



BALTIMORE CITY COUNCIL LAND USE & TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

Mission Statement

On behalf of the Citizens of Baltimore City, the Land Use & Transportation Committee is committed to shaping a reliable, equitable, and sustainable future for Baltimore's land use and transportation systems. Through operational oversight and legislative action, the committee aims to develop and support lasting solutions grounded in principles of good governance.

The Honorable Ryan Dorsey

CHAIR

PUBLIC HEARING

9/25/2025

10:00 AM

CLARENCE "DU" BURNS COUNCIL CHAMBERS

Bill: 25-0077

***Title: Zoning – Conditional Use Conversion of a Single-Family
Dwelling Unit in the R-8 Zoning District – Variances – 541
Lafayette Avenue***

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Meeting: Bill Hearing

Committee: Land Use & Transportation

Bill # 25-0077

Title: Zoning – Conditional Use Conversion of Single-Family Dwelling Units in the R-8 Zoning District – Variances – 541 Lafayette Avenue

Purpose: For the purpose of permitting, subject to certain conditions, the conversion of a single-family dwelling unit to 2 dwelling units in the R-8 Zoning District on the property known as 541 Lafayette Avenue (Block 0414, Lot 062), as outlined in red on the accompanying plat; granting variances regarding certain bulk regulations (lot size area) and off-street parking requirements; and providing for a special effective date.

REPORTING AGENCIES

Agency	Report
Law Department	Approved for form and legal sufficiency
Planning Commission	Favorable with amendment
Department of Housing and Community Development	Favorable

BACKGROUND

Bill Summary

Council Bill 25-0072 requests permission to convert the single-family dwelling at 1703 Edmondson Avenue (Block 0121, Lot 017) into two dwelling units and to convert the single-family dwelling at 1709 Edmondson Avenue (Block 0121, Lot 020) into two dwelling units, both located in the R-8 Zoning District.

Pursuant to the authority granted by §§ 5-305(a) and 5-308 of Article 32 – Zoning, the bill also grants a variance from the requirements of §§ 9-401 (Table 9-401: Rowhouse and Multi-Family Residential Districts Bulk and Yard Regulations) and 9-703(d), as the minimum lot size for two dwelling units in the R-8 Zoning District is 1,500 square feet while the lot area size is 1,240 square feet. In addition, Council Bill 25-0077 requests permission to convert a single-

family dwelling to two dwelling units in the R-8 Zoning District on the property known as 541 Lafayette Avenue (Block 0414, Lot 062).

Amendment

The newly amended Zoning Code exempts residential properties with up to three dwelling units from off-street parking requirements. Therefore, the Planning Commission recommends striking the off-street parking variance in Section 3 of the bill since it is no longer necessary.

Background

The property at 541 West Lafayette Street is an end-of-row attached dwelling located in the Upton neighborhood and abutting Robert C. Marshall Park at the rear. The lot measures 15 feet 6 inches by 80 feet, with a total area of 1,240 square feet, and is zoned R-8. Several nearby rowhouses are vacant and in need of substantial repair, though the subject property has received exterior improvements to its doors and windows and is awaiting approval for multifamily use to allow interior renovations. The site is not subject to an Urban Renewal Plan but lies within the Upton Neighborhood Master Plan area.

The surrounding block, within the West Planning District, contains a significant number of vacant structures, with sixteen vacant-building notices issued. One neighboring property has recently undergone renovation.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Fiscal Note: There should be no fiscal impact.

Information Source(s): 1st reader and agency reports

Analysis by: Juliane Jemmott
Analysis Date: 9/17/2025

Direct Inquiries to: 410 – 396 - 1268

CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL 25-0077
(First Reader)

Introduced by: Councilmember Blanchard

At the request of: Brandon Brown

Address: 5808 Kentucky Avenue, District Heights, MD 20747

Telephone: (301) 242-1798

Introduced and read first time: June 16, 2025 at 5:00 p.m.

