

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT

Applicant's Statement of RONALD BRISCOE
1608 27th Street, SE (Square 5585, Lot 0006)

I. INTRODUCTION

This Statement is submitted on behalf of Ronald Briscoe (the “Applicant”), owner of the property located at 1608 27th Street SE, Washington, DC 20020 (Square 5585, Lot 0006) (the “Property”), in support of an application for area variance relief before the District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment (“BZA” or the “Board”).

The Property is located within the RA-1 Zone District and is improved with an attached two-unit residential flat. The Applicant proposes modernization and improvement of the existing structure, including a limited upper-level addition and incorporation of existing basement space into the principal residential unit. The proposed project maintains the existing residential use and does not increase the number of dwelling units.

The Applicant respectfully requests area variance relief pursuant to Subtitle F § 203.2 and Subtitle X § 1002 associated solely with the story interpretation applicable to the proposed upper-level addition. The Office of the Zoning Administrator determined that the proposed project requires area variance relief associated with the story interpretation applicable to the proposed upper-level addition. No relief is requested for use, floor area ratio (“FAR”), building height, lot occupancy, parking, rear yard, or dwelling unit count.

As demonstrated herein and in the accompanying exhibits, the requested relief satisfies the applicable standards for area variance relief under the Zoning Regulations.

II. JURISDICTION OF THE BOARD

The Board has jurisdiction to grant the requested relief pursuant to Subtitle X § 1002 of the Zoning Regulations.

III. BACKGROUND

A. Description of the Property and Surrounding Area

The Property consists of approximately 2,945 square feet and is located within an established residential neighborhood characterized by a mix of attached row dwellings, flats, single-family residences, and multi-unit residential structures. The surrounding area contains a variety of residential building forms and architectural conditions typical of mature urban neighborhoods within the District of Columbia.

The Property is improved with an existing attached two-unit residential flat situated on a legally existing record lot. The structure is physically joined to the adjacent building located on neighboring Lot 0005. The Property is further affected by longstanding structural and site conditions associated with historically joined attached structures across adjacent lots, including an existing structural encroachment condition that contributes to the constrained nature of the site and limits flexibility in independently modifying and modernizing the structure.

The proposed improvements are intended to modernize and improve the existing residential structure while maintaining compatibility with the surrounding neighborhood context.

B. Description of the Proposed Project

The Applicant proposes renovation and a limited upper-level addition to the existing two-unit residential flat. The proposed project includes modernization of the existing residential structure, incorporation of existing basement space into the principal residential unit, and sustainability-oriented improvements consistent with broader District sustainability initiatives, including solar readiness, energy-efficient building systems and appliances, and permeable surface strategies.

The proposed roof form slopes toward the adjacent public alley in order to reduce perceived massing from street frontage and neighboring properties. The project has been designed to remain compatible with the scale and residential character of the surrounding neighborhood while preserving the existing two-unit residential use.

The project remains compliant with applicable zoning requirements related to FAR, height, lot occupancy, and dwelling unit count.

Zoning Metric	Existing	Proposed
Lot Area	2,945 sq. ft.	2,945 sq. ft.
Gross Floor Area	1,840.5 sq. ft.	2,518.5 sq. ft.
FAR	0.625	0.855
Lot Occupancy	31.8%	31.8%
Building Height	26 ft.	40 ft.
Dwelling Units	2 Units	2 Units

All zoning calculations are consistent with the submitted plans and supporting exhibits.

IV. THE APPLICATION SATISFIES THE REQUIREMENTS FOR AREA VARIANCE RELIEF

Pursuant to Subtitle X § 1002, the Board may grant area variance relief where there is an exceptional condition affecting the property, practical difficulties in complying with the Zoning Regulations, and no substantial detriment to the public good or impairment of the intent, purpose, and integrity of the zone plan.

A. Exceptional Condition Affecting the Property

The Property is affected by a unique combination of structural and site-related constraints associated with its longstanding attached urban configuration. The structure exists as part of a historically joined building condition spanning adjacent lots and is further constrained by an existing structural encroachment condition and the geometry of the existing structure.

