

**REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ZONING
COMMITTEE OF ANC 6A
December 28, 2006**

Present: Resident Members: Drew Ronneberg, Vanessa Ruffin, David Holmes
****Meeting was conducted without a quorum of voting members****

Drew Ronneberg chaired the meeting.

Community Comments

None

BZA 17570 (122 15th St. NE)

The basement of the property at 122 15th St NE has been used as a beauty salon and briefly as a barber shop for over 30 years. The property is located in an R-4 zone, so these commercial uses are non-conforming. The owner of the property, Ms. Myrtle Best is seeking to convert the basement to general office use, which requires a use variance under zoning code. Mr. Stephen Gell, the owner's representative described how the low ceilings and small size of the space (361 square feet) made it unsuitable for residential use. Mr. Gell also said that there were few complaints about the use of the space as a beauty salon, and that the conversion of the space to general office use would lower the intensity of pedestrian and automobile traffic associated with the site. (The full application for the use variance can be found in the Dec agenda package.) Mr. Gell also stated that applicant was proposing the following restrictions to the use variance:

1. There will be no display other than a small sign limited to 288 square inches.
2. There will be no structural alterations and no significant modification to the exterior
3. Normal hours of operation will not begin before 8:00 a.m. nor extend past 8:00 p.m.
4. There will be no more than three employees on the premises at any time.
5. Clients/visitors will be limited to 6 at any one time.
6. The proposed use will not adversely affect the present character or future development of the surrounding area (300 feet in all directions.)
7. The proposed use will not create any deleterious external effects including, but not limited to noise, traffic, parking and loading considerations, illumination, vibration, odor, design, and siting effects.

Mr. Gell presented a petition supporting the use variance with the enumerated restrictions that signed by over 30 neighbors, including the neighbors in the two adjacent properties. Dr. Ronneberg said that some neighbors wanted a provision to prohibit medical services including a drug treatment center. The owner did not want to rule out medical uses like a family doctor or a pediatrician but agreed to a restriction to prohibit a drug treatment center. The committee also communicated concerns that 6 customers might create increased pedestrian traffic and parking problems. Ms. Best stated that the beauty shop already services more than 6 customers at the same time, and a reduction in the number of customers from 6 to 3 would prevent them from providing customers the ability to wait if there was overlapping appointments. She also said that there was ample parking in the area and that the parking requirements would be reduced by the conversion to general office use. The committee noted that the petition signed by the neighbors clearly stated that the client/visitors would be limited to 6 at any one

time.

There were no residents present who were opposed to the use variance.

Recommendation: The committee unanimously recommends that the ANC send a letter of support for a variance to allow conversion of the basement property at 122 15th St NE to general office use subject to the 7 enumerated restrictions and an additional restriction that the site not be used for a drug treatment center.

Home Again Properties on Wylie St.

Ms. Martine Combal of the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning & Economic Development talked about the Home Again Initiative and the Bundle 25 properties on Wylie St (1215, 1216 and 1217 Wylie St.). Home Again is “an initiative designed to strengthen District neighborhoods by transforming vacant and abandoned residential properties into homeownership opportunities for residents of all income levels.” The Home Again Initiative has a goal that 30% of all properties be sold to homebuyers who earn less than 60% of the Area Median Income (AMI). Properties are bundled together and bid out to pre-qualified developers who must demonstrate the financial resources and prior work necessary to rehabilitate the properties. Ms. Combal said that Landon McCall, who is the managing principal behind the Allegre Group (the group who will construct the structures in the Wylie St. bundle) had demonstrated the ability to rehabilitate other properties in the area including 808 11th St. NE. Conceptual plans for the properties were also presented which showed building that were similar to the existing housing stock on the street.

701 10th St NE

An update was given on the curb cut at 701 7th St. NE that the ANC unanimously voted to oppose in February. The Transportation committee will be handling public space issues in the future and will be making a recommendation to the full ANC to appeal DDOT's decision to grant the curb cut.

BZA 17521 (601-645 H St. NE)

ANC 6A, ANC 6C, SPNA, H Street Main Street and the 6th and H Neighborhood Association met with DDOT to lobby for a mid-block crosswalk and traffic signal. The architect has also released new renderings of the facade which address many community concerns about integrating the building into the existing architecture of H Street. The response to the new design was favorable. Drew Ronneberg is continuing to work with the other groups to complete the final design recommendations before January 31st, when the BZA record for the case will be closed.

229 11th St NE

David Holmes reported that the owner of this property, which is in an R-4 district, is trying to subdivide the portion of the land adjoining the alley so that two parking spots can be sold. Mr. Holmes said that the parking spaces have been advertised online for \$40K apiece. It is unclear whether it is legal to subdivide the land because the resulting lots would be too small to build a conforming structure. Mr. Holmes asked that a letter be sent to the appropriate agency to investigate this case. Drew Ronneberg asked Mr. Holmes to look into the legality of the subdivision and find out who the responsible agency would be.

Recommendation: The committee unanimously recommends that if Mr. Holmes determines that the land cannot be legally subdivided that the ANC send a letter to the appropriate agency to investigate the attempted subdivision of land at 229 11th St NE.

Improving Access to DC Municipal Code and the Transparency of DCRA Permitting

When Mayor-elect Fenty spoke at the December ANC meeting, he asked for suggestions on improving city government. Two problems that our ANC faces are 1) poor access to current DC regulations and 2) poor access to building plans and applications to Certificates of Occupancy at DCRA. Currently only portions of the DC municipal code are online and the last publication of the full code was circa 1996. In order to determine if regulations are current, one must go through the last 10 years of the DC Register to see if the regulations have been amended. Thus, it is difficult for average citizens and even District employees to know the current regulations. In addition, the ANCs are not notified of applications for Certificates of Occupancies nor when C of O's are granted, so it is very difficult to file an appeal within the 60 day window. Furthermore, although the ANC is notified of pending and issued building permits, the plans must be pulled manually to determine if they comply with zoning code. This makes them less accessible and fewer errors are caught.

Recommendation: The committee unanimously recommends that the ANC send a letter to the Mayor's office to request that the current DC Municipal Regulations be made available online and updated as the Regulations change. Furthermore, the committee unanimously recommends that the Code be available in a text searchable format.

Recommendation: The committee unanimously recommends that the ANC send a letter to the Mayor's office to request that 1) building permits and building plans be publicly available online in an easily searchable format 2) Certificate of Occupancy applications and permits be available online in an easily searchable manner.

Cataloging Vacant Properties in ANC 6A

Many owners of vacant and nuisance properties on H Street and the rest of ANC 6A have low property taxes because their properties are worth less than occupied properties. The city has responded to this problem by changing the tax rate for vacant properties from 0.88% to 5%. However, the vacant property list that is maintained by the city is incomplete.

The committee discussed assembling a list of vacant property in ANC 6A to give to the proper city agencies. Rick Uzes said that people in the Rosedale neighborhood were starting this process for their neighborhood. David Holmes said that Capitol Hill Restoration Society has experience assembling such lists. Vanessa Ruffin thought that the ANC should only target nuisance properties instead of all vacant properties. Drew Ronneberg said that he would contact CHRS to learn more about how they assembled these lists and would report back to the committee next month.

**Next Scheduled ED&Z Committee Meeting:
Tuesday, January 30, 2007
7-9 PM
900 G Street, NE
Community Room of the Capitol Hill**