Assigned to: Land Use and Transportation Committee

REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: City Solicitor, Planning Commission, Department of Housing and Community Development

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ORDINANCE concerning

2 **Zoning – Conditional Use Conversion of a Single-Family Dwelling Unit in the R-8 Zoning**
3 **District – Variances – 541 Lafayette Avenue**

4 FOR the purpose of permitting, subject to certain conditions, the conversion of a single-family
5 dwelling unit to 2 dwelling units in the R-8 Zoning District on the property known as 541
6 Lafayette Avenue (Block 0414, Lot 062), as outlined in red on the accompanying plat;
7 granting variances regarding certain bulk regulations (lot size area) and off-street parking
8 requirements; and providing for a special effective date.

9 BY authority of

10 Article 32 - Zoning

11 Section(s) 5-201(a), 5-305(a), 5-308, 9-401 (Table 9-401), 9-701(2), 9-703(d), 9-703(f),
12 16-203, and 16-602 (Table 16-406)

13 Baltimore City Revised Code
14 (Edition 2000)

15 **SECTION 1. BE IT ORDAINED BY THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That
16 permission is granted for the conversion of a single-family dwelling unit to 2 dwelling units in
17 the R-8 Zoning District on the property known as 541 Lafayette Avenue (Block 0414, Lot 062),
18 as outlined in red on the plat accompanying this Ordinance, in accordance with Baltimore City
19 Zoning Code §§ 5-201(a) and 9-701(2), subject to the condition that the building complies with
20 all applicable federal, state, and local licensing and certification requirements.

21 **SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED,** That pursuant to the authority granted by
22 §§ 5-305(a) and 5-308 of Article 32 - Zoning, permission is granted for a variance from the
23 requirements of §§ 9-401 (Table 9-401: Rowhouse and Multi-Family Residential Districts - Bulk
24 and Yard Regulations) and 9-703(d), as the minimum lot size requirement for 2 dwelling units in
25 the R-8 Zoning District is 1,500 square feet and the lot area size is 1,240 square feet.

26 **SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED,** That pursuant to the authority granted by
27 §§ 5-305(a) and 5-308 of Article 32 - Zoning, permission is granted for a variance from the

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS indicate matter added to existing law.
[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.

Council Bill 25-0077

1 requirements of §§ 9-703(f), 16-203, and 16-602 (Table 16-406: Required Off-Street Parking) for
2 off-street parking.

3 **SECTION 4. AND BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED,** That as evidence of the authenticity of the
4 accompanying plat and in order to give notice to the agencies that administer the City Zoning
5 Ordinance: (i) when the City Council passes this Ordinance, the President of the City Council
6 shall sign the plat; (ii) when the Mayor approves this Ordinance, the Mayor shall sign the plat;
7 and (iii) the Director of Finance then shall transmit a copy of this Ordinance and the plat to the
8 Board of Municipal and Zoning Appeals, the Planning Commission, the Commissioner of
9 Housing and Community Development, the Supervisor of Assessments for Baltimore City, and
10 the Zoning Administrator.

11 **SECTION 5. AND BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED,** That this Ordinance takes effect on the date it is
12 enacted.

Baltimore City Council



Land Use & Transportation

Committee

Bill: 25-0077

**Title: Zoning – Conditional Use Conversion
of a Single-Family Dwelling Unit in the R-8
Zoning District – Variances – 541 Lafayette
Avenue**

Agency Reports

CITY OF BALTIMORE

BRANDON M. SCOTT
Mayor



DEPARTMENT OF LAW
EBONY M. THOMPSON, CITY SOLICITOR
100 N. HOLLIDAY STREET
SUITE 101, CITY HALL
BALTIMORE, MD 21202

September 23, 2025

The Honorable President and Members
of the Baltimore City Council
Attn: Executive Secretary
Room 409, City Hall
100 N. Holliday Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

Re: City Council Bill 25-0077 – Conditional Use Conversion of a Single-Family Dwelling Unit in the R-8 Zoning 3 District – Variances – 541 Lafayette Avenue

Dear President and City Council Members:

The Law Department has reviewed City Council Bill 25-0077 for form and legal sufficiency. The bill would permit the conversion of a single-family dwelling unit to 2 dwelling units in the R-8 Zoning District on the property known as 541 Lafayette Avenue (Block 0414, Lot 062), as outlined in red on the accompanying plat; grant variances regarding certain bulk regulations (lot size area) and off-street parking requirements; and provide for a special effective date.

