

FROM	NAME & TITLE	Eric W. Tiso,  Director of Development Oversight and Project Support	CITY of BALTIMORE MEMO	
	AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS	Department of Planning 8 th Floor, 417 East Fayette Street		
	SUBJECT	City Council Bill #25-0090 / Zoning – Conditional Use Conversion of a Single-Family Dwelling to 2 Dwelling Units in the R-7 Zoning District – Variance – 220 North Culver Street		

TO

The Honorable President and
Members of the City Council
City Hall, Room 400
100 North Holliday Street

DATE: October 10, 2025

At its regular meeting of October 9, 2025, the Planning Commission considered City Council Bill #25-0090, for the purpose of permitting, subject to certain conditions, the conversion of a single-family dwelling unit to 2 dwelling units in the R-7 Zoning District on the property known as 220 North Culver Street (Block 2275A, Lot 135), as outlined in red on the accompanying plat; granting a variance regarding certain bulk regulations (lot size area); and providing for a special effective date.

In its consideration of this Bill, the Planning Commission reviewed the attached staff report, which recommended approval of City Council Bill #25-0090 and adopted the following resolution:

RESOLVED, That the Planning Commission concurs with the recommendation of its departmental staff, adopts the findings and equity analysis outlined in the staff report, with consideration for testimony and facts presented in the meeting, and recommends that City Council Bill #25-0090 be **approved** by the City Council.

If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Eric Tiso, Division Chief, Land Use and Urban Design Division at 410-396-8358.

TK/ewt

attachment

cc: Ms. Nina Themelis, Mayor's Office
The Honorable John Bullock, Council Rep. to Planning Commission
Mr. Justin Williams, BMZA
Mr. Geoffrey Veale, Zoning Administrator
Ms. Stephanie Murdock, DHCD
Ms. Hilary Ruley, Law Dept.
Mr. Francis Burnszynski, PABC
Mr. Luciano Diaz, DOT
Ms. Nancy Mead, Council Services
Mr. Malik Thomas, Applicant



Brandon M. Scott
Mayor

PLANNING COMMISSION

Jon Laria, Chair; Eric Stephenson, Vice Chair

STAFF REPORT



Tim Keane
Director

October 9, 2025

LEGISLATION: City Council Bill #25-0090/ Zoning – Conditional Use Conversion of a Single-Family Dwelling to 2 Dwelling Units in the R-7 Zoning District – Variance – 220 North Culver Street

For the purpose of permitting, subject to certain conditions, the conversion of a single-family dwelling unit to 2 dwelling units in the R-7 Zoning District on the property known as 220 North Culver Street (Block 2275A, Lot 135), as outlined in red on the accompanying plat; granting a variance regarding certain bulk regulations (lot size area); and providing for a special effective date.

SUMMARY OF REQUEST: There are two requests made in CCB #25-0090. The first is a conditional use to convert a single-family dwelling into two dwelling units in the R-7 District. Under § 9-701, conversions in the R-7 and R-8 zoning districts require approval as a conditional use by ordinance of the Mayor and City Council.

The second request is for a variance from the bulk and yard requirements of the R-7 District, as outlined in Table 9-401 of the Zoning Code. The property does not meet the minimum lot area required for two dwelling units; therefore, a variance is necessary.

RECOMMENDATION: Approval

STAFF: Justin Walker

PETITIONER: Malik Thomas

OWNER: Malik Thomas

COUNCIL DISTRICT: 8

SITE/GENERAL AREA

Site Conditions: 220 North Culver Street is located on the north side of the street, approximately 100' west of the intersection with West Saratoga Street. This property measures approximately 22' by 75' and is currently improved with a two-story building measuring approximately 22' by 40'. The building is currently built as two dwelling units, including layout and BGE meters. This site is zoned R-7 and is located within the Edmondson Village plan area.

General Area: The site is located with the Allendale neighborhood. The site is surrounded with blocks of R-7 and R-6 residential zoning. The area contains primary rowhouse and low-density multi-family dwellings. Two blocks east is the open space zone of Hilton Park.

HISTORY

There are no previous legislative or Planning Commission actions regarding this site.

CONFORMITY TO PLANS

The 2024 Comprehensive Master Plan for the City of Baltimore was enacted by Ordinance #24-426, dated December 2, 2024. The subject property is designated in the Residential: Medium Density group in the General Land Use Plan. This proposed development conforms to that designation.

