

MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment
FROM: Joshua Mitchum, Development Review Specialist
MBR
Maxine Brown-Roberts, Associate Director, Development Review
DATE: June 12, 2026

SUBJECT: BZA Case 21435: Request for area variance relief to convert two tax lots into record lots; construct a rear addition to an existing two-story dwelling unit on Square 5778, Lot 0173; and convert an existing garage into a two-story dwelling unit on adjacent Lot 0174.

I. BACKGROUND

1756 W Street SE (Square 5778, Lots 0173 & 0174), was previously two tax lots, with a two-story dwelling on Lot 0173, and a garage with a second-level bedroom on Lot 0174. The Applicant received approvals from DC Surveyors' Office to subdivide the property into two record lots with their own addresses: (1) 1756 W Street, SE (Square 5778, Lot 0836) and (2) 1754 W Street, SE (Square 5778, Lot 0837)¹. The plats of subdivision from the Office of the Surveyor have been submitted by the Applicant into the record as Exhibits 19 and 20.

The Applicant proposes to construct a single-family dwelling unit by renovating and expanding the existing building on Lot 0836 and constructing another dwelling on the existing garage on Lot 0837. Lot 0836 is approximately 17.41 feet wide, and Lot 0837 is approximately 17.75 feet wide. As the minimum lot width for the R-3 Zone is 20 feet, the Applicant requests an area variance from the Subdivision Regulations of Subtitle C § 302.1 and the Lot Dimension standards of D § 202.1 in order to construct the proposed dwellings.

II. OFFICE OF PLANNING RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning (OP) recommends **approval** of the following area variances pursuant to Subtitle X § 1002:

- **Subdivision Regulations, C § 302.1** (Subdivision must not violate applicable general development standards of Zoning Regulations)
- **Lot Dimensions, D § 202.1 (lot width)** (20 ft. min. required, 17.41 ft. & 17.75 ft. existing, 17.41 ft. & 17.75 ft. proposed)

¹ For the remainder of this report, OP will be referring to the subject lots by their given record lot numbers (0836 & 0837).

III. LOCATION AND SITE DESCRIPTION

Address:	1756 W Street, SE
Applicants:	Yosef Asmelash, represented by Dawit Zena
Legal Description:	Square 5778, Lots 0836 & 0837
Ward / ANC:	Ward 8 / ANC 8A
Zone:	R-3, Residential Row Homes
Historic Districts:	N/A
Lot Characteristics:	Both lots are rectangular in shape fronting on W Street SE, and a 20-foot-wide public alley to their rear. • Lot 0836: 3,195 square feet (180 ft. x 17.41 ft.) • Lot 0837: 3,133.8 square feet (180 ft. x 17.75 ft.)
Existing Development:	Lots 0836 is improved with a two-story dwelling unit and Lot 037 is developed with a garage with a second story dwelling.
Adjacent Properties:	The property is bounded by single-family residential row dwellings on all sides, also in the R-3 Zone.
Surrounding Neighborhood Character:	The surrounding neighborhood character can be described as 2-3 story row dwellings on relatively narrow lots and 3-story garden apartments. Fort Circle Park is located to the north and east of the neighborhood.
Proposed Development:	The Applicant is proposing to construct a new, two-story single-family dwelling on Lot 0837, and to renovate and expand the existing dwelling on Lot 0836. The proposal also includes the addition of one parking space on each lot.

IV. ZONING REQUIREMENTS AND RELIEF REQUESTED

R Zone (R-3)	Regulation	Existing²	Proposed	Relief
Lot Width (Row) D § 202	20 ft. min.	Lot 0836: 17.41 ft. Lot 0837: 17.75 ft.	No change	Area Variance requested
Lot Area (Row) D § 202	2,000 sq. ft. min.	Lot 0836: 3,195 sq. ft. Lot 0837: 3,133.8 sq. ft.	No change	None requested
Height D § 203	40 ft. max. 3 stories max.	Not given	No change	None requested

² For the purposes of this table, “Existing” refers to the lot conditions that currently exist having already been subdivided.