In Section 3 of Council Bill 25-0077, a variance is requested for off-street parking. Newly amended Section 16-601(b)(1) of Article 32 (Zoning Code) provides “[a]ll residential uses in any zoning district with up to and including 3 dwelling units are exempt from off-street parking requirements.” Therefore Section 3 of the bill, lines 26 through 27 on page 1 and lines 1 through 2 on page 2, should be removed, and Section 4, beginning on line 3 of page 2, should be renumbered. Similarly, the Code provisions cited as authority for requesting a variance should be deleted beginning on line 11 through line 12 on page 1.

Conditional Use Standards

The conversion of a single-family dwelling to a multi-family dwelling in an R-8 District requires conditional-use approval by ordinance. City Code, Art. 32, § 9-701(2). The only properties eligible for conversions are those that meet the standards set forth in Section 9-703 of Article 32 of the Baltimore City Code. Eligible properties must “continue to conform to the applicable bulk and yard regulations, including lot area per dwelling unit, for the district in which the building is located”. Baltimore City Code, Art. 32, § 9-703(b). Properties “may not violate any dwelling unit occupancy regulations or restrictions of the City Code” and “the exterior of the dwelling must retain its existing residential character”. Baltimore City Code, Art. 32, § 9-703(c)-(d).

The converted dwelling must continue to conform to the bulk and yard regulations, including minimum lot size, for the district in which the building is located. Baltimore City Code, Art. 32, § 9-703(b), (d). The minimum lot size per dwelling unit in a multi-family dwelling in an R-8 district is 750 square feet. Art. 32, Tbl. 9-401. The Planning Commission notes that this lot contains approximately 1,240 square feet, which requires a variance.

To approve a conditional use, the City Council must find:

- (1) the establishment, location, construction, maintenance, or operation of the conditional use would not be detrimental to or endanger the public health, safety, or welfare;
- (2) the use 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.

Baltimore City Code, Art. 32, § 5-406(b).

These findings must be guided by 14 required considerations:

- (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.

Baltimore City Code, Art. 32, § 5-406(a).

Variance Standards

To grant any variance, the City Council must find that, "because of the particular physical surroundings, shape, or topographical conditions of the specific structure or land involved, an unnecessary hardship or practical difficulty, as distinguished from a mere inconvenience, would

result if the strict letter of the applicable requirement were carried out.” Baltimore City Code, Art. 32, § 5-308(a). The City Council must also make seven other findings:

- (1) the practical difficulty is caused by this Code and has not been created by the intention 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.

Baltimore City Code, Art. 32, § 5-308(b).

Planning Report

The Planning Commission accepted the Planning Staff recommendation and recommended approval of this bill. The Planning Report recommends, as required above, that the variance for off-street parking be amended out of the bill.

541 West Lafayette Street is an end-of-row attached dwelling located in the Upton neighborhood. The Planning Report notes that the block contains a significant number of vacant structures, with 16 vacant building notices issued within the block. One other property on the block has recently undergone renovation. The property is designated residential: higher density in the current Comprehensive Master Plan so that this conditional use conversion conforms to the land use plan for the area. The Planning Report notes that the Master Plan for the Upton community supports the development of a range of housing types for both rental and homeownership, so returning this vacant property to productive use is consistent with that goal.

