

September 6, 2022

Belmont Zoning Board of Appeals
Homer Municipal Building, 2nd Floor
Belmont, MA 02478

RE: CASE NO: 22-20, Application for a special permit, 127 Washington Street

Board of Appeals Members:

We are writing about the application for a special permit that extends the lot coverage at 127 Washington Street to allow for building a second-floor balcony. We are the western abutters to 127 Washington Street and are the abutter that would be most impacted by the special permit because of the way our home is oriented relative to the applicant's home and the proposed construction of a balcony.

We do not support the application for a special permit. Our objection to the special permit is twofold: 1) lot coverage/ taking up additional space and 2) the intended use of the proposed construction.

If allowed to go forward, the construction would have a meaningful impact on our privacy, the peaceful enjoyment of our home, the existing conditions, and its negative impact on the value of our property.

Our objection in no way reflects the character or the deep respect we have for the residents of 127 Washington Street. Deirdre Walsh Reilly and Jim Reilly are our friends and among the most generous, neighborly, and kind people we know, and we are fortunate to have them as neighbors.

Our home is situated on the corner of Oakley Road and Washington Street, with the front entrance/ western side of the house facing the Chenery Middle School. Despite the busy location, we have a private backyard that faces east with views of Boston.

When Deirdre and Jim erected the previously-permitted addition this summer, our view was significantly impacted. We mention this because it is an important context. However, we want to be explicit that **this is not the issue**. We recognize that losing part of our view is unfortunate and, at the same time, that Deirdre and Jim had every right to build the addition as they did. We do not hold any animosity towards them for investing in their home; rather, we wish them a lifetime of happiness and enjoyment in their new space.

However, the proposed balcony, while small relative to the larger project, is extending the boundaries of their existing home and built environment. It is a permanent structure that would further encroach into our visual field and the peaceful enjoyment of our space. Unlike a

tree, which can be trimmed and loses its leaves in the winter, a balcony is a permanent use of space.

What's more, it is a suspended, box-shaped outcropping that – from our property's perspective is situated at eye level from every northeast room on the first and second floors of our home: deck, kitchen, side room, deck, children's bathroom, and a child's bedroom.

The second and compounding issue is that of the intended use. Whereas the new addition is a 'passive' structure meaning that it doesn't change or invite activity, a balcony outfitted with a café table and chairs is, by its design, encouraging activity.

As such, any time we looked east or used our outdoor space while the balcony was in use, we would be subjected to balcony activity because it would be at eye level.

Conversely, a second-floor balcony would give those using it eye-level visual access into our home and outdoor activity, which is not present in the current condition.

Even with privacy mitigation, the issue of noise, movement, smoke, and visual encroachment would not be resolved.

For the above reasons, we request that you reject the application for a special permit.

Sincerely,
Sean McKinley, Jr
Sandi Clement McKinley
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Attachments

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Using the submitted plans, the existing roof line, and height relative to the western-facing window as a reference, we derived the visual impact the balcony would have on our existing conditions.

Below is an overlay of the proposed balcony (in yellow) superimposed over the view from our kitchen and back deck. The roof edges and height of the eastern windows are aligned and are used as references.