R Zone (R-3)	Regulation	Existing²	Proposed	Relief
Front Yard D § 206	Must be within range of existing front yard setbacks on same street	Not given	No change	None requested
Rear Yard D § 207	20 ft. min.	Not given	No change	None requested
Side Yard D § 207	N/A	Not given	No change	None requested
Lot Occupancy (Row) D § 210	60% max.	Not given	No change	None requested
Pervious Surface D § 211	20% min.	Not given	No change	None requested
Parking C § 701	1 space per dwelling unit min.	1 space	2 spaces	None requested
Subdivision C § 302	Subdivision must not violate applicable general development standards	Substandard Lot Width	Substandard Lot Width	Area Variance requested

V. OFFICE OF PLANNING ANALYSIS

Subtitle X § 1000 GENERAL PROVISIONS (AREA VARIANCES)

1000.1 With respect to variances, the Board of Zoning Adjustment has the power under § 8 of the Zoning Act, D.C. Official Code § 6-641.07(g)(3) (formerly codified at D.C. Official Code § 5-424(g)(3) (2012 Repl.)), "[w]here, by reason of exceptional narrowness, shallowness, or shape of a specific piece of property at the time of the original adoption of the regulations, or by reason of exceptional topographical conditions or other extraordinary or exceptional situation or condition of a specific piece of property, the strict application of any regulation adopted under D.C. Official Code §§ 6-641.01 to 6-651.02 would result in peculiar and exceptional practical difficulties to or exceptional and undue hardship upon the owner of the property, to authorize, upon an appeal relating to the property, a variance from the strict application so as to relieve the difficulties or hardship; provided, that the relief can be granted without substantial detriment to the public good and without substantially impairing the intent, purpose, and integrity of the zone plan as embodied in the Zoning Regulations and Map."

A. *Extraordinary or Exceptional Situation or Condition Resulting in Practical Difficulty*

(1) *Extraordinary or Exceptional Situation*

In the case of the subject application, the Applicant cites the approval of their subdivision request and receipt of signed and approved record lot plats. Having relied in good faith on District approval of their subdivision request, the Applicant did not anticipate being unable to move forward with obtaining the building permits necessary to begin construction on the new record lots.

OP finds that the Applicant is faced with an extraordinary situation as they have provided documentation that shows that they had indeed received the requisite approvals from District agencies to subdivide the subject property, including items such as record plats from the Office of the Surveyor (submitted as Exhibits 19 and 20), and a notice of proposed real property assessment for a new lot from the Office of Tax and Revenue (submitted as Exhibit 21) and that they relied on these approvals in moving forward to the development of the properties.

(2) *Condition Resulting in Practical Difficulty*

As stated above, the subject property has already been subdivided into two substandard record lots. The strict application of Subtitle D § 202 would result in a practical difficulty to the Applicant, as they would neither be able to build the additions to the structure on the newly created record lots.

Furthermore, the dwelling on Lot 0836 has suffered fire damage and remains vacant. It was the Applicant's understanding that they would be permitted to make repairs as a result of the fire damage, but due to the requirement of D § 202 they would be unable to obtain the building permits necessary to perform construction that would result in a significant improvement to either lot. Based on the approved record lots, they then proceeded to invest and prepare for submission of their construction plans to the Department of Buildings.

B. *No Substantial Detriment to the Public Good*

Granting the requested area variance from the front yard requirements of Subtitle D § 202 for the subject property should not result in substantial detriment to the public good. The current lot widths of Lots 0836 and 0837 are 17.41 feet and 17.75 feet, respectively. These widths, while substandard for the R-3 Zone, are in line with adjacent and surrounding lots in the neighborhood, as shown below:

Address	Lot Number	Lot Width
1758 W Street SE	0816	17.42 ft.
1760 W Street SE	0822	17.42 ft.
1762 W Street SE	0824	17.42 ft.
1764 W Street SE	0825	17.42 ft.

1766 W Street SE	0819	17.41 ft.
1768 W Street SE	0816	17.75 ft.

Furthermore, granting the area variance would likely result in the creation of an additional single-family dwelling in the neighborhood, one that the Applicant states is intended to be provided as a rental unit at affordable rates.

C. No Substantial Impairment to the Intent, Purpose, and Integrity of the Zoning Regulations

The requested area variance relief for lot width and subdivision regulations should not result in a building form, bulk height, or use unanticipated in R-3 zone, and should not appear as an overdevelopment of the site on the block. The request represents a minimal deviation from the minimum lot width requirements of the R-3 Zone (approximately 2.25 ft.), and as stated above, would be in line with the lot widths of adjacent homes.

VI. OTHER DISTRICT AGENCIES

As of the filing of this report, comments from other District agencies have not been submitted into the record.

VII. ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION

As of the filing of this report, a report from ANC 8A has not been submitted into the record.

VIII. COMMUNITY COMMENTS

As of the filing of this report, comments from the community have not been submitted into the record.

Location Map