Procedural Requirements

The City Council committee assigned the bill must consider it at a scheduled public hearing wherein it will hear and weigh the evidence. Baltimore City Code, Art. 32, §§ 5-404; 5-406; 5-507; 5-602. After weighing the evidence presented and submitted into the record before it, the Committee is required to make findings of fact with respect to the factors and considerations outlined above. If, after its investigation of the facts, the Committee makes findings which support the conditional use and the variances sought, it may adopt these findings and the legal requirements will be met.

Certain procedural requirements apply to this bill because both conditional uses and variances are considered “legislative authorizations.” Baltimore City Code, Art. 32, § 5- 501(2)(i), (ii).

Specifically, notice requirements apply to the bill, and it must be referred to certain City agencies, which are obligated to review it in a specified manner. Baltimore City Code, Art. 32, §§ 5-504, 5-506, 5-602. Additionally, certain limitations on the City Council's ability to amend the bill apply. Baltimore City Code, Art. 32, § 5-507.



This bill is the appropriate method to review the facts and make the determination as to whether the legal standards for a conditional use and variance have been met. Assuming the required findings are made at the hearing, all procedural requirements are satisfied, and the required amendments are made the Law Department can approve the bill for form and legal sufficiency.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'DLuckey', written in a cursive style.

Desiree Luckey
Assistant Solicitor

cc: Ebony Thompson, City Solicitor
Hilary Ruley, Chief Solicitor, General Counsel Division
Jeff Hochstetler, Chief Solicitor
Ashlea Brown, Chief Solicitor
Michelle Toth, Assistant Solicitor

FROM	NAME & TITLE	CHRIS RYER, DIRECTOR 	CITY of BALTIMORE MEMO	
	AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS	DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING 8 TH FLOOR, 417 EAST FAYETTE STREET		
	SUBJECT	CITY COUNCIL BILL #25-0077 / ZONING – CONDITIONAL USE CONVERSION OF A SINGLE-FAMILY DWELLING UNIT IN THE R-8 ZONING DISTRICT – VARIANCES – 541 LAFAYETTE AVENUE		

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

DATE: August 11, 2025

At its regular meeting of August 11, 2025, the Planning Commission considered City Council Bill #25-0077, for the purpose of permitting, subject to certain conditions, the conversion of a single-family dwelling unit to 2 dwelling units in the R-8 Zoning District on the property known as 541 Lafayette Avenue (Block 0414, Lot 062), as outlined in red on the accompanying plat; granting variances regarding certain bulk regulations (lot size area) and off-street parking requirements; and providing for a special effective date.

In its consideration of this Bill, the Planning Commission reviewed the attached staff report, which recommended amendment and approval of City Council Bill #25-0077 and adopted the following resolution, with nine members being present (nine in favor):

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 #25-0077 be **amended and 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.

CR/ewt

attachment

cc: Ms. Nina Themelis, Mayor's Office
The Honorable John Bullock, Council Rep. to Planning Commission
Ms. Rebecca Witt, BMZA
Mr. Geoffrey Veale, Zoning Administration
Ms. Stephanie Murdock, DHCD
Ms. Hilary Ruley, Law Dept.
Mr. Francis Burnszynski, PABC
Mr. Luciano Diaz, DOT
Ms. Nancy Mead, Council Services
Mr. Brandon Brown, applicant



Brandon M. Scott
Mayor

PLANNING COMMISSION

Jon Laria, Chair; Eric Stephenson, Vice Chair

STAFF REPORT



Chris Ryer
Director

August 7, 2025

REQUEST: City Council Bill #25-0077/ Zoning – Conditional Use Conversion of Single-Family Dwelling to Two Dwelling Units in the R-8 Zoning District – 541 West Lafayette 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-8 Zoning District on the property known as 541 Lafayette Avenue (Block 0414, Lot 062), as outlined in red on the accompanying plat; granting variances regarding certain bulk regulations (lot size area) and off-street parking requirements; and providing for a special effective date.

