meet requirements for height and side yards. The applicant has also re-examined the materials on the building and would increase the height of the brick to better match the arrangement of materials on nearby structures. To further maintain the character of the neighborhood, the revised design proposes to keep the existing opening in the retaining wall at the sidewalk. Retaining walls are characteristic of this neighborhood and keeping the existing wall would help integrate the new development into the streetscape.

Because of the changes in the building and site layout, the design now proposes some larger residential units, including 4-bedroom units, which would help attract families to the new project. The design continues to propose a canopy at the entry walk, but the plans note that any features in public space or beyond the building restriction line would potentially be subject to Public Space Committee review.

### **Variations From Parking Space and Driveway Requirements**

The subject lot is unusually narrow compared to typical R-5-A-zoned lots throughout the city, and accommodating the necessary parking, drive aisle and trash receptacles in the given space would make strict compliance with the Regulations a practical difficulty for the applicant. By proposing a slight deviation from the requirements for driveway width (12' required; 11' proposed) and parking space width (9' required; 8'6" proposed), the design is able to accommodate a trash enclosure at the alley, rather than next to the building. The proposed location would mean less impacts to both future residents of the subject building and the adjacent house in terms of odor, noise and pests such as rodents and insects. The slightly more narrow widths would not impair the intent of the Regulations; The required number of parking spaces would still be provided, the drive aisle would appear to be functional, and the location of the trash enclosure would more fully satisfy the goal of § 353 to create developments compatible with their surroundings.