

MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment
FROM: Stephen J. Mordfin, AICP, Case Manager
Joel Lawson, Associate Director Development Review
DATE: February 19, 2013
SUBJECT: BZA Case 18506 – 1700 Columbia Road, N.W.

I. OFFICE OF PLANNING RECOMMENDATION

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

- § 2101, Off-street Parking
 - Number of Spaces (37 spaces required, 29 spaces proposed);
 - Compact Parking Spaces (Min. group of 5 required, min. 2 proposed).
- § 2201, Loading
 - Berths (one at 55 feet and one at 30 feet required, none proposed);
 - Platforms (one at 100 square feet and one at 200 square feet, none proposed); and
 - Delivery Spaces (two at twenty feet required; none proposed.)

The Office of Planning recommends **approval** of the following special exception:

- § 411, Roof Structures:
 - One permitted, 18 proposed;
 - One height permitted, two proposed; and
 - 1:1 setback required, < 1:1 setback proposed.

Subject to the following conditions:

1. No retail parking spaces shall be provided.
2. All loading associated with the building shall be in Columbia Road public space, with delivery between the hours of 7:00 AM and 4:00 PM, Monday through Saturday only.
3. Applicant shall designate a Loading Coordinator to coordinate residential move-in/move-out, and residents shall be required to notify the Loading Coordinator of residential moves.
4. No truck idling shall be permitted.

II. LOCATION AND SITE DESCRIPTION

Address	1700 Columbia Road, N.W.
Legal Description	Square 2565, Lot 52
Ward	1
Lot Characteristics	Level corner lot with no alley access
Zoning	C-2-B: Moderate density commercial zone
Existing Development	Former theater building converted to commercial space
Adjacent Properties	North: Across Columbia Road, five-story apartment buildings South: Three and four-story apartment buildings East: Across 17 th Street, apartment building and an elementary school West: Commercial buildings
Surrounding Neighborhood Character	Commercial uses and high rise apartments along Columbia Road, with lower density residential uses south of Columbia Road.

III. APPLICATION IN BRIEF

The applicant proposes to construct a six-story mixed use building with 9,403 square feet of ground floor retail, 29 off-street parking spaces and thirty-eight bicycle parking spaces within the garage. Eight of the bike spaces within the building would be reserved for the retail spaces. Three bicycle racks for six bicycles would be provided within public space on Columbia Road.

Eighty-five apartments, including studio, one and two-bedroom units, would be located on floors two through six. Sixth floor units would have access to rooftop decks. The residential lobby would be accessed from 17th Street, providing access to the elevators, an exercise room, mailroom and rental office.

Most of the ground floor would be devoted to retail space fronting on Columbia Road, but would also include trash rooms, retail bicycle storage and vehicular access to the parking garage below. The roof would include mechanical units in the center, with private roof decks for the sixth floor units around the edge of the building. One roof top deck with elevator access would be reserved in common for the residents of the building, and a decorative trellis would connect all of the stairwell enclosures. A total of ten roof structures are proposed. The height of all of the stair enclosures would be 10 feet and the height of the elevator override would be 18 feet. A rooftop embellishment would be provided at the corner of 17th and Columbia Road.

IV. ZONING REQUIREMENTS and REQUESTED RELIEF

C-2-B Zone	Regulation	Proposed	Relief
Lot Area	n/a	16,291 SF	None required
Height § 770	70-foot max.	70 feet ¹	None required
Floor Area Ratio § 771	4.2 max.	4.2 ²	None required
Lot Occupancy § 772	100% non-residential 80% residential max.	74%	None required
Parking § 2101	36 (8 commercial; 28 residential)	0 commercial; 29 residential	Required
Compact Parking § 2101.4	Min. 5 contiguous	Min. 2 contiguous	Required
Loading Berths § 2201	1 @ 30 feet; 1 @ 55 feet	None	Required
Loading Platforms § 2201	1 @ 100 SF; 1 @ 200 SF	None	Required
Delivery Spaces § 2201	2 @ 20 feet	None	Required
Roof Structures § 411.2	1:1 setback min.	< 1:1	Required
Roof Structures § 411.3	One enclosure max.	10 enclosures	Required
Roof Structures § 411.5	Enclosing walls of equal height	10 feet and 18 feet	Required

OFFICE OF PLANNING ANALYSIS

a. Variance Relief from § 2101, Off-Street Parking

i. Exceptional Situation Resulting in a Practical Difficulty

The subject property is triangular in shape and has no alley access. Vehicular access to the garage would be from 17th Street and the ramp would occupy almost the entire length of the property along the south side of the lot, reducing the size of the triangularly shaped garage. The shape of the garage does not lend itself to an efficient utilization of space and results in an inefficient parking layout, areas that cannot be devoted to parking, and compact parking in groups of less than five contiguous spaces.

ii. No Substantial Detriment to the Public Good

The reduction in parking would not result in a detriment to the public good. Although the request is to reduce the amount of parking by seven spaces and provide no retail parking, the applicant proposes to provide all of the required residential parking. For the security of the residents, the garage would be for residential use only.

