

MEMORANDUM

TO: District Board of Zoning Adjustment

FROM: Paul Goldstein, Case Manager
Joel Lawson, Associate Director Development Review

DATE: September 18, 2012

SUBJECT: BZA No. 18401 - Request for special exception relief pursuant to §§ 508 & 3104 to permit the conversion of an existing alley building to office use.

I. OFFICE OF PLANNING RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning (OP) **recommends approval** of special exception relief to allow the conversion of two existing adjacent alley buildings to office use at 1749 and 1751 St. Matthews Court NW (Square 159, Lots 46 and 47). The application requires the following relief:

- §§ 508 & 3104: conversion of buildings to office use in the DC/SP-1 zone.

II. AREA AND SITE DESCRIPTION

Address:	1749 and 1751 St. Matthews Court NW ¹
Legal Description:	Square 159, Lots 46 and 47 (hereinafter, collectively the “Property”)
Ward/ANC:	2/2B
Lot Characteristics:	The Property includes two adjacent trapezoidal alley lots which collectively measure 2,170 square feet in land area. The Property has no street frontage, but abuts a 20' wide public alley to the south, a 10' wide public alley to the north, and an 11.75' wide public alley to the east of Lot 47.
Zoning:	DC/SP-1 DC: Dupont Circle Overlay District SP-1: Special Purpose District; designed to act as a buffer between adjoining commercial and residential areas.
Existing Development:	The lots are improved with abutting two-story structures which are approximately 22' tall. ² The application indicates that the two buildings are listed on the District of Columbia Inventory of Historic Sites. Presently, the buildings operate with a mix of office and storage uses. Two parking spaces are located internal to the Lot 47 building and two surface parking spaces are located on the north side of Lot 46.
Historic District:	Dupont Circle Historic District

¹ OP notes that the drawings submitted as part of the application appear to incorrectly reference the property addresses as 1747 & 1749 St. Matthews Court NW.

² OP notes that while the application indicates that 65' in height is permitted for the subject structures, § 2507.4 limits alley buildings to “the distance from the opposite side of the abutting alley to the outside wall of the structure nearest the alley.” Since the Applicant is not proposing an increase in the height of the structures, no related zoning analysis or relief for height should be necessary.

