



Stephanie Rawlings-Blake
Mayor

PLANNING COMMISSION

Wilbur E. "Bill" Cunningham, Chairman

STAFF REPORT



Thomas J. Stosur
Director

September 19, 2013

REQUEST: Multiple Principal Structures on a Residential Lot – 4915 Holder Avenue

RECOMMENDATION: Approval

STAFF: Martin French

PETITIONERS: KCW Engineering Technologies, Inc. and Waldon Studio, PC

OWNER: Zion Baptist Church, Inc., operator of Zion Christian Middle School on this site

SITE/GENERAL AREA

Site Conditions: 4915 Holder Avenue is located on the southeastern side of the street, between Holder Avenue and Walther Avenue, where this property interrupts Ailsa Avenue as it intersects both Holder and Walther Avenues. This property contains approximately 1.38 acre, and has approximately 252' of frontage on Holder Avenue and 301' of frontage on Walther Avenue. The property is currently improved with a three-story parochial school building, and is zoned R-4.

General Area: Adjoining this property to its northeast is a church; adjoining this property to its southwest are two detached single-family residences. This is a suburban-style residential area dating from the 1920s, with most of the housing detached or semi-detached dwellings constructed from the 1920s to the 1950s. Walther Avenue is a major thoroughfare serving the residential areas of Northeast Baltimore, while Holder Avenue which parallels it for several blocks is a local street. Most of the houses on the Holder Avenue side of this property are of two-story wood frame construction, while most of the houses on the Walther Avenue side of this property are of two-story brick construction.

HISTORY

There are no previous legislative or Planning Commission actions regarding this site.

CONFORMITY TO PLANS

The proposed action is consistent with the City of Baltimore's Comprehensive Master Plan, LIVE EARN PLAY LEARN, Learn Goal 3, Objective 3: Improve and Expand Learning Opportunities for all Baltimoreans to Create Active and Well-educated Citizens. The proposed additional structure on this property would be a gymnasium and classrooms building, which

would offer current students opportunities for continuing indoor physical education while also allowing future development of separate classes of instruction as a means of diversifying the school's curriculum.

ANALYSIS

The existing use of the property is as a parochial school of limited enrollment (less than 50 students at present) which occupies a structure that now uses a modest proportion of the property, near to the northeastern boundary of the lot. In the middle of the lot is a parking lot, accessible from Holder Avenue, serving the school. The proposed structure would be erected across this parking lot from the existing school structure. While the petitioner did explore the possibility of connecting the proposed gymnasium and classroom structure to the existing structure as an extension, for economic reasons it was determined that the more cost-effective approach would be a separate structure.

Planning staff have worked with the architect and engineer on this project, and have also sought input from the surrounding community concerning the appearance of the new structure and issues such as parking and access for it. After several iterations, the design of the structure has been refined to create greater consistency with the surrounding residential area. Approval of these two structures on a single residential lot, subject to construction of the new structure according to the plans and elevations approved by Planning staff, would be an accommodation of the needs of the school for more diversified educational facilities.

Zoning Code compliance: The proposed action is required by the Zoning Code, which states: "No more than one principal detached structure may be located on: (i) any residential lot ... (§3-301.a). Notwithstanding subsection (a) of this section, the Zoning Administrator must approve construction of more than one principal detached structure or other free-standing structure on a residential lot ... if, in a specific case: (1) the development otherwise would conform to the requirements of this article; and (2) the Planning Commission approves the design of the development" (§3-301.b).

In this case, more than one structure is proposed for this site, as the gymnasium and classrooms structure would not be physically joined to the principal structure on 4915 Holder Avenue, and so Planning Commission approval is required for this additional development of the property.

Community Input: The following community organizations have been notified of this action: Waltherson Improvement Association, Inc., and HarBel Community Association, Inc.



Thomas J. Stosur
Director