These conditions materially limit the Applicant's flexibility in independently modernizing and improving the Property while maintaining the existing residential use. The practical difficulty associated with the Property arises from the interaction between the existing basement configuration, the attached structural condition, and the zoning interpretation applicable to the story calculation.

These factors constitute exceptional conditions unique to the Property.

B. Practical Difficulties in Strict Compliance

Strict application of the Zoning Regulations would create practical difficulty for the Applicant by unreasonably restricting the ability to modernize and improve the existing residential structure in a manner consistent with surrounding neighborhood development patterns.

As established in *Palmer v. Board of Zoning Adjustment*, practical difficulties arise where strict compliance imposes unnecessary burdens. The requested relief is limited in scope and directly related to the unique conditions affecting the Property.

The requested relief is limited to the story-related interpretation identified by the Office of the Zoning Administrator and does not involve additional relief for height, FAR, lot occupancy, use, or residential density.

The proposed project maintains the existing residential use, does not increase the number of dwelling units, and remains compliant with FAR, building height, and lot occupancy requirements. The Applicant has intentionally designed the project to minimize visual and contextual impacts through the use of a limited upper-level addition, restrained architectural massing, and an alley-oriented sloped roof form.

C. No Substantial Detriment to the Public Good

The requested relief can be granted without substantial detriment to the public good and without substantially impairing the intent, purpose, and integrity of the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Map.

The proposed project remains residential in character and compatible with the surrounding neighborhood. The project does not introduce additional residential density and remains compliant with all applicable zoning requirements other than the requested story-related relief.

The accompanying shadow studies, contextual exhibits, and architectural renderings demonstrate that the proposed improvements have been carefully designed to minimize impacts on neighboring properties and maintain consistency with the surrounding built environment.

The project additionally advances broader sustainability and reinvestment objectives through the incorporation of energy-conscious and environmentally responsive building improvements aligned with District sustainability initiatives.

D. No Impairment of the Zone Plan

The proposed project is consistent with the intent and purpose of the RA-1 Zone District and does not impair the integrity of the Zoning Regulations or Zoning Map. The project preserves the existing residential use, maintains neighborhood scale, and does not increase residential density.

The requested relief is narrow in scope and arises from the specific structural and site-related conditions affecting the Property rather than from an attempt to intensify development beyond what is appropriate for the neighborhood. The proposed improvements are compatible with the surrounding residential context and reflect a restrained and carefully designed modernization of the existing structure.

The project further supports continued reinvestment in the residential housing stock while maintaining consistency with the low-density residential character contemplated by the RA-1 Zone District.

V. APPLICABLE LEGAL STANDARD

Pursuant to Subtitle X § 1002 of the Zoning Regulations, the Board may grant an area variance where it finds that, by reason of exceptional narrowness, shallowness, shape, topographical conditions, or other extraordinary or exceptional situation or condition of a specific piece of property, strict application of the Zoning Regulations would result in peculiar and exceptional practical difficulties to the owner.

The Applicant respectfully submits that the Property satisfies the applicable variance criteria based upon the unique structural and site conditions affecting the Property and the limited nature of the requested relief.

The requested relief is further consistent with established District of Columbia variance jurisprudence, including *Palmer v. Board of Zoning Adjustment*, *Clerics of St. Viator, Inc. v. District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment*, and *Gilmartin v. Board of Zoning Adjustment*.

VI. CONCLUSION

For the reasons set forth herein and in the accompanying exhibits, the Applicant respectfully requests that the Board grant the requested variance relief associated with the story condition interpretation applicable to the proposed upper-level addition.

The requested relief is narrow in scope, consistent with the surrounding residential context, and necessary to permit its modernization and continued residential use of the Property.

Accordingly, the Applicant respectfully requests approval of the application.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ronald Briscoe".

Ronald Briscoe
Applicant / Owner