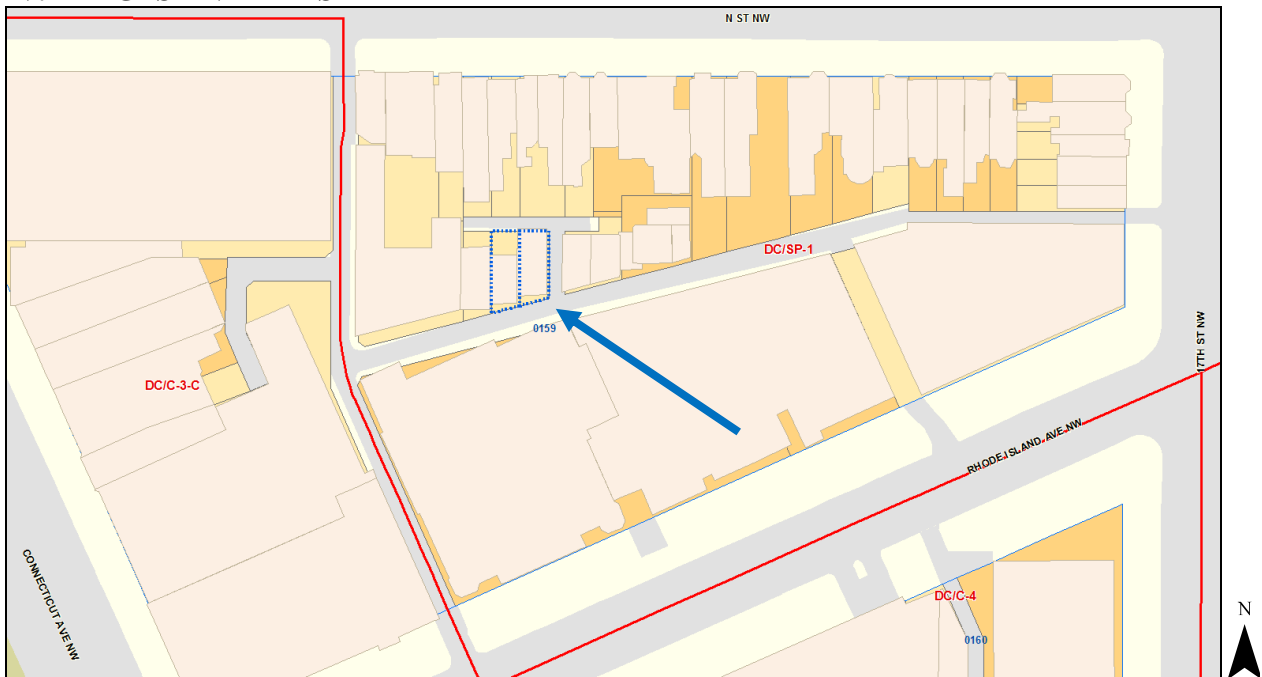


Adjacent Properties:	The Property is near other alley buildings to the east and west. The Applicant has indicated that the alley building abutting Lot 46 to the west appears to have an existing office use, and the alley building to the east of Lot 47 (across the 11.75' wide alley) appears to have a mix of office and residential use. To the north of the Property are the backs of roughly four-story commercial buildings. To the south of the Property is the back of the Cathedral of St. Matthew the Apostle.
Surrounding Neighborhood Character:	The subject Square is largely comprised of medium to high density office use and institutional uses, with a limited amount of residential use. The Square abuts the Connecticut Avenue commercial corridor to the west. The Dupont Circle Metro station is approximately three blocks northwest of the Property.

III. PROJECT DESCRIPTION IN BRIEF

Applicant:	SLS Carriage House Enterprise LLC (the “Applicant”)
Proposal:	The Applicant proposes to renovate, update and connect the interior layout, and retain and convert area within the existing two-story alley buildings to office use. In total, the building would contain approximately 2,583 square feet of gross floor area. ³ In the past, the site has functioned as a mix of office and storage uses, and the Applicant indicates that the requested zoning relief is necessary for office tenants to receive a certificate of occupancy. The Applicant also intends to subdivide the Property into a single lot. No additions or expansion of the existing building footprints are proposed. Four parking spaces presently on-site would be retained.
Relief Sought:	§§ 508 & 3104: office use in an SP-1 district

IV. IMAGES AND MAPS



Aerial view of the subject site (highlighted in blue and identified with arrow).

³ See Application Exhibit A, Sheet 2.



View of the subject block looking south across N Street (Property identified)

V. RELIEF REQUESTED & OP ANALYSIS

The application proposes to use the existing buildings for offices. Office uses are permitted in SP-1 zones subject to the satisfaction of the following criteria:

Special Exception (§ 508)

508.1 *Construction of a new office building or construction of an addition to a building for office use, or conversion of an existing building to office use, shall be permitted in an SP District if approved by the Board of Zoning Adjustment as a special exception under § 3104, subject to the provisions of this section. Construction of Fire Department Administrative Facilities shall also be permitted in an SP District if approved by the Board of Zoning Adjustment under § 3104, subject to the provisions of this section.*

508.3 *The use, height, bulk, and design shall be in harmony with existing uses and structures on neighboring property.*

Office uses are common in both the Square and the neighborhood more broadly. The Applicant is not proposing to change the height or bulk of the existing structures, but to renovate the buildings and update the internal layout to better accommodate office uses. Changes to the building design would be reviewed by the Historic Preservation Office. Finally, due to the limited size of the buildings, OP anticipates that the proposed office use would be in harmony with neighboring uses and structures.

508.4 *The use shall not create dangerous or other objectionable traffic conditions.*

The proposed use should not create dangerous or other objectionable traffic conditions. The Applicant only proposes to renovate the existing buildings for office use. The buildings front on an accessible 20' wide paved alley, and the four parking spaces presently existing on-site would be retained.⁴ The Property would not provide any on-site loading space, but none is required under the SP-1 zoning.

⁴ In SP-1 Zones, no parking is required for office uses on lots of less than 10,000 square feet in size. As such, the Property has no parking requirement.

508.5 *The Board may require special treatment in the way of design, screening of buildings, accessory uses, signs, and other facilities as it deems necessary to protect the value of neighboring property.*

OP does not propose that the Board require any special treatments in association with the project.

VI. ANC/COMMUNITY COMMENTS

As reflected in a letter dated June 25, 2012, ANC 2B voted unanimously to support the application. The Applicant's Pre-hearing submission included three letters in support, including one from the owner of an alley lot to east of the Property (1 St. Matthews Court NW).

VII. HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The Historic Preservation Office has indicated to OP that they have no objections to the application in concept.

VIII. OTHER DISTRICT AGENCIES

OP has not received comments from any other District agencies.