

MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment
FROM: Anne Fothergill, Case Manager
JL Joel Lawson, Associate Director Development Review
DATE: January 5, 2015
SUBJECT: BZA Case 19181, 5701 Broad Branch Road, N.W.

I. OFFICE OF PLANNING RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning (OP) recommends **approval** of the following variance relief for proposed additions to a public school:

- § 2117.12 – open parking lot not meeting the screening requirements from contiguous residential properties in R-1-B;

and approval of the following special exception relief:

- § 411.3– rooftop structures with more than one enclosure (two proposed)
- § 411.5 – rooftop structures with enclosing walls of varying heights (7’, 10’3” and 10’ proposed)
- § 413.3 – retaining walls that exceed the maximum allowable height (6’ allowed; 7’ and 8.5’ proposed)

II. LOCATION AND SITE DESCRIPTION

Address	5701 Broad Branch Road, N.W.
Legal Description	Square 2012, Lot 0809
Ward	4
Lot Characteristics	The subject property is 258,074 SF and improved with a two-story school building and ancillary structures.
Zoning	R-1-B
Existing Development	Two-story elementary school building, permitted in this zone
Historic District	N/A
Adjacent Properties	There is a park to the north and a residential property to the east. Across the street to the south and west are residential properties.
Surrounding Neighborhood Character	The surrounding neighborhood is residential with one commercial structure across the street.



III. APPLICATION IN BRIEF

The applicants propose to renovate the entire school including demolition of part of the building and construction of new additions to the building and related site work.

IV. ZONING REQUIREMENTS

R-1-B	Regulation	Proposed	Relief
§ 411.3 Roof structures	One enclosure	Two enclosures	Relief required
§ 411.5 Roof structures	One height	Three heights (7', 10'3" and 10')	Relief required
§ 413.3 Retaining Walls	6' tall maximum	7' and 8.5' tall	Relief required
§ 2117.12 Open parking lot screening next to contiguous residential	42" minimum height masonry wall or evergreen trees	42" and higher wooden fence (72" max.)	Relief required

V. OFFICE OF PLANNING ANALYSIS

Special Exception Relief

Special Exception Relief from § § 411.3 and 411.5, pursuant to § 411.11:

i. Where impracticable because of operating difficulties, size of building lot, or other conditions relating to the building or surrounding area that would tend to make full compliance unduly restrictive, prohibitively costly, or unreasonable, the Board of Zoning Adjustment shall be empowered to approve, as a special exception under § 3104, the location, design, number, and all other aspects of such structure regulated under §§ 411.3 through 411.6, even if such structures do not meet the normal setback requirements of §§ 400.7, 530.4, 630.4, 770.6, 840.3, or 930.3, when applicable, and to approve the material of enclosing construction used if not in accordance with §§ 411.3 and 411.5; provided, that the intent and purpose of this chapter and this title shall not be materially impaired by the structure, and the light and air of adjacent buildings shall not be affected adversely.

The relief is needed to make the mechanical areas more compatible with the building and full compliance would be unreasonable due to building conditions including the installation of separate mechanical equipment systems on different parts of the building as part of the overall renovation. The applicant's architectural drawings respond to the comments of the Commission of Fine Arts and the Historic Preservation Office which directed the applicants to vary the mechanical screening heights to reduce their visual impact and to have two enclosures to break down the massing rather than one very large enclosure.

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

Because of the siting of the school building and the size of the equipment enclosures, the roof structure will be minimally visible which is consistent with the intent of the regulations.

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

The light and air of adjacent buildings would not be adversely affected and the proposed relief would not adversely affect the use of neighboring properties. The rooftop equipment enclosures will be a substantial distance from the neighboring properties (150 and 250 feet approximately) and they will be lower than the building's roof peak and within overall building height restrictions.

Special Exception Relief from § 413.3, pursuant to § 413.9

Do conditions relating to the building, terrain, or surrounding area make full compliance unduly restrictive, prohibitively costly, or unreasonable?

Conditions related to the subject building siting and the terrain would make full compliance with §413.3 restrictive. The existing raised terrace is being extended to the south to accommodate the new building additions and the proposed 8'6" site wall is designed around a substantial grade change at the southern end. The terrace wall is continuous and forms the

base to the building complex. The proposed 7' retaining wall at the end of the loading driveway area is designed around the grade change and to meet the physical and visual clearance required for the loading dock without impacting the park's existing grades and paths.

Would the proposal adversely affect the use of neighboring property?

Both walls will be located behind the school and adjacent to the school's field. The southern retaining wall at the loading dock will be approximately 150 feet from the closest residential property's rear façade.

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

The proposal is in keeping with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and Maps. The two walls will be set back from the street, located behind the school, and designed to be compatible with the school building design.

Area Variance Relief

Variance from § 2117.12 – open parking lot not meeting the screening requirements from contiguous residential properties in R-1-B

- 1. Does the property exhibit specific uniqueness with respect to exceptional narrowness, shallowness, shape, topography or other extraordinary or exceptional situations or conditions, and does the extraordinary or exceptional situation impose a practical difficulty, which is unnecessarily burdensome to the applicant?***

The adjacent residential property abuts an existing driveway to an existing parking lot for the school and the current conditions are non-conforming to the zoning regulations in terms of screening from an open parking lot. The owner of the adjacent residential property does not want the Applicant to comply by changing the screening to either a masonry wall or evergreen trees and prefers to have an in-kind replacement of the existing wooden picket fencing. The requested relief responds to the preference of the property owner whose property is intended to benefit from the screening requirement.

- 2. Can the relief be granted without substantial detriment to the public good?***

The relief requested would not be detrimental to the public good. The ANC has voted to support it and the adjacent and directly affected property owner requested the proposal that requires the relief.

- 3. Can the relief be granted without substantially impairing the intent, purpose and integrity of the Zoning Regulations and Map?***

The requested relief would not harm the zoning regulations. The intent of this regulation is to provide adequate screening of the open parking lot from the contiguous residential

property owner and the proposed relief would provide screening of a different kind, continuing the existing non-conforming condition.

VI. COMMENTS OF OTHER DISTRICT AGENCIES

The Historic Preservation Office and Commission of Fine Arts both reviewed and approved this proposal.

At the time of the staff report, no other District agency had submitted comments.

VII. COMMUNITY COMMENTS

The ANC voted to support the application at their December 14, 2015 meeting.