This site is not located in any Urban Renewal Plan (URP) area.

APPLICANT'S PROPOSAL AND CODE CONTEXT:

The applicant purchased the property configured as two dwelling units. Upon attempting to replace the existing BGE meters, the applicant learned that the property was not recognized as two dwelling units in City records. The proposal retains the existing structure with no proposed changes; however, the passage of this bill would allow the units to be legally rented and the necessary permits to be obtained.

Conditional Use: In this zoning district, the conversion of a single-family dwelling to a multi-family dwelling is a conditional use, requiring approval by ordinance of the Mayor and City Council (§ 9-701).

Insufficient Lot Area: In this zoning district, multi-family dwellings require 1,100 square feet of lot area per dwelling unit (Table 9-401). In this case, for two dwelling units, 2,200 square feet of lot area is required. The lot only encloses 1,650 square feet, and so does not meet this requirement. A variance of 550 square feet, or 25 percent is required.

Impacts of proposed CCB #25-0064: The current proposed legislation would impact the bulk and yard requirements of the subject property's zoning district. CCB #25-0064 would decrease the minimum lot area for a multi-family dwelling from 1,100 to 750 square feet per dwelling unit in the R-7 district. If this bill were to take effect, the project would require a total lot area of 1,500 square feet for two dwelling units. The existing lot would meet that requirement, and no variance would be needed if the bill were adopted as currently proposed.

CONDITIONAL USE:

§ 5-406. Approval standards.

(a) *Evaluation criteria.*

As a guide to its decision on the facts of each case, the Board of Municipal and Zoning Appeals or the City Council must consider the following, where appropriate:

- (1) the nature of the proposed site, including its size and shape and the proposed size, shape, and arrangement of structures;
- (2) the resulting traffic patterns and adequacy of proposed off-street parking and loading;
- (3) the nature of the surrounding area and the extent to which the proposed use might impair its present and future development;

- (4) the proximity of dwellings, churches, schools, public structures, and other places of public gathering;
- (5) accessibility of the premises for emergency vehicles;
- (6) accessibility of light and air to the premises and to the property in the vicinity;
- (7) the type and location of adequate utilities, access roads, drainage, and other necessary facilities that have been or will be provided;
- (8) the preservation of cultural and historic landmarks and structures;
- (9) the character of the neighborhood;
- (10) the provisions of the City's Comprehensive Master Plan;
- (11) the provisions of any applicable Urban Renewal Plan;
- (12) all applicable standards and requirements of this Code;
- (13) the intent and purpose of this Code; and
- (14) any other matters considered to be in the interest of the general welfare.

(b) *Limited criteria for denying.*

The Board of Municipal and Zoning Appeals or the City Council, may not approve a conditional use or sign unless, after public notice and hearing and on consideration of the standards required by this subtitle, the Board or Council finds that:

- (1) the establishment, location, construction, maintenance, or operation of the conditional use or sign would not be detrimental to or endanger the public health, safety, or welfare;
- (2) the use or sign would not be precluded by any other law, including an applicable Urban Renewal Plan;
- (3) the authorization would not be contrary to the public interest; and
- (4) the authorization would be in harmony with the purpose and intent of this Code.

VARIANCE(S):

§ 5-308. Approval standards.

(a) *Required finding of practical difficulty.*

To grant a variance, the Zoning Administrator, the Board of Municipal and Zoning Appeals, or the City Council, as the case may be, shall find that:

- (1) because of the conditions peculiar to the property, including particular physical surroundings, shape, or topographical conditions of the specific structure or land involved, a practical difficulty, as distinguished from a mere inconvenience, would result if the strict letter of the applicable requirement were carried out; or
- (2) because of exceptional circumstances related to the specific structure or land involved, a practical difficulty, as distinguished from a mere inconvenience, would result if the strict letter of the applicable requirement were carried out.

