

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



October 22, 2010

Steven E. Sher - Director of Zoning and Land Use Services
Holland & Knight LLP - Suite 100
2099 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington D.C. 20006

Re: Florida Avenue and 9th Street, N.E. Square N931, Lots 802, 803 and 804

Dear Mr. Sher:

This is to confirm the substance of our discussion on Tuesday, September 14, 2010, with Michael Belisle, Jerry Jewell and Peter Cooper, concerning the development of the property located in the block bounded by Florida and West Virginia Avenues and 9th and L Streets, N.E., known as Lots 802, 803 and 804 in Square N931. The property is zoned R-4. The property is presently vacant, comprises the entire above-referenced block and has frontage on all of the four streets cited.

You advised that the proposed development is to consist of two flats fronting on Florida Avenue which would share a common division wall. A flat is a use permitted as a matter-of-right in an R-4 District.

Each of the three lots contains less than 1,800 square feet in lot area; Lot 802 contains 1,468 square feet, Lot 803 contains 908 square feet and Lot 804 contains 890 square feet. Because of the unusual shape of the block, all the lots are non-rectangular and vary greatly in width, with the widest point along the Florida Avenue frontage and the narrowest point along the L Street frontage.

Section 401.1 of the Zoning Regulations provides that "in the case of a building located, on May 12, 1958, on a lot with a lot area or width of lot, or both, less than that prescribed in § 401.3 for the district in which it is located, the building may not be enlarged or replaced by a new building unless it complies with all other provisions of this title." A lot is defined in Section 199.1 of the Regulations as:

"the land bounded by definite lines that, when occupied or to be occupied by a building or structure and accessory buildings, includes the open spaces required under this title. A lot may or may not be the land so recorded on the records of the Surveyor of the District of Columbia."

You provided evidence to me through plats from the Baist Atlas from 1921 through 1967 that the three lots were improved with houses on May 12, 1958. Those houses were demolished after that date. Accordingly, §401.1 would allow each of the three existing lots to be improved

with a single family dwelling or a flat. The requirements for minimum lot width and lot area are the same for a flat or a row dwelling.

You propose to use existing Lot 802 in its current configuration. You further propose to combine lots 803 and 804 into a single new lot which would have 1,798 square feet of land area and which would have an average lot width of more than eighteen feet. Section 2522.1 of the Regulations gives the Zoning Administrator flexibility to permit up to a two percent deviation in the minimum lot area requirements where the Administrator determines that the purpose of the otherwise applicable regulations will not be impaired. You have requested me to grant that flexibility for two square feet in the new combined lot area, instead of the 1800 square feet requirement. That deviation would amount to 0.11% and is such a minimal deviation that it would not impair the purpose of the regulations. I hereby approve that deviation, noting that you will be eliminating two very substandard lots and replacing them with one lot that complies with the minimum lot area requirements except for two square feet.

With respect to the other requirements of the R-4 District, I have determined that the proposed construction of two flats complies as follows:

- Height (§400): The maximum permitted height is forty feet and three stories. Height shall be measured from the level of the curb opposite the middle of the front of the building on any of the streets that each flat abuts to the highest point of the roof or parapet. Alternatively, height may be measured from the finished grade at the middle of the front of the building to the ceiling of the top story. The number of stories is counted at the point at which the height of the building is measured. A cellar (a story where the height of the ceiling is less than 4 feet above the adjacent finished grade) does not count as a story. You advised that the height of the flats would be no more than forty feet and would not exceed three stories at the point of measurement.
- Percentage of lot occupancy (§403): The maximum percentage of lot occupancy for a flat is sixty percent. You advised that the lot occupancy of the flats would be approximately fifty-one percent and forty-five percent and would therefore be in compliance.
- Rear yard (§404): A rear yard is required with a minimum depth of twenty feet. Pursuant to §404.2, on a corner lot abutting three or more streets, the depth of the rear yard may be measured from the centerline of the street at the rear. Both lots will be corner lots fronting on three streets, with Florida Avenue at the front and L Street the rear. The twenty foot rear yard requirement is exceed by the width from the centerline of L Street.
- Side yard (§405): No side yard is required and none will be provided.
- Courts (§406): If a court is provided, it must be a minimum width of four inches per foot of height, but not less than ten feet. You advised that at the first and second floors, each flat would have a rectangular court opening onto the rear yard with a width of ten feet. At the third floor level, the wall of the court would be setback to create a width equal to the minimum requirement. The courts would thus comply.

Pursuant to §2101.1 of the Regulations, one parking space is required for a flat. You advised that staff of the District Department of Transportation had advised you that DDOT would not approve a curb cut on any of the four streets which form the boundaries of the subject block. Accordingly, you have not proposed to include any parking on either of the two lots. Since you would not comply with the parking requirements, you would be required to seek a variance from the D.C. Board of Zoning Adjustment (BZA). The authority of the BZA to grant variances is set forth in §3103.2 of the Regulations as follows:

"[w]here, by reason of exceptional narrowness, shallowness, or shape of a specific piece of property at the time of the original adoption of the regulations, or by reason of exceptional topographical conditions or other extraordinary or exceptional situation or condition of a specific piece of property, the strict application of any regulation adopted under D.C. Official Code §§ 6-641.01 to 6-651.02 would result in peculiar and exceptional practical difficulties to or exceptional and undue hardship upon the owner of the property, to authorize, upon an appeal relating to the property, a variance from the strict application so as to relieve the difficulties or hardship; provided, that the relief can be granted without substantial detriment to the public good and without substantially impairing the intent, purpose, and integrity of the zone plan as embodied in the Zoning Regulations and Map."

Accordingly, as set forth above, it is my conclusion that, provided that the BZA grants the parking variance, you may construct two flats on the subject property. My determination is limited to zoning matters. You must comply with all other applicable District codes and regulations.

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

Sincerely, 
Matthew Le Grant
Zoning Administrator