

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 #25-0091/ Zoning – Conditional Use Conversion of a Single-Family Dwelling to 4 Dwelling Units in the R-8 Zoning District – Variance – 1425 West Fayette Street		

TO

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

DATE: October 31, 2025

At its regular meeting of October 30, 2025, the Planning Commission considered City Council Bill #25-0091, for the purpose of permitting, subject to certain conditions, the conversion of a single-family dwelling unit to 4 dwelling units in the R-8 Zoning District on the property known as 1425 West Fayette Street (Block 0197, Lot 013), 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 #25-0091, and adopted the following resolution:

RESOLVED, That the Planning Commission finds, in accordance with §5-406 *Approval Standards* of the Zoning Code of Baltimore City, that the proposed use provided in this bill:

- would not be detrimental to or endanger the public health, safety, or welfare;
- would not be precluded by any other law, including an applicable Urban Renewal Plan;
- would not be contrary to the public interest; and
- meets all criteria for approval specified in §5-406(b) of the Zoning Code of Baltimore City, as described in the Departmental staff report; and further

RESOLVED, That the Planning Commission takes no position on the included variance, and notes that upon the approval of CCB #25-0064, the variance will no longer be required.

THEREFORE, the Planning Commission concurs with the recommendation of its Departmental staff with regard to the Conditional Use application, and recommends that City Council Bill #25-0091 be **approved** by the City Council.

If you have any questions, please contact me at eric.tiso@baltimorecity.gov or by phone at 410-396-8358.

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
Ms. Catia Bleck, Applicant



Brandon M. Scott
Mayor

PLANNING COMMISSION

Jon Laria, Chair; Eric Stephenson, Vice Chair

STAFF REPORT



Tim Keane
Director

October 30, 2025

REQUEST: City Council Bill #25-0091 / Zoning – Conditional Use Conversion of a Single-Family Dwelling to 4 Dwelling Units in the R-8 Zoning District – 1425 West Fayette Street: For the purpose of permitting, subject to certain conditions, the conversion of a single-family dwelling unit to 4 dwelling units in the R-8 Zoning District on the property known as 1425 West Fayette Street (Block 0197, Lot 013), 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.

RECOMMENDATION: Approval

STAFF: Austin C. Davis

PETITIONER: Catia Bleck / Properland LLC

OWNER: Catia and Henry Bleck

SITE/GENERAL AREA

Site Conditions: The property at 1425 West Fayette Street is a 3-story rowhome located midblock between North Carey and North Payson Streets in the Franklin Square neighborhood. The structure is currently vacant and in shell condition, with a recorded lot area of 1,755 square feet. The interior square footage is 2,387 square feet with a 629 square foot basement. It is zoned R-8 and located within the boundaries of the Franklin Square National Register Historic District but not within a local CHAP district.

General Area: This portion of West Fayette Street consists of a mix of occupied and vacant rowhomes. The surrounding blocks show evidence of historic disinvestment but also include signs of reinvestment and rehabilitation. The site is located one block south of West Baltimore Street, a commercial corridor. It lies within Council District 9, and is supported by the Franklin Square Community Association.

HISTORY

There are no prior Planning Commission or legislative actions associated with this property. The site is not subject to an Urban Renewal Plan.

CONFORMITY TO PLANS

The 2024 Comprehensive Master Plan designates the area as Residential – Higher Density, which supports multi-family conversions as a means of increasing housing diversity and occupancy.

This proposal aligns with the goals of the Franklin Square neighborhood and the City’s strategic housing policies. The neighborhood organization has submitted a formal letter of support, citing the importance of retaining and rehabilitating historic structures and the community benefit of additional housing units.

ANALYSIS

Background: The petitioner seeks a conditional use approval and bulk variance to convert a vacant single-family home into a four-unit multifamily dwelling. According to the Zoning Code, such conversions are allowed conditionally in the R-8 district under §9-701(2) and require City Council approval.

Conditional Use Approval Standards:

The structure was originally built as a single-family home and meets the minimum gross floor area required by §9-703 for conversion. Each proposed unit will include two bedrooms and two bathrooms. The applicant has stated that parking will be provided for three to four vehicles.

Below is the staff’s review of Article 32 – *Zoning*, §5-406 {“Approval standards”}: Staff finds no evidence that the proposed conversion would negatively affect public health, safety, or welfare. Rehabilitating this vacant structure will return it to productive use. The site is not located within an Urban Renewal Plan area, and no other regulations preclude the proposed conversion. The request is consistent with the General Land Use Plan as well as the goals of the applicable area master plan.

§ 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 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:

The required minimum lot area for four units in the R-8 zone is 2,625 square feet. The property provides only 1,755 square feet, necessitating a 33% variance under §9-401 and §5-308 of the Zoning Code. This deficiency is due to the historic lot dimensions and does not result from any action by the applicant.

Staff finds that the proposed variance meets the standards for practical difficulty as defined in the Code, and that the conversion will not negatively impact surrounding properties. The reduced lot size is typical for this block and does not hinder access, light, air, or utilities.

Variance Approval Standards:

§ 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

Community Support:

The Franklin Square Community Association submitted a letter of support for this application. The letter emphasized the importance of preserving historic homes, supporting responsible development, and expanding housing options.

Equity:

This proposal advances equity by rehabilitating a long-vacant structure into four new housing units in an under-invested community. It addresses goals for increasing housing choice and preserving historic urban fabric. No displacement of current residents will occur, and the property is not owner-occupied. The project is community-supported and provides moderate-density housing without altering the block's character.

Notification: The site has been posted per zoning requirements. The applicant has engaged with the community association, and Councilman John Bullock has introduced the enabling legislation (Bill 25-0091).



Tim Keane
Director