RECOMMENDATION: Adopt findings and approve with the following amendment:

- Strike the off-street parking variance granted in Section 3 of the bill.

STAFF: Justin Walker

PETITIONER: Brandon Brown

OWNER: Brandon Brown

SITE/GENERAL AREA

Site Conditions: 541 West Lafayette Street is an end-of-row attached dwelling located in the Upton neighborhood. The property abuts Robert C. Marshall Park at the rear. The row contains several vacant units in need of substantial repair. The subject property has undergone some improvements to the doors and windows and is awaiting approval for conversion to multifamily use to allow for interior renovations. The lot measures 15 feet 6 inches by 80 feet, with a total lot area of 1,240 square feet. The property is not subject to an Urban Renewal Plan and is located within the Upton Neighborhood Master Plan area. It is zoned R-8.

General Area: The subject property is located in the Upton neighborhood within the West Planning District. The block contains a significant number of vacant structures, with 16 vacant building notices issued within the block. One other property on the block has recently undergone renovation.

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 on December 2, 2024. The subject property is designated as Residential: Higher Density in the General Land Use Plan. The proposed development conforms to this designation.

The Master Plan for the Upton community supports the development of a range of housing types for both rental and homeownership. Returning this vacant property to productive use is consistent with that goal.

ANALYSIS

Background: The proposal involves converting the existing single-family rowhouse into two apartment units. The site would consist of one one-bedroom unit with 780 square feet of gross floor area and one two-bedroom unit with 1,350 square feet of floor area.

Conditional Use Approval Standards:

§ 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.

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.

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

Below is the staff's review of Article 32 – *Zoning*, §5-308 {"Approval standards"}: Staff notes that the property is situated so that it is abutted on two sides by alleys, including a mid-block pedestrian access point measuring 20 feet in width along the west side of the lot. While this configuration of rights-of-way is distinct and may influence site access, the overall lot size and shape remain generally consistent with other properties on the block.

Equity: The proposed conversion of 541 West Lafayette Avenue supports equity goals by reactivating a vacant property. Located in Upton, the project adds two rental units to an area with significant vacancies. The additional units expand housing choice and align with the Upton Master Plan, which calls for more diverse and affordable housing types. The project is supported by the local community association.

Notification: In addition to the required posting on the property, the Upton Planning Committee was notified and provided a letter of support.



Chris Ryer
Director



CITY OF BALTIMORE
MAYOR BRANDON M. SCOTT

TO	The Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council
FROM	Alice Kennedy, Commissioner, Housing and Community Development
CC	Mayor's Office of Government Relations
DATE	September 19, 2025
SUBJECT	25-0077 Zoning – Conditional Use Conversion of a Single-Family Dwelling Unit in the R-8 Zoning District – Variances – 541 Lafayette Avenue

Position: Favorable



BILL SYNOPSIS

The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) has reviewed City Council Bill 25-0077 Zoning – Conditional Use Conversion of a Single-Family Dwelling Unit in the R-8 Zoning District – Variances – 541 Lafayette Avenue for the purpose of permitting, subject to certain conditions, the conversion of a single-family dwelling unit to 2 dwelling units in the R-8 Zoning District on the property known as 541 Lafayette Avenue (Block 0414, Lot 062), as outlined in red on the accompanying plat; granting variances regarding certain bulk regulations (lot size area) and off-street parking requirements; and providing for a special effective date.

If enacted, City Council Bill 25-0077 would convert the property located at 541 Lafayette Avenue from a single-family home to 2 dwelling units and grant variances for bulk regulations and off-street parking. If approved, this Bill will take effect on the date of its enactment.

SUMMARY OF POSITION

At its regular meeting of August 11th, 2025, the Planning Commission concurred with the recommendations of its Departmental staff and recommended that the Bill be amended and approved by the City Council. In their report, the Commission noted that the proposed conditional use conversion would be in alignment with the General Land Use Plan due to the block's designated higher density as well as the Master Plan for Upton, given the need for diverse housing typologies.

