

MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Zoning Commission

FROM: *JL for* Jennifer Steingasser, Deputy Director, Development Review & Historic Preservation

DATE: March 7, 2016

SUBJECT: **Public Hearing Report for ZC #16-01**
1542 1st Street, SW
Design Review Under the Capitol Gateway Overlay

I. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

This application proposes an eight unit apartment building. The proposed use which would meet the Capitol Gateway Overlay goal for increasing residential population in the neighborhood, and the design and scale of the building would not be out of character with its surroundings. The Office of Planning (OP) supports the requested parking variance relief, and can fully support the design review application pending the applicant’s further study of the materials and design of the party walls, as well as examination of whether the green features of the building can be enhanced.

II. APPLICATION-IN-BRIEF

Location	1542 1 st Street, SW (Square 656, Lot 813) Ward 6, ANC 6D
Applicant	TMASSHLDG, LLC
Zoning	CR / CG (Commercial Residential / Capitol Gateway Overlay)
Site Area	3,000 sf
Proposed Development	8-unit, 4 story apartment building 10,040 square feet (3.3 FAR)
Relief	Pursuant to 11 DCMR § 1610.7, the following relief is requested in order to develop as proposed: 1. Variance from parking requirements (§ 2101, 3 spaces required, zero proposed).

III. SITE, AREA AND PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The subject property is located on the east side of 1st Street, SW, north of Q Street. The adjacent property to the south is a small retail building, and to the north is a two-story charter school housed in what appears to be a former commercial building. Further to the north are low to

moderate density garden style apartments. Across 1st Street are rowhouses, and rowhouses also occupy most of the frontage of the unit block of Q Street between Half and 1st Streets. There is an alley in the square, but not adjacent to the subject site. The remainder of the neighborhood is a mix of apartment and rowhouse uses, as well as industrial uses, primarily to the south of this site. The proposed soccer stadium would be located just over a block south of the subject property, and Fort McNair is one block to the west. All immediately adjacent properties are zoned CG/CR, while properties further to the north are zoned R-4. The site is about six tenths of a mile from the Half Street Navy Yard metro entrance and about seven tenths of a mile from the Waterfront metro.



The proposed development would consist of an eight unit, four story apartment building. The building's parameters are described in the table below. Each floor would have two units, including one 1BR, five 2BRs, and two 3BR units. The building would be set back 12.5' from the front property line in order to meet the CR open space requirement. That area would be used for walkways to access the two entrances needed to meet fire code, and be landscaped to enhance the streetscape and provide a visual buffer to the ground floor unit. Sheet 0.09 of Exhibit 2E indicates that a bioretention facility would be included as part of the landscaping. Bike racks are proposed to be placed in public space, and the applicant would be improving the sidewalk in

conformance with DDOT’s forthcoming Buzzard Point design guidelines. Residents would have access to the rear yard of the building, as well as the communal roof terrace.

Item	Requirement	Proposed	Relief
Lot Area	n/a	3,000 sf	Conforming
Lot Width	n/a	24’	Conforming
Height § 630	90’	54’6”	Conforming
FAR § 631	6.0	3.3	Conforming
Open Space § 633	10% of lot area (300 sf)	10% 300 sf (12.5’ x 24’)	Conforming
Lot Occ. § 634	75%	75%	Conforming
Rear Yard § 636	3 in. / ft. of height Min. of 12’ (13’7.5”)	19’6”	Conforming
Parking § 2101	1 per 3 units	0	Requested

The design proposes an industrial-inspired façade that would not be out of character with the historic industrial uses in the neighborhood. The front and rear façades would be brick, while the party walls are proposed to be EIFS. Elevation drawings at Sheets 2.20 and 2.30 indicate that two different colors would be used to break up the depth of the walls. While the sides of this building could eventually be covered with development on adjacent lots, it is not known when that could occur. The applicant informed OP that alternate materials were considered for the party walls, but ultimately rejected because of the increase in cost relative to the overall project cost. OP has encouraged the applicant to again examine what alternative design options are possible for the party walls so that the exposed surface can present the most pleasing possible view.

IV. ZONING

The subject site is zoned CR / CG (Commercial-Residential / Capitol Gateway Overlay). The CR district is designed to “help create major new residential and mixed use areas in planned locations at appropriate densities, heights and mixture of uses” (600.3(a)). The Capitol Gateway Overlay is intended to encourage a mix of uses while creating a pedestrian-friendly environment. The proposal as designed requires relief as noted below.

1. Variance from Parking (§ 2101)

The application proposes no parking for the project, where the CR zone would require three spaces. The subject site has no alley access so cannot provide access to parking from the rear. Providing parking from the front would disrupt the streetscape and severely impair the design of any proposed building or perhaps even prevent the ability to develop the 24-foot wide site. It is also extremely unlikely that the Public Space Committee would approve a curb cut in this location. The subject site has a combination of exceptional conditions that would prevent

compliance with parking requirements. As indicated in the parking study submitted by the applicant (Exhibit 10), several hundred parking spaces were available in the vicinity at peak hour, so the addition of three additional vehicles to the street should not unduly impact the parking supply for the neighborhood. OP, therefore, has no objection to the requested relief.

