

476 SOUTH COLUMBIA STREET

VARIANCE STANDARDS

Project Description

Drake and Lauren Kelly purchased the property located at 476 South Columbia Street (“Subject Property”) in December 2019. The Subject Property is vacant; there was a house on the property, but it was razed before the Kellys purchased the property. The Kellys propose to construct a single-family detached residence for their family on this site.

The maximum height allowed by the Zoning Regulations for this house is 2½ stories not to exceed 35 feet.

Height is determined by establishing the datum point. For the Subject Property, the datum point is 699.98.

A basement is considered a “story” if its ceiling is 4 feet or more above the level from which the height of the building is measured, i.e., the datum point.

The Kelly house includes a basement. The ceiling of the basement will be 8.57 feet above the datum point. Therefore, the basement would be considered a “story” and the Kelly house will be 3 stories which exceeds the maximum allowable number of stories of 2½. However, the “height” of the Kelly house does not exceed the maximum allowable height of 35 feet. It measures 34.2 feet in height.

The Kellys are requesting a variance to allow the house to be 3 stories. They believe that this variance is reasonable and fair based on topographic, drainage, engineering and aesthetic considerations as detailed below in the Variance Standards.

1. The variance is in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and the adopted Comprehensive Master Plan.

The purpose of the bulk requirements, including the height restrictions, of the Zoning Regulations is to insure compatibility of structures within a neighborhood.

The topography of the neighborhood in which the Subject Property is located varies dramatically between an elevation of 705 and an elevation of 694. The Subject Property is at the low point and is located in the watershed drainage flow. The basement needs to be set at a higher elevation so as to minimize flooding risks to the basement and garage. Even though the basement level exceeds 4 feet, the house will not negatively impact the neighborhood because it is at a lower elevation than the surrounding houses in the neighborhood and its overall height does not exceed the maximum allowable height of 35 feet. It will not appear to be taller than other newly-constructed houses in the area. The residential nature of the neighborhood is maintained.

Therefore, the proposed structure is in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the height restrictions of the Zoning Regulations and the Comprehensive Master Plan.

2. Strict enforcement of the Zoning Regulations would result in practical difficulties or impose exceptional hardships due to special and unusual conditions which are not generally found on other properties in the same zoning district.

The Subject Property is located in the Steeple Run Watershed. The overland flow route begins at Prairie Elementary School and flows through the Sylvan Circle/White Oak Drive area and then through the Julian Street/Columbia Street area, including the Subject Property, and continues along Prairie Avenue and across the North Central College campus to the DuPage River. Because the Subject Property is included in the historic overland flow route, it is at much lower elevation than the surrounding lots. In a heavy rain, water rapidly runs across the Subject Property and Columbia Street, in front of the Subject Property, and the street will flood with 3-4 feet of water remaining for several hours; this occurs several times each year (to watch video, click here [[img_0920.mov](#)]). This property includes retaining walls along its east and north sides so as to direct the stormwater away from the previous house. The retaining walls will remain, but based on good engineering design standards, the basement needs to be set at a higher elevation so as to prevent (a) water infiltration into the basement and (b) street flooding from backing into the garage. Raising the height of the basement is necessary in order to protect the proposed house.

The topography of the Subject Property is a special and unusual condition unique to this property. If the variance is not granted, the proposed house would be subject to water infiltration or the basement would need to be eliminated from the design of the house, both of which result in practical difficulties or impose exceptional hardships on the Kellys for their new family home.

It should be noted that the Subject Property is not located in a flood plain. Due to the topography of the area, it is prone to flash flooding.

The highwater level of the property is 701.25. The basement floor will be between 694 and 699. However, there will not be any openings in the basement lower than the highwater level of 701.25.

3. The variance, if granted, will not alter the essential character of the neighborhood and will not be a substantial detriment to adjacent property.

This is a neighborhood of older houses and recently constructed houses. The topography of the area varies dramatically. Many of the newer houses have basements which come out above ground. The overall height of the Kelly house complies with the maximum allowable height restriction of 35 feet. The design and height of the Kelly house will be compatible with the neighborhood. Therefore, the requested variance will not alter the essential character of the neighborhood nor be a substantial detriment to adjacent properties.

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LEGAL DESCRIPTION

LOT 20 IN BLOCK 5 IN ARTHUR T. MCINTOSH AND COMPANY'S NAPERVILLE HIGHLANDS, BEING A SUBDIVISION OF PART OF SECTIONS 18 AND 19, TOWNSHIP 38 NORTH, RANGE 10, EAST OF THE THIRD PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN, ACCORDING TO THE PLAT THEREOF RECORDED JANUARY 8, 1926 AS DOCUMENT 205844, IN DUPAGE COUNTY, ILLINOIS.

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