The property in reference is not located within any of DHCD's Streamlined Code Enforcement Areas or Community Development Zones but does fall within the West Impact Investment Area. This conditional use conversion may benefit the Upton neighborhood by returning a vacant

building to productive use and increasing affordable housing opportunities for the surrounding communities.

FISCAL IMPACT

As drafted, this Bill would have minimal fiscal or administrative impact on DHCD.

AMENDMENTS

DHCD supports the Planning Commission's amendment to Strike the off-street parking variance granted in Section 3 of the Bill.



BALTIMORE CITY
DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING &
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Office of the Zoning Administrator
417 E. Fayette Street, Benton Bldg., Room 147

Ref: 541 W. Lafayette Avenue

Date: January 03, 2025

This memo is submitted to confirm the review of a request from the owner and/or representative of the property (or properties) referenced above for authorization to:

Convert existing premises into two dwelling units - R-8 Zoning District

Please be advised that the Office of the Zoning Administrator has determined that the authorization requested above (in whole or in part) requires approval by Ordinance of the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore. In the furtherance of said Ordinance approval, the Zoning Administrator has determined that the following variances per the Zoning Code of Baltimore City are required or needed to be incorporated into the bill for approval.

- For two dwelling units, the required lot area is 1,500 square feet. The existing lot area is only 1,240 square feet, therefore, a variance will be needed. (Subsection 9-703(d), Table 9-401)

At least one off-street parking space is required for the proposed unit. The rear of property is open and accessible, and if the applicant is able to provide one parking space in the rear, a variance would not be required for off-street parking (Subsection 9-703(f), Table 16-406).

This memo is being submitted in accordance with Subsections 5-201 and 5-303 of the Zoning Code for Baltimore City.

Respectfully,

Geoffrey M. Veale
Zoning Administrator

cc: Department of Legislative Reference
Brandon Brown, Applicant
Councilmember John Bullock
Department of Planning

Baltimore City Council



Land Use & Transportation

Committee

Bill:25-0077

**Title: Zoning – Conditional Use Conversion
of a Single-Family Dwelling Unit in the R-8
Zoning District – Variances – 541 Lafayette
Avenue**

Additional Materials



TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

This letter is in support of the rehabbing housing development in Baltimore City for Mr. Brown for the following property, 541 West Lafayette Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21217.

Guidance for Turning Single Family Homes into Apartments

I am writing to express my support for the new housing development initiative aimed at transforming single-family homes into two separate apartments in Baltimore City, Maryland. This innovative approach promises to address the growing demand for rental housing while optimizing existing residential spaces. However, it is essential that the housing developer follows all permitting regulations and housing regulations to ensure the success and sustainability of this project.

Importance of Adhering to Permitting Regulations

Baltimore City has established a comprehensive set of permitting regulations designed to maintain the integrity and safety of residential properties. It is imperative that the housing developer obtains all necessary permits before commencing any construction or renovation activities. This includes:

- Building permits
- Zoning permits
- Electrical and plumbing permits
- Environmental impact assessments

Compliance with these regulations ensures that the construction process meets city standards and minimizes any potential legal or safety issues.

Housing Regulations for Rental Properties

In addition to permitting regulations, Baltimore City has specific housing regulations that govern rental properties. The developer must adhere to these guidelines to provide safe, habitable, and regulated living spaces for future tenants. Key aspects include:

- Compliance with the Baltimore City Housing Code
- Ensuring proper sanitation and waste disposal
- Maintaining adequate heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems
- Regular inspections and maintenance of the property



- Fair rental practices and transparent lease agreements

By following these housing regulations, the developer will contribute to the city's efforts to provide quality rental housing and uphold the rights of tenants.

