

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



August 14, 2014



John Linam Jr, AIA
John Linam Jr, Architect + Associates
1608 Washington Plaza - 4th Floor
Reston, VA 20190

RE: 3585 13th Street NW- Conversion and Addition

Dear Mr. Linam:

This letter summarizes the conclusions from our PDRM meeting of May 30, 2014 in which we discussed relevant zoning regulations with regards to the proposed conversion and addition to the existing single family house into a four unit apartment building, in the subject R-4 zone. The following is a list of clarifications provided to various aspects of the current zoning code as it applies to this proposed project:

1. **Measuring point used to determine the building height, and whether the lowest level is a Cellar or a Basement.** The building height for a structure in the R-4 zone is measured from the Building Height Measuring Point [BHMP], as per 11 DCMR 400.16, which is a point at which the existing grade meets the middle of the front wall of the building, which faces 13th Street NW, the primary street. It was noted that while perimeter grade and grade plane calculations would be required to determine the extent of 'chargeable' gross floor area [GFA] the lowest level to be applied to Floor Area Ratio [FAR] calculations, there is no FAR standard for this zone.

Furthermore, the designation of the lowest level as cellar or a basement depends on the dimension between the adjacent finished grade and the ceiling of said lowest level. If that dimension is four (4) feet or more, then such a level is deemed a Basement and is also considered a story; if that dimension is less than four (4) feet, such level is deemed a Cellar, and is not considered a story.

2. **Side Yard setback.** As per 11 DCMR 405.5, no side yard is required along a side street abutting a corner lot in a Residential District. Therefore, in this case where Otis Place NW is the adjacent side street, no setback is required from this side property line for the proposed addition. There is presently an approximately five (5) foot setback from the side property line from the existing house for this lot that borders Otis Place NW, so any resulting court must be in compliance with court requirements.
3. **Courts and Lot Occupancy.** As noted in the above item, the condition created by the proposed full width addition behind the existing structure could result in an open court which is only roughly 5'

wide. 11 DCMR 406.1 states the minimum width of an open court for an apartment house in a R-4 zone must have a minimum width of 10 feet. It was then discussed that if a covered porch was provided to occupy that space, the court condition is removed and no longer a violation, but that the covered area would then count towards lot occupancy, of which the total lot occupancy for the lot cannot exceed 60% as per 11 DCMR 403.2. It was further clarified that the “roof” covering of such a deck/porch must either be solid, or an open trellis provided the cross members of the trellis are spaced no more than 24” on center.

4. **Court vs Court Niche.** The open area at the front of the building that is between the existing covered front porch and the proposed covered porch would be treated as a Court Niche instead of an Open Court, as it is of a small size (roughly 5’ x 7’) and functions as an architectural indentation, and therefore is not required to comply with the open court minimum dimensions.
5. **Rooftop stair and “pantry” enclosure.** As per 11 DCMR 400.7 and 411.1 a staircase serving a rooftop “common” area (such as a deck), a stairway rooftop penthouse structure may also include a small “pantry” space which would be accessory to the primary communal outdoor use of the rooftop deck, as it does not support an enclosed activity space.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely, 
Matthew Le Grant
Zoning Administrator

Enclosures - Plat of Proposed site plan