

MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment
FROM: Stephen J. Mordfin, Case Manager
Joel Lawson, Associate Director Development Review
DATE: October 24, 2018
SUBJECT: BZA Case 19804: **SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT**

This proposal is for the conversion of a row house to a three-unit apartment building, including the addition of a conforming third floor and three-story rear extension. Special exception relief is required for the conversion and for the rear addition to extend more than ten feet. At the hearing of September 19, 2018, the Board requested the applicant provide design alternatives to the proposed construction. Specifically, the Board requested plans detailing the difference between a ten-foot addition, permitted as a matter-of-right, and the proposed twenty-six-foot addition. Concerns of the Board included the following:

1. Effect the long staircase in the rear yard would have on privacy;
2. Lack of a shadow study to aid in the evaluation of how the proposed addition would affect light and air of adjacent properties; and
3. Evaluation of the proposed third-floor balcony and its effect on the privacy of neighboring properties.

The Board requested the applicant present the proposed revisions to the ANC at its regularly scheduled meeting of October 10, 2018. Although the applicant attended this meeting no action was taken by the ANC on the subject application.

On October 17, 2018 the applicant submitted three versions of the proposed conversion of the row house to three units in a supplemental filing (Exhibit 58) to the record in response to concerns raised. All three concepts impact the massing and design of the rear addition and include conversion of the building to three apartments.

1. Concept A (Sheets 2 thru 9 and 22) is the original proposal reviewed by the Board in September, with the proposed addition extending back approximately 26 feet on all three floors and the cellar, and a roof deck extending beyond the rear wall of the adjacent row house. The proposed gross floor area (GFA) is 3,899 square feet.
2. Concept B (Sheets 10 thru 14 and 23) maintains the rear addition on the cellar and first floors at 26 feet but reduces it to 13 feet with a 13-foot deep deck on the second floor and 13 feet with no deck on the third floor. Concept B reduces the GFA to 3,716 square feet (5% reduction). A roof top deck is proposed, but reduced in size, not extending back further than the walls of the adjacent buildings. These changes would reduce shadow and visibility into adjoining rear yards from the upper floors as compared to Option A. The reduced size of this building addition on the upper floors lessens its visual impact from the rear.

3. Concept C (Sheets 15 thru 19 and 24) reduces the rear building extension to ten feet beyond the rear wall of the existing building on all floors, as permitted. The GFA for Concept C is 3,031 square feet (22% percent reduction from Concept "A"). An eight-foot deck would be provided on the ground and second floors. The proposed roof top deck would be reduced in size and not extend back further than the walls of adjacent buildings.

Rear Exterior Staircase

The exterior stair on the original submission (Concept A) extended back 26 feet along the eastern side lot line. Concepts B and C include a redesigned switchback stairway, reducing its impact on the adjoining lot. The exterior stairwell is reduced in length, as it would switch back once, reducing it by approximately half.

Views from Public Ways

Sheets 20 and 21 depict the view of the third-floor addition from Upshur Street and does not change in the three options. Although visible from street, the addition is set back sufficiently not to detract from the street face along the south side of Upshur Street.

Sheets 22 through 24 depict the view of each of the concepts from the rear public alley. Although there is no significant difference in the appearance of the building addition in the drawings for any of the concepts due to the depth of the lot, Concepts B and C provide additional articulation, shorter lengths of visible side walls and a redesigned external staircase.

Shadow Study

Sheets 25, 26 and 27 are shadow studies for each of the concepts, including spring equinox, summer solstice and winter equinox. The greatest shadow impacts occurring during the winter equinox. Morning shadow on the rear yard of the lot to the west is relatively minimal, but is lessened with the reduced addition sizes of Concepts B and C. Afternoon shadows tend to be larger and fall on the roof and rear yard of the lot to the east. However, as Concept C provides for the shortest building addition, it also results in shadow primarily cast across the rooftop of the property to the east. Concept B would shadow some of the rear yard of the lot to the east, but less than those of Concept A.

Conclusion

Although OP did not oppose the original proposal, Concept B and Concept C address issues raised by the Board at the hearing on September 19, 2018. Those concepts eliminate the long stairwell in the rear yard, pull back the roof deck on the third floor, and reduce the mass at the rear of the structure. The shadow study documents all three would cast shadow into the yard to the east during the shortest days of the year. Shadows cast by either concept B or C are less than the original proposal, and the shadow cast by Concept B would not significantly differ from Concept A throughout much of the year.