(b) *Other required findings.*

The Zoning Administrator, the Board of Municipal and Zoning Appeals, or the City Council, as the case may be, must also find that:

- (1) the practical difficulty is caused by this Code and has not been created by the intentional action or inaction of any person who has a present interest in the property;
- (2) the purpose of the variance is not based exclusively on a desire to increase the value or income potential of the property;
- (3) the variance will not:
 - (i) be injurious to the use and enjoyment of other property in the immediate vicinity; or
 - (ii) substantially diminish and impair property values in the neighborhood;
- (4) the variance is in harmony with the purpose and intent of this Code;
- (5) the variance is not precluded by and will not adversely affect:
 - (i) any Urban Renewal Plan;
 - (ii) the City's Comprehensive Master Plan; or
 - (iii) any Historical and Architectural Preservation District; and
- (6) the variance will not otherwise:
 - (i) be detrimental to or endanger the public health, safety, or welfare; or
 - (ii) be in any way contrary to the public interest.

ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATION:

As noted above, for Conditional Uses, the Board of Municipal and Zoning Appeals or the City Council must consider the following, where appropriate. Staff's assessment follows each of these criteria.

§ 5-406 (a) Evaluation criteria:

The nature of the proposed site, including its size and shape and the proposed size, shape, and arrangement of structures; The site is suitable for the proposed two dwelling units, which will be fully contained within the existing rowhouse structure. The minor increase in density can be accommodated by the site and the existing building configuration.

The resulting traffic patterns and adequacy of proposed off-street parking and loading; Staff anticipates minimal impact to area traffic patterns from the addition of a single dwelling unit. The site is exempt from the parking requirements of the Zoning Code under § 16-601, which exempts all residential uses of three units or fewer.

The nature of the surrounding area and the extent to which the proposed use might impair its present and future development; The surrounding area is designated Residential: Medium Density in the General Land Use Plan. The existing development pattern is consistent with this designation. The proposal is not anticipated to have any impact on future development in the area.

The proximity of dwellings, churches, schools, public structures, and other places of public gathering; The addition of a single dwelling unit is not expected to impact nearby dwellings, churches, schools, or public institutions. The closest institution is Green Street Academy, located approximately two blocks southeast of the subject property.

Accessibility of the premises for emergency vehicles; The conversion to two dwelling units within the existing structure is not anticipated to affect emergency vehicle access.

Accessibility of light and air to the premises and to the property in the vicinity; The conversion to two dwelling units within the existing structure is not anticipated to affect access to light and air.

The type and location of adequate utilities, access roads, drainage, and other necessary facilities that have been or will be provided; The existing utilities, roadways, and drainage infrastructure are sufficient to accommodate the addition of a single dwelling unit.

The preservation of cultural and historic landmarks and structures; The proposal will have no impact on cultural and historic landmarks or structures.

The character of the neighborhood; The proposal is contained to the interior of the property, and therefore will not impact the neighborhood's character.

The provisions of the City's Comprehensive Master Plan; The proposal is consistent with the City's master plan.

The provisions of any applicable Urban Renewal Plan; There is not applicable Urban Renewal Plan that impacts the site.

All applicable standards and requirements of this Code; With the variance request included as part of this bill's approval, all applicable standards of the Zoning Code will be met.

The intent and purpose of this Code; and Any other matters considered to be in the interest of the general welfare. The proposal is consistent with the conversion standards applicable to the R-7 Zoning District. No adverse impacts to the general welfare are anticipated.

§ 5-406 (b) Limited criteria for denying:

The establishment, location, construction, maintenance, or operation of the conditional use or sign would not be detrimental to or endanger the public health, safety, or welfare; The addition of a single dwelling unit within the existing structure will have little to no impact on public health, safety, or welfare. The unit already exists, and no construction is proposed. It will be operated in accordance with applicable City laws governing rental properties, and maintenance needs are not expected to exceed those typical of a single-family dwelling.

The use or sign would not be precluded by any other law, including an applicable Urban Renewal Plan; The residential conversion is not precluded by any law or Urban Renewal Plan of which staff is aware.

The authorization would not be contrary to the public interest; and The authorization would allow an existing unit to be returned to productive use and would not be contrary to the public interest.

The authorization would be in harmony with the purpose and intent of this Code. The authorization is in harmony with the purpose and intent of the Code.

RECOMMENDATION: Staff therefore recommends that the Planning Commission adopt these findings and recommend the bill favorably, with respect to the conditional use.

