BZA CASE NO. 21498

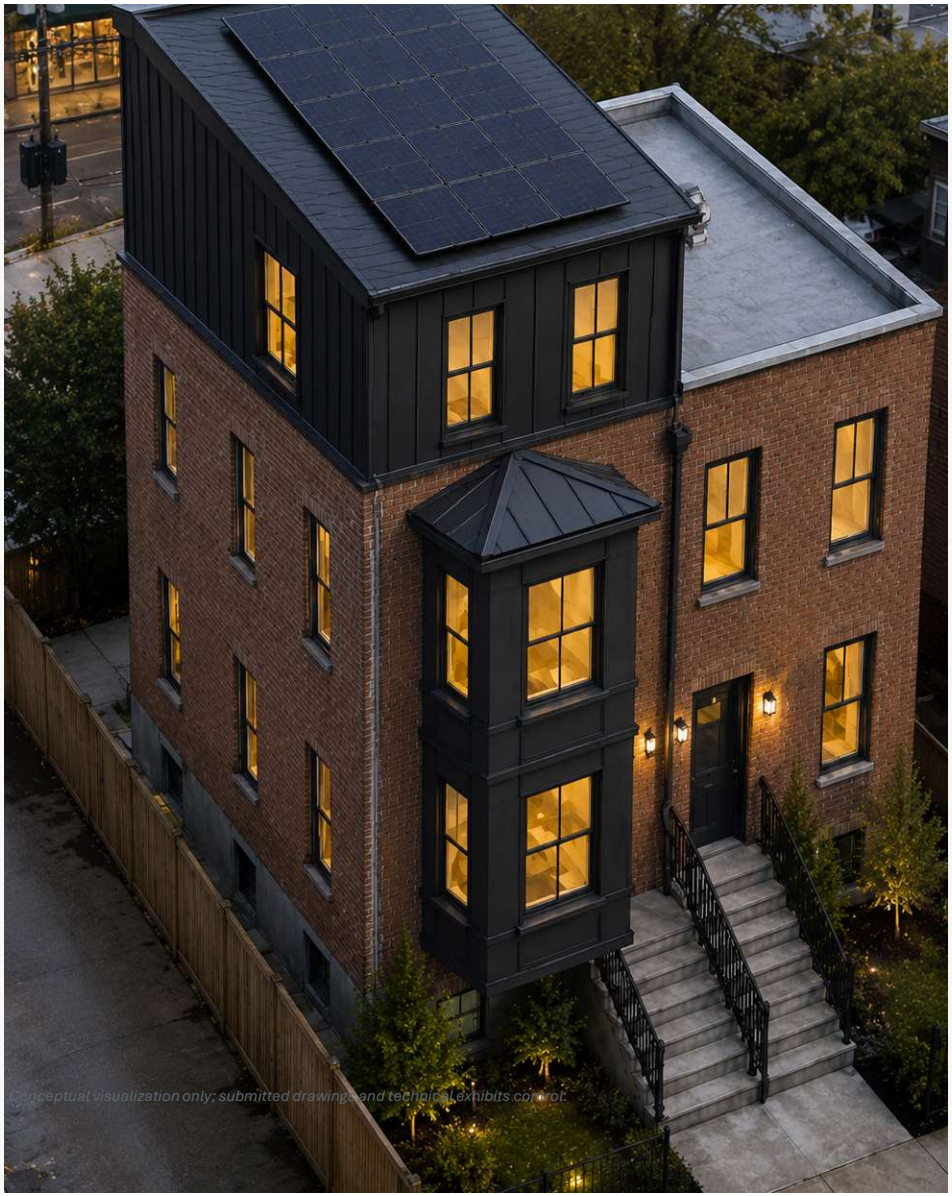
1608 27th Street SE

Area Variance Hearing Presentation

Requested relief is limited to a technical story-count issue under Subtitle F § 203, pursuant to Subtitle X § 1002.

Office of Planning recommends approval.

Applicant / Owner: Ronald Briscoe
Public Hearing: October 7, 2026



Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 21498
EXHIBIT NO. 25

REQUESTED RELIEF

One variance. One nonconforming metric.

The zoning issue arises from the story-count treatment of the existing basement.

What relief is requested?

- Area variance from Subtitle F § 203
- Relief requested under Subtitle X § 1002
- RA-1 permits a maximum height 40 feet and 3 stories
- Project remains within the 40-foot height limit
- Relief is triggered because the existing basement counts as a story

OP Report: “OP recommends approval…”

Source: Office of Planning Report, Sept. 25, 2026, Recommendation section.

Development standards remain compliant

40 ft Height in feet	**0.86** FAR	**32.0%** Lot occupancy
28 ft Rear yard	**2** Dwelling units	**4** Story count

Only story count requires relief.