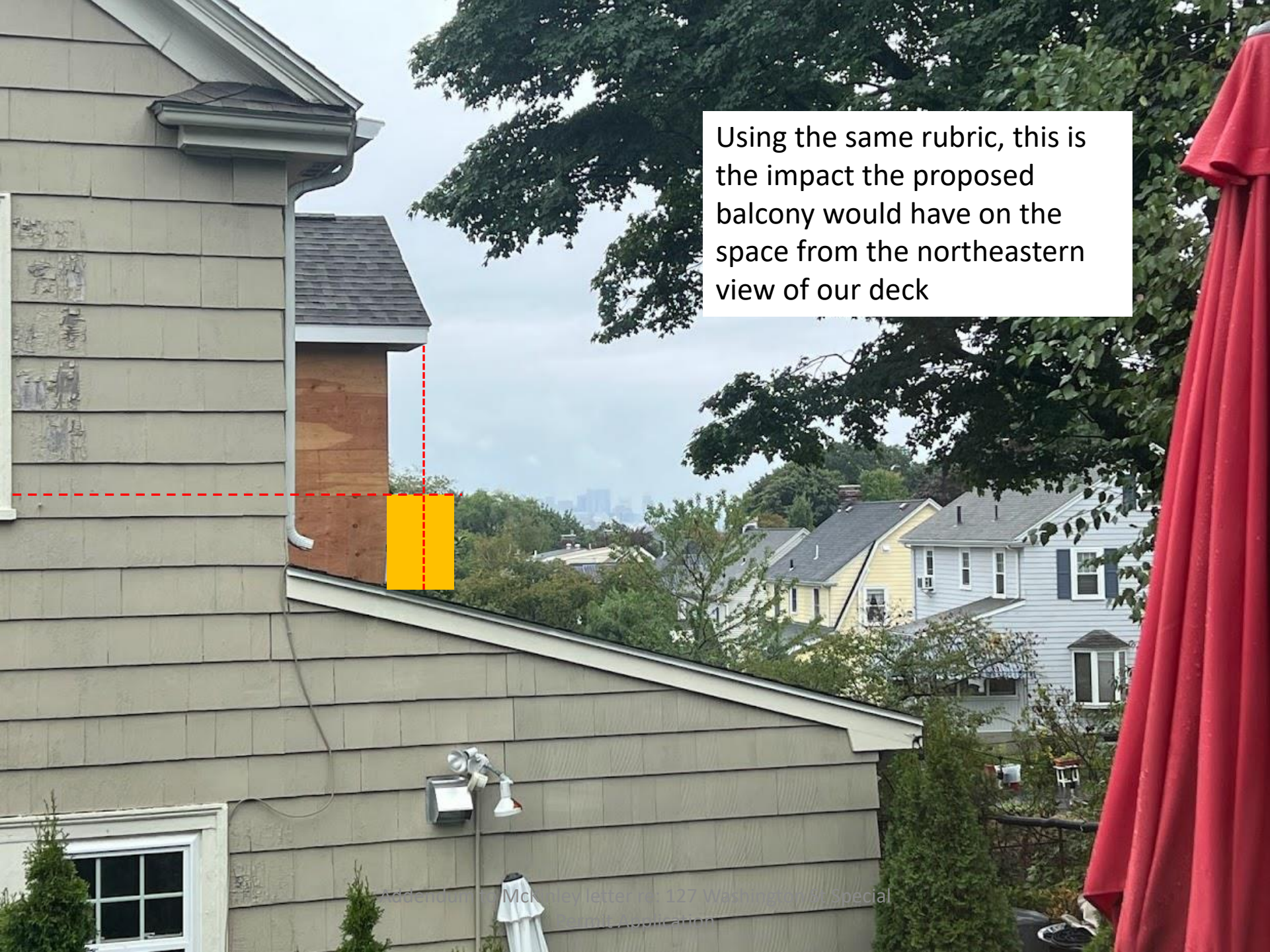


The size and placement of the proposed balcony are fair representations of the additional space it would take up and its visual impact.

