

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT



Application No. 14765, of Mary B. Robinson, pursuant to 11 DCMR 3107.2, for a variance from the minimum lot area and lot width requirements (Sub-section 401.3), and a variance from the side yard requirements (Sub-section 405.9) for the proposed new construction of a single-family dwelling in an R-1-B District at premises 1604 Longfellow Street, N.W., (Square W-2720, Lot 813).

HEARING DATE: March 16, 1988
DECISION DATE: May 4, 1988

FINDINGS OF FACT:

1. The subject property is a 9,803 square foot rectangular lot located at 1604 Longfellow Street, N.W. The lot is 40 feet wide and 120.08 feet deep and is undeveloped but for a garage at the south corner and a fence along Longfellow Street.
2. The subject property is in an R-1-B District.
3. The applicant owns and occupies the adjoining lot west of the subject property. The lot is located at 1606 Longfellow Street, N.W., and is improved with a three-story house.
4. A church and parking lot were recently constructed on the adjoining lot east of the subject property .
5. Most of the lots in the area are between forty and fifty-feet wide and are improved with two and three story, single-family, detached houses. The block containing the subject property was subdivided before the 1958 Zoning Regulations and contains many lots which do not meet present width and area requirements.
6. The applicant intends to sell the property to a developer for the construction of a two-story single family residence with a wood and stucco facade. The house would create a five-foot side yard to the east and an eleven foot side yard to the west. The proposed house would be eight feet from the church parking lot, but would be separated from it by a six-foot fence.

7. The subject property is in the jurisdiction of Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) 4A. The ANC filed a written report dated March 8, 1988 opposing the applicant's proposal because the wood and aluminum facade would conflict with the brick exterior of nearby houses and contaminate the architectural integrity of the neighborhood. The ANC also found that the house would diminish the quality of life enjoyed by area residents by increasing the density of the neighborhood.

Having given the report "great weight" in its decision, the Board nevertheless finds that the facade will be constructed of horizontal painted wood siding instead of aluminum, and that the facade's impact on the surrounding neighborhood, regardless of the materials used, has no direct bearing in the Board's decision because it cannot be directly attributed to the relief sought. However, the proposed house is not so different from others in the area as to threaten the architectural integrity or the quality of life enjoyed by neighborhood residents.

8. Opposition to the applicant's proposal was expressed at the hearing and in a petition signed by thirty-six local residents. Those who appeared at the hearing expressed concern that the proposed house is inconsistent with the design of other houses because of its smaller size and wood facade. Residents were also concerned that the proximity of the house and the adjacent parking lot would create unnecessary fire and safety hazards. The Board finds that the proposed development would not adversely affect the residential character or aesthetic integrity of the neighborhood, and would not create a fire or traffic safety hazard.

9. Fourteen residents signed a petition stating for the record that they do not oppose the applicant's proposal.

10. The Office of Planning (OP) submitted a written report dated March 8, 1988, which supports the applicant's proposal. The OP found that the house is compatible with others in the neighborhood because many of the surrounding lots were also subdivided before the 1958 Zoning Regulations and do not meet the width and area requirements. The OP also found that the applicant's request is consistent with the intent of the Zoning Regulations. The Board concurs with OP's findings.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW AND OPINION:

The Board concludes that the applicant is seeking variances from Sub-section 401.3, which prescribes the minimum width and area for lots in the R-1-B District, and sub-section 405.9, which defines the minimum permissible depth of at each side yard. To qualify for the variances,