Conclusion

Transforming single-family homes into apartments is a commendable initiative that can significantly benefit Baltimore City's housing market. However, it is crucial for the housing developer to meticulously adhere to all permitting and housing regulations. This ensures the creation of safe, compliant, and desirable living spaces that meet the needs of the community. I strongly urge the developer to commit to these standards and contribute to the ongoing efforts to enhance housing options in Baltimore City.

Together, we can create a vibrant and inclusive residential environment that caters to the diverse needs of our city's residents. I can be reached at (410)299-1535 or wgbest@verizon.net for additional information.

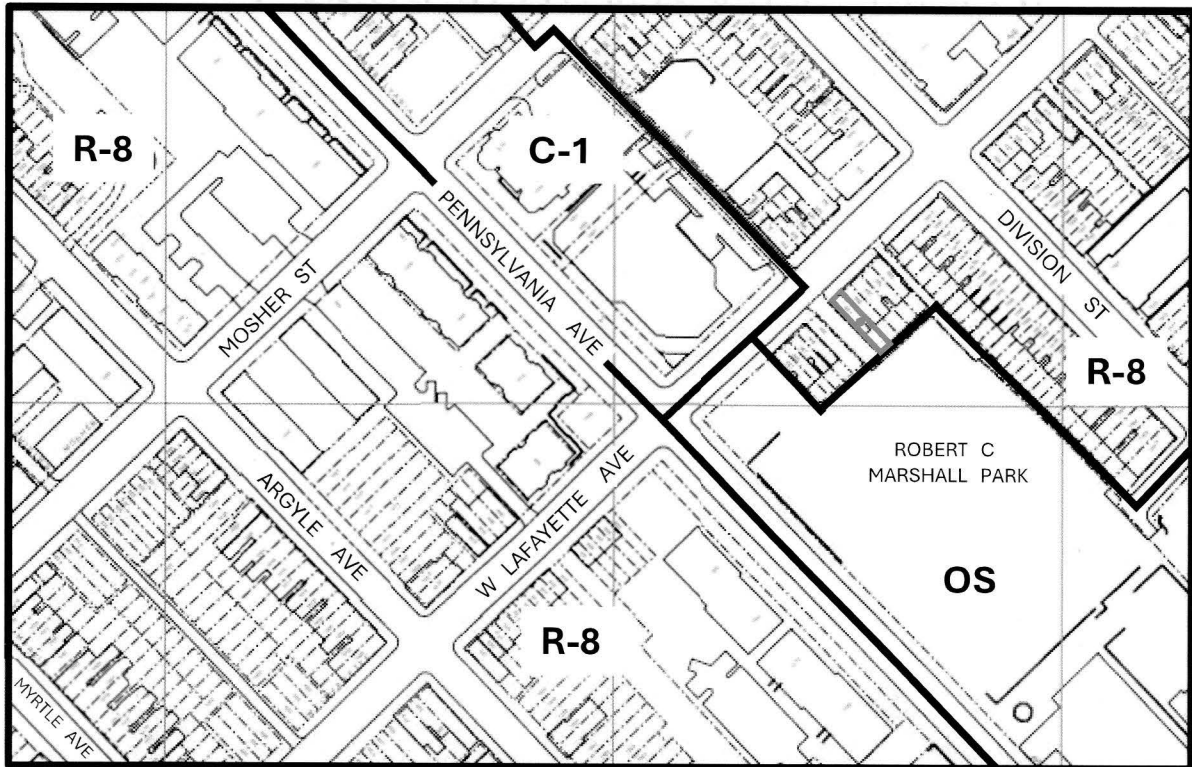
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Wanda G. Best", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