§ 5-308 (a) Variance approval standards and finding of practical difficulty:

To grant a variance, the Zoning Administrator, the Board of Municipal and Zoning Appeals, or the City Council, as the case may be, shall find that:

Because of the conditions peculiar to the property, including particular physical surroundings, shape, or topographical conditions of the specific structure or land involved, a practical difficulty, as distinguished from a mere inconvenience, would result if the strict letter of the applicable requirement were carried out; or The existing condition of the property as two dwelling units demonstrates that strict application of the Code would create a hardship, as the building would need to be reverted to a single-family dwelling at significant cost before being returned to productive use. The conditions were not created by any intentional action of the current property owner or anyone with a present interest in the property..

Because of exceptional circumstances related to the specific structure or land involved, a practical difficulty, as distinguished from a mere inconvenience, would result if the strict letter of the applicable requirement were carried out. The structure was purchased by the current owner as two dwelling units. The site included existing mailboxes and BGE electrical meters indicating two units. When the applicant attempted to update the utilities, it was discovered that City records identified the property as a single dwelling unit.

§ 5-308 (b) Other required findings:

The Zoning Administrator, the Board of Municipal and Zoning Appeals, or the City Council, as the case may be, must also find that:

The practical difficulty is caused by this Code and has not been created by the intentional action or inaction of any person who has a present interest in the property; The current owner purchased the dwelling in its existing condition; the circumstances were not created by anyone with a present interest in the property. The purpose of the variance is to authorize the continued use of the structure as two dwelling units consistent with its existing configuration.

is not based exclusively on a desire to increase the value or income potential of the property; The variance does not appear to be based solely on a desire to increase the income potential of the property. Without the variance, significant expense would be required to revert the structure to a single-family dwelling.

The variance will not be injurious to the use and enjoyment of other property in the immediate vicinity; The subtle increase in density, contained within the existing structure, is unlikely to impact the use and enjoyment of neighboring properties.

The variance will not substantially diminish and impair property values in the neighborhood; No negative impact on nearby property values is anticipated.

The variance is in harmony with the purpose and intent of this Code; The variance is in harmony with the purpose and intent of the Zoning Code, as it supports the continued residential use of an existing structure consistent with the character of the surrounding neighborhood.

The variance is not precluded by and will not adversely affect any Urban Renewal Plan; The variance is not precluded by, and will not adversely affect, any Urban Renewal Plan applicable to the property.

The variance is not precluded by and will not adversely affect the City's Comprehensive Master Plan; The variance is consistent with the goals of the City's Comprehensive Master Plan, which supports the maintenance and reinvestment of existing housing stock in established neighborhoods.

The variance is not precluded by and will not adversely affect any Historical and Architectural Preservation District; The property is not located within a designated CHAP district.

The variance will not otherwise be detrimental to or endanger the public health, safety, or welfare; The variance will not be detrimental to or endanger the public health, safety, or welfare. The continued residential use of the existing structure is compatible with surrounding properties and poses no adverse impacts.

The variance will not otherwise be in any way contrary to the public interest. The variance will not be contrary to the public interest.

RECOMMENDATION: Staff therefore recommends that the Planning Commission adopt these findings and recommend the bill favorably, with respect to the variance requested.

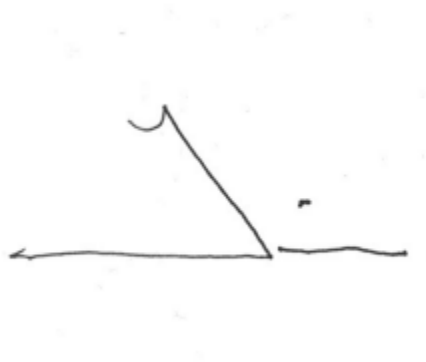
Other provisions or Article 32 – Zoning:

Off-Street Parking: The amount of off-street parking required for a multi-family dwelling is one parking space per dwelling unit (Table 16-406). In this case, under § 16-601.b. of the Zoning Code, the use is exempt from the code's parking requirements.

EQUITY:

The property owner purchased the dwelling in good faith as a two-unit structure, supported by existing mailboxes and BGE meters. Requiring the owner to fully revert the building to a single-family dwelling would create a disproportionate financial hardship and could lead to loss of housing stability or vacancy. Approval of the variance would legitimize an existing condition without expanding the building footprint, maintaining neighborhood character while supporting equitable access to housing and avoiding unnecessary financial and logistical burdens on the property owner.

NOTIFICATION: In addition to the required on-site posting and the notice distributed by staff via GovDelivery, the Allendale Community Association was notified of this action and submitted a letter of support.



Tim Keane
Director