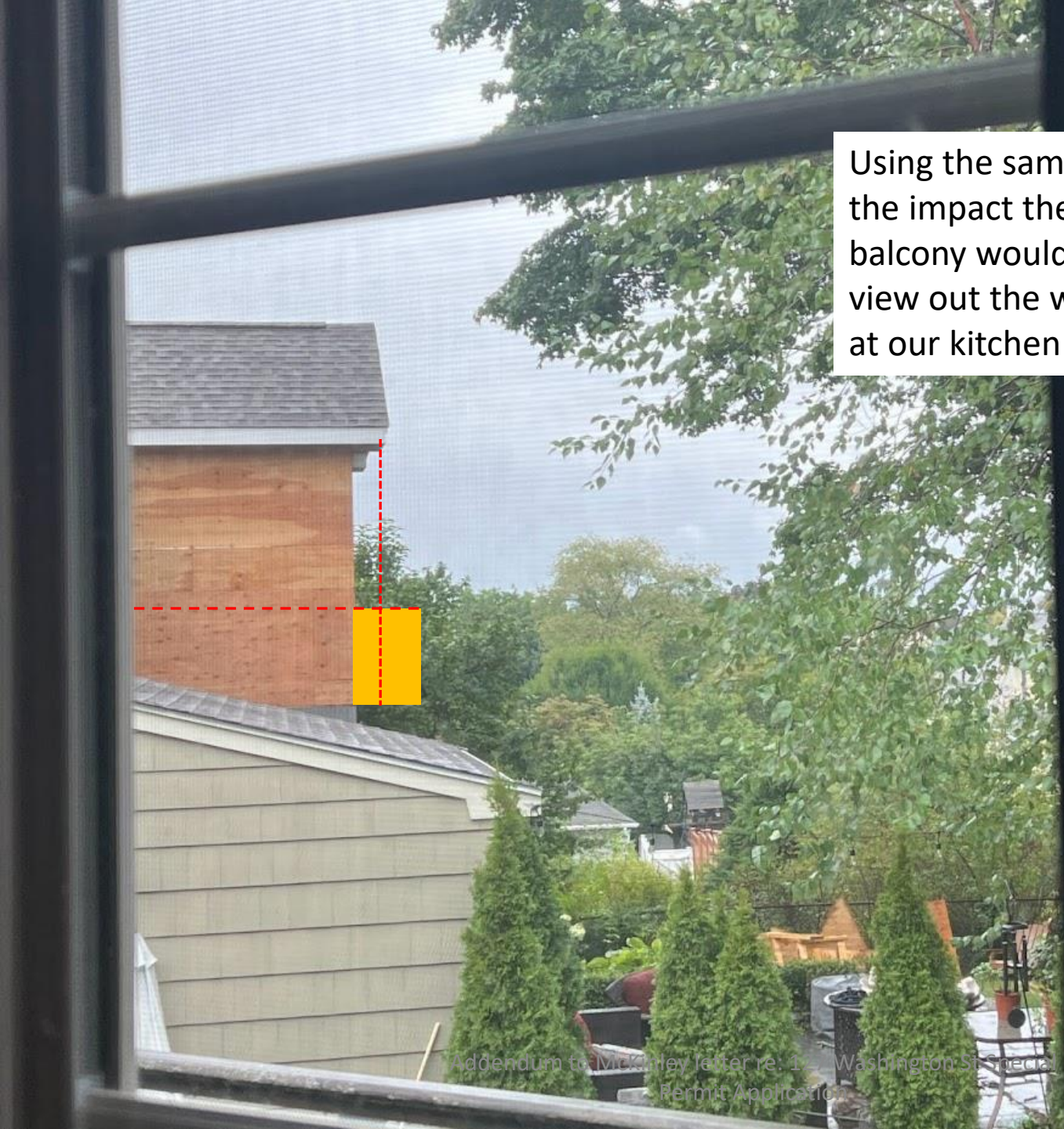
View from our kitchen and back deck

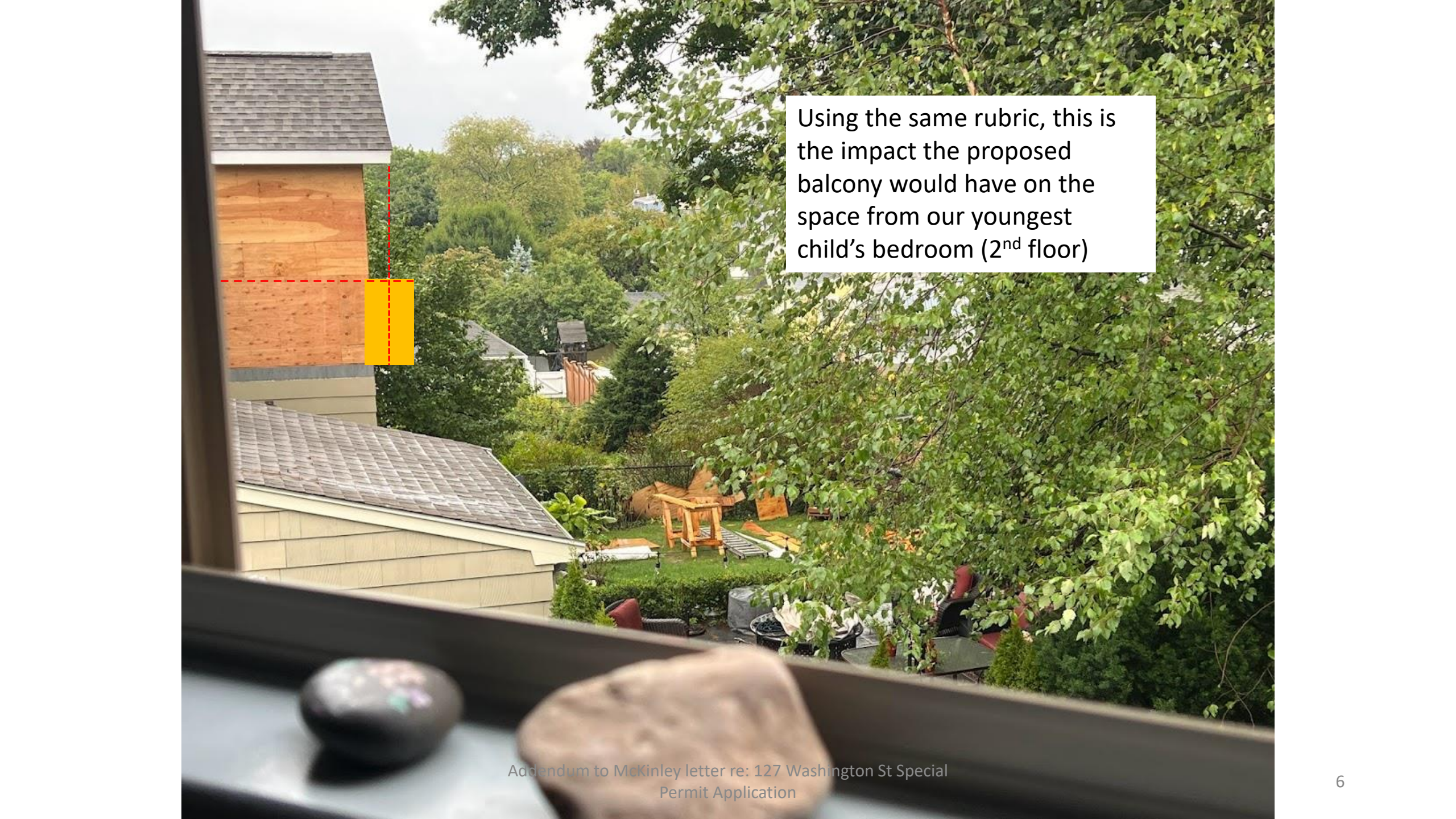


Using the same rubric, this is the impact the proposed balcony would have on the space from the northeastern view of our deck