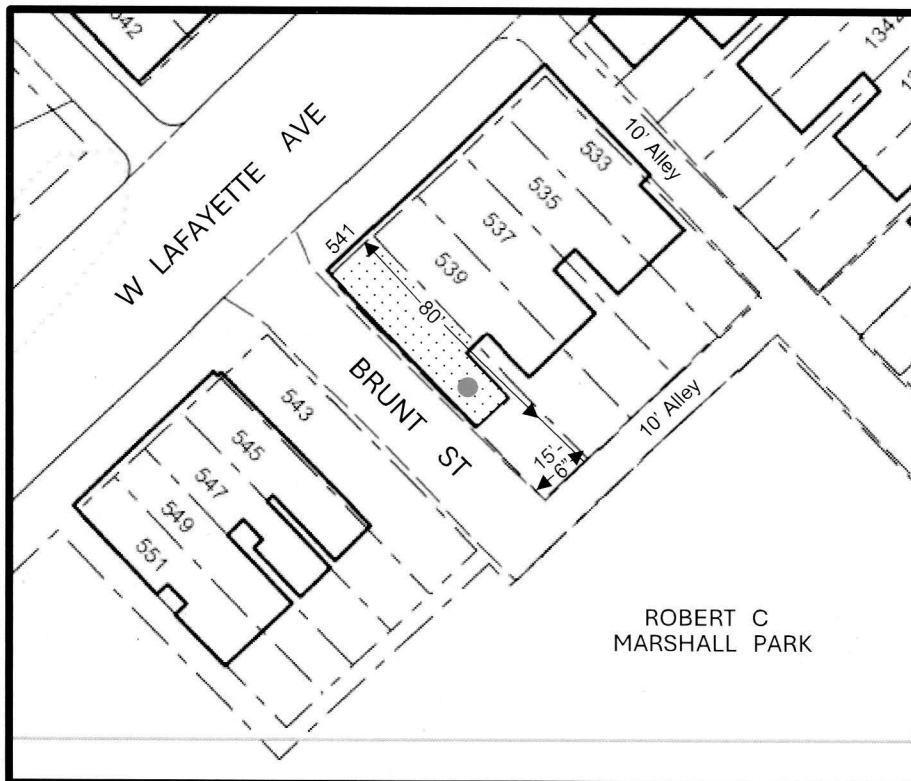
Wanda G. Best
Executive Director

Cc Zac Blanchard, City Council, District 11
Tarek Bolden, City Planner II Western District
Howard Tutman III, DHCD, Neighborhood Development Officer

SHEET NO. 45 OF THE ZONING MAP OF THE ZONING CODE OF BALTIMORE CITY



Scale: 1" = 200'



Note:

In Connection With The Property Known As No. 541 WEST LAFAYETTE AVENUE. The Applicant Wishes To Request The Conditional Use Conversion Of The Aforementioned Property From A Single-Family Dwelling Unit To Three Dwelling Units In The R-8 Zoning District, As Outlined In Red Above.

WARD 17 SECTION 1

BLOCK 414 LOT 62

MAYOR

PRESIDENT CITY COUNCIL


Scale: 1" = 50'

541

CITY OF BALTIMORE

BRANDON SCOTT – MAYOR

KEVIN COHEN – COUNCIL PRESIDENT



OFFICE OF COUNCIL SERVICES

NANCY MEAD – DIRECTOR

100 N. HOLIDAY STREET

BALTIMORE MD, 21202

TO:

FROM:

DATE:

RE:

Juliane Jemmott, Office of Council Services

August 27th, 2025

INSTRUCTIONS FOR NOTICE OF A PUBLIC HEARING – CONDITIONAL USE AND VARIANCES

The Land Use & Transportation Committee of the Baltimore City Council has scheduled the following public hearing:

City Council Bill No. 25-0077

Thursday, September 25th, 2025

10:00 AM

Clarence “Du” Burns Chamber, City Hall, 100 N. Holliday Street, 4th Floor and online via Webex

Notice of the public hearing must be provided by and at the expense of the applicant in accordance with Article 32. Zoning § 5-602 – Major variances: Conditional uses. For helpful information about the notice requirements under Article 32 - Zoning see Attachment B. You are encouraged to access and review Article 32 using the web link below:

<https://legislative.reference.baltimorecity.gov/city-codes>

Required notice and deadlines are outlined on the following page.

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