GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AND REGULATORY AFFAIRS
OFFICE OF THE ZONING ADMINISTRATOR

July 14, 2011

Norman M. Glasgow, Jr.
Steven E. Sher
Director of Zoning and Land Use Services
Holland & Knight LLP
2099 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W. - Suite 100
Washington, DC 20006

Re: 627 H Street, N.W, Square 453, Lot 59 – Revision to Design

Gentlemen:

This is to respond to your question concerning the above-referenced property located on the north side of H Street between 6th and 7th Streets, N.W. The property is currently vacant and is proposed to be redeveloped with an office building with retail uses on the ground floor. The property has been variously described as 627 H Street, 625 H Street and 627-631 H Street. The property has been subdivided into a single record lot, as referenced above. The zoning which applies to the property is C-3-C in the Downtown Development (DD) District Overlay.

The development as proposed required relief from the Board of Zoning Adjustment (BZA), for a special exception from the roof structure requirements of §411, a special exception to reduce the rear yard requirements of §774, a special exception to reduce the number of required parking spaces by no more than 25%, a variance from the accessibility requirements of §2117.4 and a variance from the loading and service delivery loading space requirements of §2201. By Summary Order No. 17673, dated October 17, 2007, the Board granted the requested variances and special exceptions for the project, pursuant to Exhibit No. 40, plans and elevations. By Order No, 17673A, dated September 17, 2009, the Board granted a two year extension of the original approval, meaning that the applicant has until October 17, 2011, to file an application for a building permit under the approval.

Since the BZA approved the application and the extension, the property has been acquired by a new owner. The owner has retained the same architect to move forward with construction documents for the project. At the owner's direction, the architect has revised the plans to reverse the elevation of the building; i.e., the office entry on the ground floor and the core of the building above have been moved to the north side of the property from the south side. In all other respects, the plans remain the same. The "flip" in the elevation results in no further or different relief from the BZA.

Because the property is located in the area known as Chinatown, the design of the building is subject to review under the Chinatown Design Guidelines. That review is conducted by the Office of Planning (OP), pursuant to the Mayor's Order implementing the Design Guidelines. The OP approved the revised plans on May 24, 2011. A copy of those approved plans is attached. In approving the plans, the OP reviewer commented as follows:

1. The applicant is submitting a revision to the previously approved 2007 Chinatown Design Review Application. The applicant is the new owner of the property, MR Gallery Square LLC c/o Monument Realty. The original Architects, Cunningham Quill Architects, were retained and provided the proposed design documents for the application.

2. The proposal will "flip" the original footprint and floor plans of the tower. The exterior facade will become the mirrored image of the original design as shown in the attached drawings. The rich Chinese architectural features in the original elevations will be retained in the revised building elevations.

Given the nature of the design change, as described by OP, the approval of the plans by OP and the fact that the original relief granted by the BZA remains unchanged and no additional relief is required, I conclude that you may proceed with these plans without further review by the BZA. Accordingly, I hereby confirm that I will approve for zoning purposes plans for a building permit to build the building as shown on the attached plans. My ruling is for zoning purposes only. You will have to comply with all applicable requirements of the Building Code and any other District rules and regulations which may apply.

Please let me know if I may be of further assistance.

Sincerely, Matthew Le Grant

Matthew Le Grant
Zoning Administrator

Attachments

File: Det Let re 627 H St NW for revised design to Glasgow 7-14-2011