

MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment
FROM: Brandice Elliott, Case Manager
 JLS
 for Joel Lawson, Associate Director Development Review
DATE: December 8, 2017

SUBJECT: BZA Case 19656 (2517 Q Street, N.W.), to increase the FAR of an existing row dwelling by converting the attic into livable space

I. OFFICE OF PLANNING RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning (OP) recommends **approval** of the following variance:

- Subtitle F § 302.1, Floor Area Ratio (1.8 maximum, 1.98 proposed).

II. LOCATION AND SITE DESCRIPTION

Address	2517 Q Street, N.W.
Applicant:	Michael Rouse for Mark and Cynthia Moyer
Legal Description	Square 1287, Lot 820
Ward / ANC	Ward 2; ANC 2E
Zone	<u>RA-2</u> (Residential Apartment Zone) permits all types of urban residential development and compatible institutional and semi-public buildings.
Historic District or Resource	Georgetown Historic District
Lot Characteristics	The rectangular lot has 1,007 square feet of area, with 15 feet of frontage along Q Street. The rear of the lot measures 16 feet wide, and abuts lots that are currently developed as dwellings. The lot does not have alley access.
Existing Development	The lot is currently developed with a 35.5-foot high three-story row dwelling. Parking is provided on the ground floor of the dwelling via a curb cut on Q Street.
Adjacent Properties	To the north, are existing row dwellings. To the south, is a small cluster of row dwellings, flanked by larger apartment buildings on either side. The subject property is located in a row of five row dwellings, with dwellings located to the east and west of the property. Larger apartment buildings are located on either side of the row of five dwellings.

Surrounding Neighborhood Character	The surrounding neighborhood character is predominantly moderate-density residential, consisting of a mix of larger apartment buildings and row dwellings.
Proposed Development	The applicant proposes to convert the existing attic into a fourth-floor livable space, increasing the height of the space with the addition of a dormer at the rear of the dwelling. The new dormer will consist of three windows, and will align with the neighboring dormer to the east. The proposal would not increase lot occupancy or height, but the additional habitable space increases the FAR above the maximum permitted in the zone.

III. ZONING REQUIREMENTS and RELIEF REQUESTED

Zone – RA-2	Regulation	Existing	Proposed	Relief
Lot Width F § 201	None prescribed	15 ft.	15 ft.	None required
Lot Area F § 201	None prescribed	1,007 sq. ft.	1,007 sq. ft.	None required
Court F § 202	None required	--	--	None required
Floor Area Ratio F § 302	1.8 maximum	1.85	1.98	Required
Height F § 303	50 ft. max.	35.5 ft.	35.5 ft.	None required
Lot Occupancy F § 304	60% max.	60%	60%	None required
Rear Yard F § 305	15 ft. min.	25 ft.	25 ft.	None required
Side Yard F § 306	None required	0 ft.	0 ft.	None required
Green Area Ratio F § 307	0.4	Not provided	Not provided	Not requested
Parking C § 701	1 per dwelling	1 space	1 space	None required

IV. OFFICE OF PLANNING ANALYSIS

a. Variance Relief from Subtitle F § 302.1, Floor Area Ratio

i. Exceptional Situation Resulting in a Practical Difficulty

The existing row dwelling, constructed in 1956, is effectively a one bedroom dwelling located in the Georgetown Historic District. The applicant has provided floor plans identifying a garage and mechanical room on the ground floor, common space on the second floor, a master bedroom, study, and restrooms on the third floor, and an attic on the fourth floor. Given that the property is located in the Georgetown Historic District, the homeowners are required to maintain the existing front windows, which as a result, may not be enlarged to provide sufficient egress required by the Building Code to consider the room a legal bedroom. In addition, the mechanical room on the ground floor, which will be converted into a studio and workroom, does not meet the requirements of a bedroom due to its proximity to the garage and inability to meet egress requirements. One bedroom row dwellings are unique in the District in general, and there are practical difficulties associated with the expansion of this particular dwelling to accommodate an additional legal bedroom.

The subject property, at 1,007 square feet, is the smallest in the square. The square consists of a variety of housing types, including larger apartment buildings and short blocks of row dwellings. The existing dwelling is located in a row of five dwellings, with lot sizes ranging from 1,313 square feet to that of the subject lot. Compared to adjacent lots, where similar additions would be permitted by right, the lot size is prohibitively small to permit a second bedroom addition; rather, the applicant has proposed to make use of existing space in the attic by increasing the headroom to 7'-3" and adding a dormer at the rear. The applicant notes that the required parking space, which is included in the FAR because it is enclosed, utilizes 230 square feet, which is equivalent to the area of the proposed attic conversion. While OP appreciates the comparison, the development requirements in the Zoning Regulations cannot be used as a practical difficulty to justify the variance.

However, the applicant has demonstrated that there is an exceptional situation resulting in a practical difficulty by providing an analysis of lot sizes within the square demonstrating that the subject lot is the smallest. The applicant has also qualified the uniqueness of the row dwelling as a one bedroom home due to restrictions imposed on the façade by the Old Georgetown Board and Building Code requirements.

ii. No Substantial Detriment to the Public Good

The proposed attic conversion should not cause substantial detriment to the public good. The conversion of the space entails increasing the headroom height of the attic to 7'-3", and adding a new dormer with three windows at the rear. The dormer would extend as far back as the neighboring dormer to the east, and would not be visible from Q Street. The conversion makes minor revisions to the rear façade without adding new height or lot occupancy to the dwelling, while converting existing storage space to habitable space. The proposal maintains the privacy of adjacent neighbors by not providing fenestration on the side elevations.

iii. No Substantial Harm to the Zoning Regulations

The proposed attic conversion would not cause harm to the Zoning Regulations. The additional floor area would be carved out of an existing, uninhabitable part of the dwelling, and would not add mass to the structure. As a result, the dwelling would continue to be a reasonable size for the small lot on which it is located.

V. COMMENTS OF OTHER GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

As of the date of this writing, comments from other District Agencies had not been received. DDOT has filed a report under separate cover noting that it has no objection to the requested variance (Exhibit 29).

At its October 19, 2017 meeting, the Old Georgetown Board (OGB) noted no objection to the concept design for the proposed dormer addition (reference case number OG 17-354).

VI. COMMUNITY COMMENTS

The applicant will be meeting with the ANC at a regularly scheduled meeting on December 4, 2017, and will provide an update to the Board at the public hearing.

Attachment: Location Map

Location Map