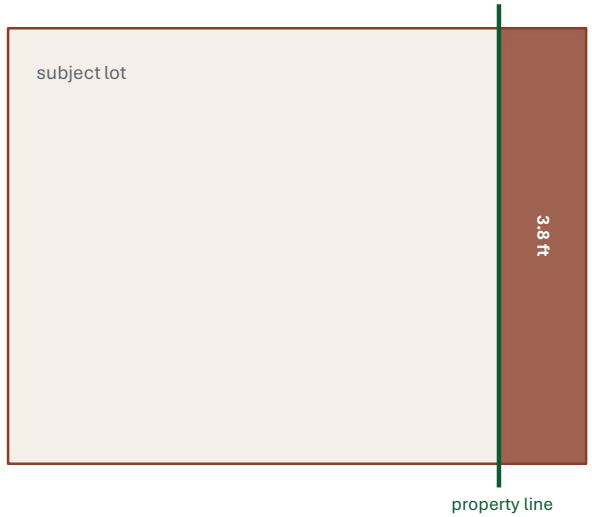
Source: OP Report zoning table; all listed metrics conform except stories.

VARIANCE PRONG 1

Exceptional property conditions

OP identified two site conditions that are central to the variance analysis.

1. Party wall / lot encroachment



OP states the party wall is located about 3.8 feet into the subject lot.

2. Significant grade condition



OP notes that the grade causes the exposed front basement to be below grade at the rear.

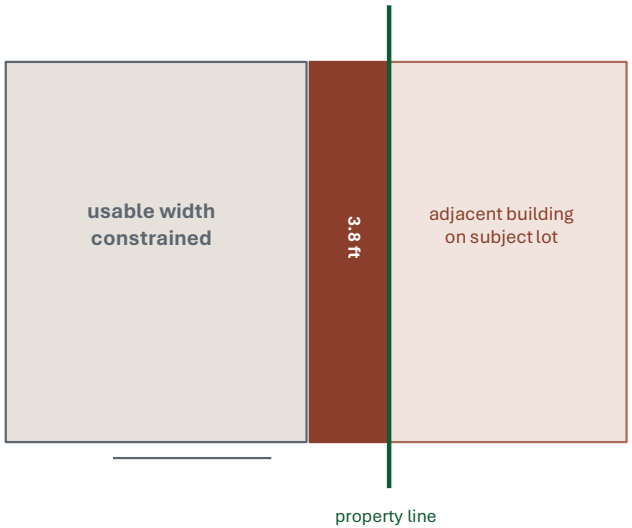
Source: OP Report, Analysis — Exceptional Situation.

VARIANCE PRONG 1

Practical difficulty

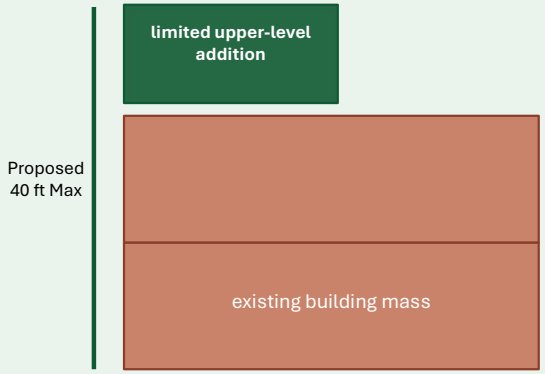
The exceptional conditions materially constrain reasonable expansion options.

Constrained horizontal expansion



rear/side addition options become awkward or more impactful

Reasonable vertical modernization



OP concludes the encroachment practically limits use of the full width of the property.

Source: OP Report, Practical Difficulty analysis.

VARIANCE PRONG 2

No substantial detriment to the public good

The proposal remains within permitted height and limits potential external impacts.

40 ft

height in feet remains compliant

reduced

upper-level footprint is smaller

limited

light, air, and shadow effects

none

no community opposition in record

OP: the proposed design “would continue to read as a typical rowhouse,” remains within 40 feet, and the smaller upper-level footprint reduces potential impacts to light and air.

DDOT: No objection; no adverse transportation impacts identified

Source: OP Report, No Substantial Detriment section.

VARIANCE PRONG 3

No impairment of the zoning regulations

The technical story condition does not change the project's compliant scale.

Zoning compliance snapshot

FAR	**0.86**	**complies**
Lot occupancy	**32.0%**	**complies**
Rear yard	**28 ft**	**complies**
Dwelling units	**2**	**complies**
Height in feet	**40 ft**	**complies**
Stories	**4**	**relief**

OP conclusion

- Addition technically creates a fourth story
- Building remains within the 40-foot height limit
- Based on submitted drawings, the building reads like a three-story building with a cellar
- Overall scale remains consistent with typical District rowhouses

The variance resolves a technical story-count issue without impairing the intent, purpose, or integrity of the zoning regulations.

Source: OP Report, No Impairment section and zoning table.

REQUESTED BOARD ACTION

Approve the requested area variance

The record supports approval under the three-part area variance test.

1. **OP recommends approval**

   The Office of Planning recommends approval of the requested area variance.

2. **DDOT has no objection**

   DDOT has determined that the proposed action will not have adverse impacts on the District's transportation network .

3. **SMD support in record**

   Exhibit 19 contains support from the affected SMD representative.

4. **No community opposition**

   As of the OP report, no community comments were in the record.

5. **Relief remains narrow**

   Single variance limited to the story-count interpretation.

For these reasons, the Applicant respectfully requests that the Board approve the area variance from Subtitle F § 203, pursuant to Subtitle X § 1002.

Thank you.

Source: OP Report, Recommendation; ANC Comments; Community Comments.