

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment  
**FROM:** Stephen J. Mordfin, AICP, Case Manager  
*JL* Joel Lawson, Associate Director Development Review  
**DATE:** December 29, 2016  
**SUBJECT:** BZA Case 19271A (4800 Meade Street, N.E.) for a special exception to permit more than one rooftop mechanical equipment enclosure on an existing public school building

**I. OFFICE OF PLANNING RECOMMENDATION**

The Office of Planning (OP) recommends **approval** of the following special exception to Subtitle C § 1500.6:

- C § 1500.6, Penthouse General Regulations (one enclosure permitted, two proposed).

**II. BACKGROUND**

BZA Order 19271, dated June 14, 2016, reduced the number of required on-site parking spaces from 142 to 86 as part of the conversion of this school facility from a middle school to a high school. The subject application has no impact on the previous approval for parking relief.

**III. LOCATION AND SITE DESCRIPTION**

Address	4800 Meade Street, N.E.
Applicant	DC Department of General Services
Legal Description	Square 5159, Lot 801
Ward, ANC	Ward 7, ANC 7C
Zone	R-2: detached and semi-detached dwellings, including public schools
Lot Characteristics	Generally rectangular lot with three street frontages
Existing Development	Public school building with accessory parking and athletic fields
Adjacent Properties	North: Deanwood Community Center and Library South: Across Meade Street, detached dwellings and institutional uses East: Across 49 <sup>th</sup> Street, low-rise apartments West: Across 48 <sup>th</sup> Street, one-family detached dwellings
Surrounding Neighborhood Character	Low to moderate density residential and institutional uses
Proposed Development	Modernization of existing school facility for use as the Ron Brown College Preparatory High School, including the installation of new rooftop equipment on the education building.

**IV. ZONING REQUIREMENTS and RELIEF REQUESTED**

<b>R-2 Zone</b>	<b>Regulation</b>	<b>Existing</b>	<b>Proposed</b>	<b>Relief</b>
Building Height C § 1602.1(b) and D § 207.7	60-foot max.	44.5 feet	44.5 feet	None Required
Lot Width C §1605.1	120-foot min.	504.99 feet	504.99 feet.	None Required
Lot Area C § 1605.1	9,000 sq.ft. min.	205,830 sq.ft.	205,830 sq.ft.	None Required
Lot Occupancy C § 1603.4	60% max.	33.5%	33.5%	None Required
Floor Area Ratio C § 1604.2	0.9 max.	0.88	0.88	None Required
Rear Yard D § 1606.1	20-foot min.	155 feet	155 feet	None Required
Penthouse Height C § 1501	18 feet, 6 inches max.	N/A	14 feet, 9 inches	None Required
Penthouse Setback C § 1502.1	1 to 1 min.	N/A	1:1 min.	None Required
No. of Penthouse Enclosures C § 1500.6	1 max.	N/A	2	<b>Required</b>

**V. OFFICE OF PLANNING ANALYSIS**

**Subtitle X Chapter 901 SPECIAL EXCEPTION REVIEW STANDARDS**

*901.2 The Board of Zoning Adjustment is authorized under § 8 of the Zoning Act, D.C. Official Code § 6-641.07(g)(2), to grant special exceptions, as provided in this title, where, in the judgment of the Board of Zoning Adjustment, the special exceptions:*

*(a) Will be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps;*

Special exception relief to permit the construction of two mechanical equipment enclosures on the roof the academic (eastern) building to enable the applicant to modernize it for use as a public high school, a use permitted as a matter-of-right within the R-2. Located within a residential zone, the requested relief to the penthouse regulations would permit the applicant to continue to use the existing improvements on the property as a public school, as otherwise permitted by the Zoning Regulations.

*(b) Will not tend to affect adversely, the use of neighboring property in accordance with the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps; and*

By minimizing the penthouse area and placing the penthouses only where required, the requested relief would reduce visibility of the rooftop mechanical structures, keeping with the intent of the penthouse regulations to minimize the appearance of rooftop enclosures to the extent possible.

*(c) Subject in specific cases to the special conditions specified in this title.*

An analysis of the special conditions for the granting of a special exception to the screening provisions for mechanical equipment as contained in Subtitle C § 1500.6 is as follows:

- (a) *The strict application of the requirements of this chapter would result in construction that is unduly restrictive, prohibitively costly, or unreasonable, or is inconsistent with building codes;*

The applicant proposes to construct two rooftop enclosures, one in the northeast corner of the building and the other in the southwest corner. Photovoltaic panels would be installed within each of the enclosures to generate some of the energy required for the school. Combining the two into one within the center of the building is not possible as the building is improved with a central courtyard. Constructing one large enclosure around the entire rooftop for the mechanical equipment installations would increase shadowing not only from around the building but also within the enclosure, reducing the effectiveness of the photovoltaic panels by fifty percent.

- (b) *The relief requested would result in a better design of the roof structure without appearing to be an extension of the building wall;*

The requested relief would reduce the visibility of the roof enclosure from surrounding properties, as it would significantly reduce the area needed to be enclosed. Instead of one enclosure consisting of approximately 27,000 square feet, the applicant proposes two separate enclosures, each with an area of approximately 840 square feet, for a total of 1,680, or a reduction of approximately 94 percent.

- (c) *The relief requested would result in a roof structure that is visually less intrusive;*

The requested relief would allow the applicant to construct two smaller mechanical equipment enclosures in place of one larger one that would encompass the entire roof, resulting in roof structures that would not be visible from all angles of the building. Both penthouses provide the minimum required setback and are lower in height than the maximum permitted.

- (d) *Operating difficulties such as meeting D.C. Construction Code, Title 12 DCMR requirements for roof access and stairwell separation or elevator stack; location to achieve reasonable efficiencies in lower floors; size of building lot; or other conditions relating to the building or surrounding area make full compliance unduly restrictive, prohibitively costly or unreasonable;*

Full compliance would result in the construction of a significantly larger roof structure, increasing cost and visibility. Centralizing the mechanical equipment is unreasonable due to location of a courtyard within the center of the building.

- (e) *Every effort has been made for the housing for mechanical equipment, stairway, and elevator penthouses to be in compliance with the required setbacks; and*

Although the applicant submitted drawings demonstrating that it is possible to design the mechanical equipment enclosures within one structure in conformance with the regulations, such a design would increase the impact the enclosure would have on neighboring properties.

*(f) 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 granting of this special exception request would reduce the amount of shadowing and visibility of caused by the rooftop enclosures, consistent with the intent of the penthouse regulations.

## **VI. COMMENTS OF OTHER DISTRICT AGENCIES**

DDOT, in a memorandum dated December 20, 2016, indicated that it has no objection to the application.

No other comments were received from District agencies.

## **VII. COMMUNITY COMMENTS**

No comments were received from ANC 7C.

No other comments were received.