V. CRITERIA OF THE CAPITOL GATEWAY OVERLAY

The Capitol Gateway Overlay District lists a number of objectives for the overlay and provides specific criteria for the Zoning Commission review of proposed developments. The following is OP's analysis of these standards as applied to the application.

§ 1600.2 The purposes of the CG Overlay District are to:

- (a) Assure development of the area with a mixture of residential and commercial uses, and a suitable height, bulk and design of buildings, as generally indicated in the Comprehensive Plan and recommended by planning studies of the area;**

The project proposes a multi-family residential use, which is a use called for by this section. The height proposed, 54'6", is allowed in this zone, and is not inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan. While the Comprehensive Plan's Future Land Use Map shows that high density mixed use would be appropriate in this area, the height would be compatible with other nearby development in the immediate vicinity, which tends to be lower in scale. The project would enhance the walkability of the neighborhood – a key goal of the overlay – by replacing a blighted building, improving the landscaping, and replacing and widening the sidewalk.

§ 1610 Zoning Commission Review of Buildings, Structures and Uses

§ 1610.1 The following provisions apply to properties located:

- (e) On a lot within Squares 601, 656, or 657; ...**

§1610.2 With respect to those properties described in § 1610.1, all proposed uses, buildings, and structures, or any proposed exterior renovation to any existing buildings or structures that would result in an alteration of the exterior design, shall be subject to review and approval by the Zoning Commission in accordance with the following provisions.

§1610.3 In addition to proving that the proposed use, building, or structure meets the standards set forth in § 3104, an applicant requesting approval under this section must prove that the proposed building or structure, including the siting, architectural design, site plan, landscaping, sidewalk treatment, and operation, will:

(a) Help achieve the objectives of the CG Overlay District as set forth in §1600.2;

The project would help achieve the objectives of the CG Overlay. The project would add residential use to the area, and the building height and bulk would be appropriate to its surroundings, and not inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan, which states that high density mixed use would be appropriate on this square. The residential use would complement the existing nearby rowhouses and apartments. The goal of the Overlay of achieving a high level of design could be attained through the industrial motif employed on the building, but the applicant should examine other ways to dress the sides of the building rather than the current proposal, which presents a flat blank wall to the observer, and could be visible for several years.

(b) Help achieve the desired mixture of uses in the CG Overlay District as set forth in §§ 1600.2(a) and (b), with the identified preferred uses specifically being residential, hotel or inn, cultural, entertainment, retail or service uses;

The proposal would provide a residential use as encouraged by § 1600.2(a), and the added residents would help support retail, service and entertainment uses – preferred uses described in § 1600.2(b).

(c) Be in context with the surrounding neighborhood and street patterns;

The proposed development would be in context with the surrounding development patterns. While the zoning and Comprehensive Plan anticipate eventual high density development in this area, the proposal is lower in scale and would not be out of line with the existing rowhouses and apartments nearby.

(d) Minimize conflict between vehicles and pedestrians;

The proposed design would result in no conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians. The applicant has requested a variance from the three required parking spaces and no curb cut or driveway is anticipated. No loading is required for the building. With the installation of external bike racks as well as an internal bike storage room, the design would encourage biking as a mode of travel. As described in the traffic study (Exhibit 11), the applicant will commit to TDM measures including the provision of bicycle helmets and either bikeshare or carshare memberships to residents. These will further reduce the need for residents to own or operate private vehicles, reducing the chances of conflict with pedestrians.

(e) Minimize unarticulated blank walls adjacent to public spaces through facade articulation; and

The building façade facing 1st Street would have an industrial character not inappropriate for the neighborhood surroundings. The mix of brick and glass is an appropriate material palate for the streetscape. The proposed landscaping would also provide visual interest for the property.

While not literally adjacent to public spaces, the north and south party walls could be visible from public space for many years. The applicant should examine ways to enhance the appearance of those party walls.

- (f) **Minimize impact on the environment, as demonstrated through the provision of an evaluation of the proposal against LEED certification standards.**

The applicant's written statement indicates that they intend to achieve the equivalent of a Silver LEED rating, though the submitted LEED checklist only commits to points that would be the equivalent of certified. The applicant has already had discussions with DOEE, but OP has asked them to again speak with DOEE to find ways to enhance the green features of the building. The design does propose over 600 square feet of green roof on the building, as well as a bioretention facility in the front landscaping area.

§1610.7 The Commission may hear and decide any additional requests for special exception or variance relief needed for the subject property. Such requests shall be advertised, heard, and decided together with the application for Zoning Commission review and approval.

As described in this report, the design of the project would require relief from parking.

VI. COMMUNITY COMMENTS

As of this writing OP has received no comments on the project from the community, but the applicant has submitted a number of letters of support into the record. The ANC has also submitted to the record a letter in support of the application.