¹ Includes additional five feet permitted by Inclusionary Zoning Act.

² Includes additional 20 percent FAR permitted by the Inclusionary Zoning Act

Although no retail parking would be provided, eight bicycle parking spaces would be provided within the building and six on the street for a total of fourteen dedicated to retail use, in excess of the two required. The site is also well served by public transportation. It has a Transit Score of 85, described as “Excellent Transit.” Two Metrorail stations, Woodley Park-Zoo on the Red Line and Columbia Heights on the Yellow/Green Line are located nearby, and Columbia Road and 16th Street are served by a total of six Metrobuses and one Circulator bus, making the site easily accessible. In combination, these would serve to increase the transportation options available to users of the building.

The compact parking spaces, not all of which would be provided in groups of five or more, would be located within the same general area of the garage, increasing the ease of use and utility of these spaces, and allowing the applicant to provide the required number of residential parking spaces within the building.

iii. No Substantial Harm to the Zoning Regulations

No substantial harm to the Zoning Regulations would result from the reduction in parking. The required number of parking spaces for the residential portion of the building would be provided. Provision of bicycle parking within the building and within the public space of Columbia Road for the retail users of the building, in combination with the other transportation option available within the neighborhood, including Metrobus, Metrorail and car sharing, make the building easily accessible by means other than private automobile.

The location of the compact parking spaces as shown on the drawing, “Proposed Building Design, Garage P1 Level Plan” and dated February 12, 2013, depicts all of the compact spaces within the same general area of the garage and would serve to group the compact parking spaces together within the garage.

b. Variance Relief from § 2201, Loading Berths, Loading Platforms and Service Delivery Spaces

i. Exceptional Situation Resulting in a Practical Difficulty

The exceptional situation resulting in a practical difficulty is the narrow pavement width of 17th Street, thirty feet, the desire of DDOT to not have vehicular access to the building from Columbia Road, a busy commercial corridor, and the existence of on-street parking on both sides of 17th Street. The combination of the narrow pavement width and the on-street parking permitted on 17th Street would make it impossible for trucks to negotiate the turning movements necessary to enter and exit the building. As a result any loading facilities provided within the building would be inaccessible to truck traffic.

ii. No Substantial Detriment to the Public Good

There would be no substantial detriment to the public good. The applicant proposes to work with DDOT to expand the existing loading space within Columbia Road and adjacent to the subject property from forty-one to fifty-five feet to accommodate the loading needs of the building. To minimize the impact on the surrounding neighborhood, loading would be restricted to the hours of 7:00 AM to 4:00 PM, Monday through Saturday, no truck idling would be permitted, and residents would be required to coordinate move-ins/move-outs with the Loading Coordinator.

iii. No Substantial Harm to the Zoning Regulations

There would be no substantial harm to the Zoning Regulations. The on-street loading would serve the loading needs of the building.

c. Special Exception Relief pursuant to § 411.11, Roof Structure Setback

i. Is the proposal in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps?

The application proposes to provide more than one roof structure at two different heights, not all set back a distance equal to their height from the edge of the roof. Reducing the height and increasing the number would serve to reduce the visibility of these structures from the ground. Although the elevator override would be set back a distance less than its height from the edge of the roof, it is in an area where a rear yard is provided, increasing its distance from the southern lot line to a distance greater than its height. Therefore, the proposal is in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations.

ii. Would the proposal appear to tend to adversely affect the use of neighboring property?

The applicant proposes two roof structure heights, ten feet for the stair enclosures and eighteen feet for the elevator. The elevator override, at a height of eighteen feet, would be set back fourteen feet, eight inches from the edge of the roof, less than a distance equal to its height. Although set back a distance less than its height from the edge of the south side of the building, its visibility would be minimized by the building's set back of approximately fifty feet from the property in the vicinity of the elevator override.

The proposed reduction of the height of the stairwell enclosures would reduce the visibility of these enclosures and minimize their visibility from the street, as shown on the drawing titled "Proposed Penthouse: Cross Section," and dated February 12, 2013. Increasing the number of rooftop enclosures, as opposed to consolidating and creating one larger structure, would also serve to minimize the impact on the neighborhood. Therefore, the proposal would not tend to adversely affect the use of neighboring property.

V. COMMENTS OF OTHER DISTRICT AGENCIES

DDOT, in an email to OP dated February 13, 2013, indicated that it is generally supportive of the application, but requests that the applicant provide additional bicycle parking spaces.

OP is not aware of comments from any other District agency.

VI. COMMUNITY COMMENTS

ANC 1C, at its regularly scheduled meeting of February 6, 2013, voted to support the application.

Attachment: Location Map

