

MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment
FROM: Brandice Elliott, Case Manager
 Joel Lawson, Associate Director Development Review
DATE: April 2, 2013
SUBJECT: BZA Case 18533, 827 Adams Mill Road, N.W.

I. OFFICE OF PLANNING RECOMMENDATION

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

- § 2101, Off-Street Parking
 - Number of Parking Spaces (37 spaces required, 24 spaces proposed).

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

- § 411, Roof Structures:
 - One permitted, three proposed;
 - One height permitted, three proposed; and
 - 1:1 setback required, less than 1:1 setback proposed

Based on a preliminary review of the site plan, the Zoning Administrator has determined that a variance for rear setback would be required. However, the applicant continues to have further discussion with the Zoning Administrator concerning this matter and has elected not to request this relief. OP has not provided an analysis or recommendation for this relief, as it was not requested.

II. LOCATION AND SITE DESCRIPTION

Address	1827 Adams Mill Road, N.W.
Legal Description	Square 2580, Lot 853
Ward	1, 1C
Lot Characteristics	The property is a uniquely shaped corner lot at the intersection of Adams Mill Road and Lanier Place. It is 14,695 square feet in area, with a ten foot wide alley located along the southern property line. There is a 15 foot wide building restriction line along Lanier Place and along a portion of Adams Mill Road.
Zoning	C-2-A – low to medium density residential that includes office employment centers, shopping centers and medium-bulk mixed use centers



Existing Development	Fueling station and automobile repair facility, permitted in this zone with a special exception. A portion of the adjacent building encroaches onto this site.
Historic District	N/A
Adjacent Properties	To the north, across Lanier Place, is a four story multi-family residential building and a single-story dry cleaning facility, both zoned R-5-B. To the south, across the ten foot wide alley, is a three story mixed use development, zoned C-2-B. To the east, is a three story office building, zoned C-2-A. The west, across Adams Mill Road, are three story row dwellings, zoned R-5-B.
Surrounding Neighborhood Character	The surrounding character consists generally of medium density mixed use development, including multi-family residential. Row dwellings are typical in the area west of Adams Mill Road; row dwellings and small apartment buildings are typical east of the site along Lanier Place.

III. APPLICATION IN BRIEF

The applicant proposes to construct a four story mixed use building with 8,692 square feet of ground floor retail and 36 residential units on the second through fourth floors. Parking will be provided below grade and accessed via the alley located south of the property. A total of 24 parking spaces would be provided in the garage, with 18 dedicated to the residential units and the remaining six spaces for the retail tenants. Twenty bicycle parking spaces would be provided in the garage. Additional bicycle parking spaces would be provided in the public space above grade adjacent to Adams Mill Road or Lanier Place, but the number of spaces will be determined as the applicant continues to work with the District Department of Transportation (DDOT).

The purpose of building restriction lines in this area is to enable the development of a park system along the street frontage. The applicant has not provided a landscape plan for streetscape along Lanier Place or Adams Mill Road, but it will require review through a Plan Design Review Meeting, with participation from agencies directly involved in the design of public space.

An estimated total of 36 residential units will be provided, including one and two bedroom units on floors two through four. The residential lobby would be accessed from Lanier Place. The applicant has indicated that the development would comply with inclusionary zoning regulations, allocating approximately three to four units toward affordable units.

The roof would be accessible to tenants of the building. Two stair towers would be provided, complying with separation requirements of the building code. In addition, an elevator penthouse would be provided adjacent to the interior wall along the east property line. The stair towers would be nine feet in height, while the elevator penthouse would be just below 16 feet in height.

IV. ZONING REQUIREMENTS and REQUESTED RELIEF

C-2-A Zone	Regulation	Proposed	Relief
Height § 400	50 ft. max.	50 ft.	None required
Lot Width § 401	N/A	151.08 ft.	None required
Lot Area § 401	N/A	14,695 s.f.	None required
Roof Structures § 411.2	1:1 setback min.	< 1:1	Required
Roof Structures § 411.3	One enclosure max.	3 enclosures	Required
Roof Structures § 411.5	Enclosing walls of equal height	15'-9" and 9'	Required
Floor Area Ratio § 402	3.0	2.88	None required
Lot Occupancy § 403	75% max.	72% ¹	None required
Rear Yard § 404	15 ft. min.	15 ft.	None requested ²
Side Yard § 405	0 ft. min.	0 ft.	None required
Court § 406	350 s.f. min.	355 s.f.	None required
Parking § 2101	37 (18 residential; 19 commercial)	24 (18 residential; 6 commercial)	Required

V. OFFICE OF PLANNING ANALYSIS

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

i. Exceptional Situation Resulting in a Practical Difficulty

The subject property is an irregular-shaped lot located on the corner of Adams Mill Road and Lanier Place. The property has a 15 foot wide building restriction line along Lanier Place and a portion of Adams Mill Road, with a PEPCO vault occupying space along Lanier Place. The west wall of the property located east of the lot encroaches onto the property, limiting the ability to develop the entire site. Further, as the site has been operating as a fueling station for a long period of time, it is believed that there is soil contamination below grade, substantially increasing the cost of development.