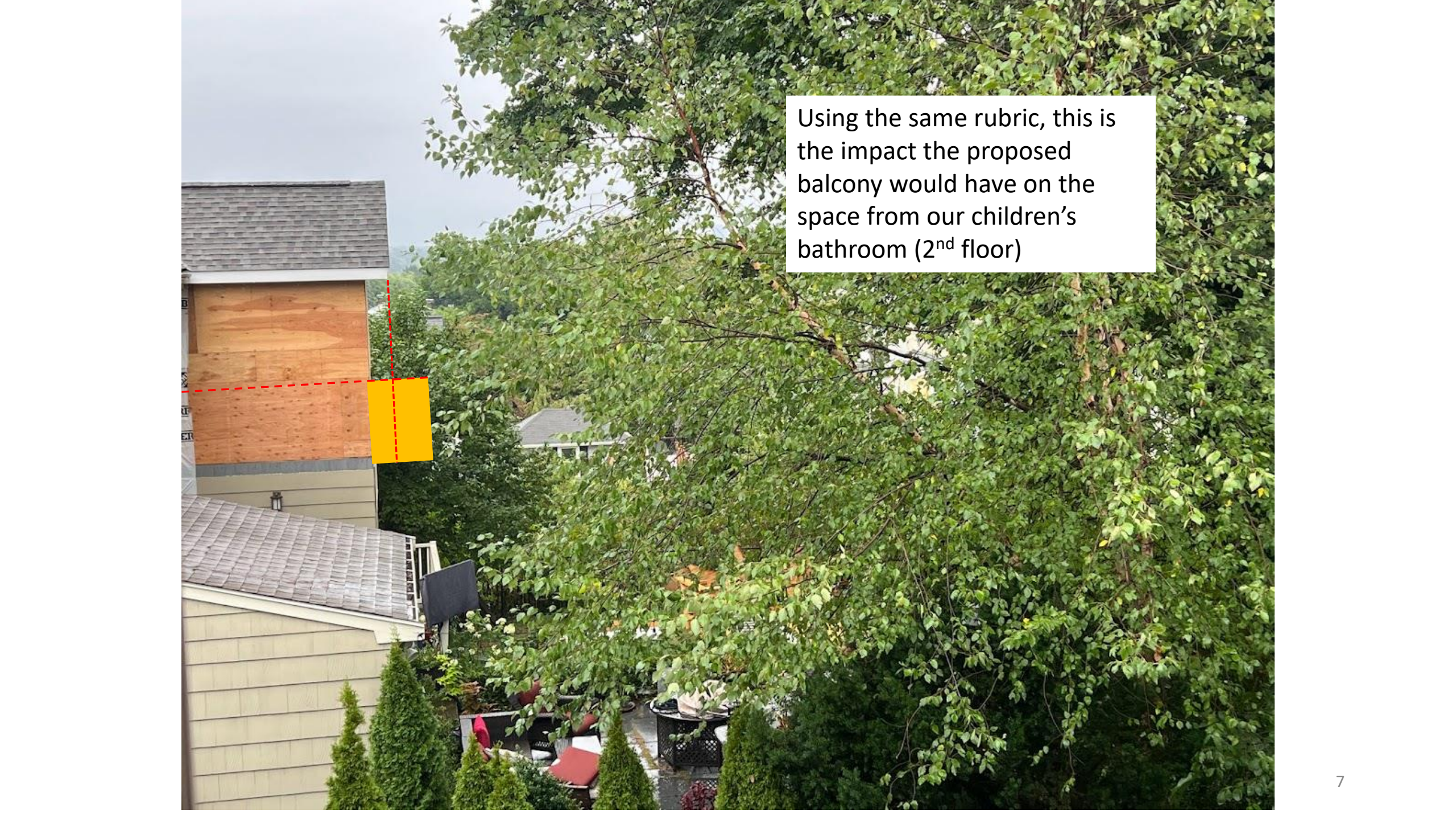


Using the same rubric, this is the impact the proposed balcony would have from the view out the window standing at our kitchen sink





Using the same rubric, this is the impact the proposed balcony would have on the space from our youngest child's bedroom (2nd floor)



Using the same rubric, this is the impact the proposed balcony would have on the space from our children's bathroom (2nd floor)