The physical limitation and irregular shape of the property create a practical difficulty in providing the number of parking spaces required by the zoning regulations. While the typical area allotted per parking space is 400 square feet, the

¹ This includes a portion of the adjacent building, which encroaches onto this site.

² The Zoning Administrator determined during a preliminary review that a rear setback should be provided along the length of the property, adjacent to all eastern property lines. The applicant continues to have discussions with the Zoning Administrator concerning this matter and is awaiting a final interpretation. However, relief for rear setback has not been requested as part of this application.

area associated with the proposed parking spaces and associated drive aisle would result in about 640 square feet per space. The trapezoid-shaped lot results in an inefficient configuration, with larger drive aisles and open spaces on the north and south ends of the garage.

Excavation of more than one garage level would result in the elimination of six spaces from the first level for the purpose of access, yielding 18 parking spaces on each level. Therefore, a total of 36 parking spaces would be provided where 37 are required, still necessitating relief from the zoning regulations. It is estimated by the applicant that the cost of a second level would be upwards of one million dollars (over \$55,000 per additional space), in part due to additional costs related to environmental remediation and disposal.

ii. No Substantial Detriment to the Public Good

The proposed reduction in parking would not result in a detriment to the public good. The requested variance for the number of parking spaces would reduce the number of spaces from 37 to 24, dedicating 18 parking spaces to the residential use and six spaces to the retail use. The parking for residential units would comply with the zoning regulations, while the retail use would lack 13 required spaces.

The proposed retail area is small and is not intended to be “destination” retail, resulting in few vehicular trips to the development. The property is located approximately ½ mile from the Woodley Park Metrorail station and ¾ mile from the Columbia Heights Metrorail station. With several Capital Bikeshare stations in the neighborhood and a bicycle network, the property retains a bike score of 94% on walkscore.com. In addition, the site has a walk score of 88%, which is considered “very walkable.” There are nine Metro bus routes within approximately 100 yards of the property and a total of 24 Metro bus routes in close proximity. Finally, there is a zipcar facility one-half block south of the site at 18th Street and Columbia Road, with several others within ¼ mile. In summary, the site is adjacent to several means of transportation and will be accessible to the neighborhood without causing substantial detriment to the area.

iii. No Substantial Harm to the Zoning Regulations

No substantial harm to the Zoning Regulations would result from the reduction in parking spaces. The required number of parking spaces for the residential use of the building would be provided (18 spaces). The provision of bicycle parking within the garage and the public space of Lanier Place and Adams Mill Road for the retail users of the building, in combination with other various types of transportation available in the neighborhood, including Metrobus, Metrorail and car sharing, make the development easily accessible by means other than private automobile.

b. Special Exception Relief pursuant to § 411.11, Roof Structure Setback, Number of Roof Structures, and Equal Height of Roof Structures

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

The request proposes to provide more than one roof structure at two different heights: the elevator penthouse would be 15.75 feet high; and the two stair towers and space associated with the roof deck would be nine feet in height. In addition, the applicant has indicated that two trellises at 8.75 feet in height for the roof deck are proposed. The elevator penthouse, as identified on the roof plan, would not be set back a distance equal to its height from the exterior wall of the building. To comply with the zoning regulations, this structure would require an additional separation of 5.25 feet from the exterior wall along the rear property line.

Due to the size of the roof deck, two separate means of egress are mandatory and are required by the Building Code to be remote from one another. The locations of the elevator penthouse and stairways cannot be located away from the exterior building wall because their locations are dictated by the locations of the elevator shaft and interior stairways in the building. Relocating the interior elevator shaft further north on the roof would result in an inefficient floor plan, thereby reducing the floor area in unit number one, as noted on the floor plan, by ten percent on floors two through four. Relocating the elevator penthouse further west on the roof, with an adequate setback from all exterior walls, would result in the reduction of several units between floors two through four.

The Zoning Regulations would require the roof structures to be housed in one structure of a single height. This would increase the visibility of the roof structure, as it would be a significantly larger and taller structure than those that are proposed. The structures are sufficiently set back from the street frontages, reducing their visibility from the street level. As a result, the proposal is in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations.

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

The elevator penthouse, located adjacent to the east interior building wall, is not set back a distance equal to its height from the exterior building wall along the rear property line. While the structure will be set back a distance less than its height from the exterior building wall, its visibility would be minimized from Lanier Place and Adams Mill Road, where it is compliant with the setback requirement.

Increasing the number of roof enclosures, as opposed to consolidating and creating one larger, taller structure, would also serve to minimize the impact on the neighborhood. In addition, the applicant has indicated that the neighbor located east of the property has not noted any concern in reference to the roof structures in their discussions concerning this request.

VI. COMMENTS OF OTHER DISTRICT AGENCIES

DDOT, in email to OP dated March 26, 2013, indicated that it is generally supportive of the application, but requests additional bicycle parking spaces on the site. Further, DDOT will request that the applicant provide Capital Bikeshare memberships to initial residential tenants.

VII. COMMUNITY COMMENTS

The applicant has met twice with the Planning, Zoning and Transportation Committee of ANC 1C and will meet with the full ANC on April 3, 2013. The applicant has also met with the Kalorama Citizens Association and with the immediate neighbors on Lanier Place to discuss this proposal.

Attachment: Location Map