

PETITION FOR A ZONING VARIANCE

Petitioners: Brian and Rebecca Wright

Property: 122 North Loomis Street

Description of Proposal

In 2000, Brian and Rebecca Wright purchased their home located at 122 North Loomis Street. The property is located across Loomis Street from the North Central College Campus and Ellsworth School is located behind the house across the alley.

Over the years, they have made extensive renovations to the home, restoring the house from a duplex to a single-family home.

The existing detached garage, though structurally stable, is not aesthetically compatible with the architectural design and materials of their house and the residences and garages in the surrounding neighborhood. The garage is small and shallow and requires substantial work. Therefore, the Wrights propose to demolish the garage and construct a new garage. The garage that they propose to construct is the same garage as was built at 8 North Loomis Street (photograph attached). The proposed garage would be twenty-one feet in height and would be located in the same general area as the existing garage. It would include space for three vehicles and an upper level for storage space.

The Wrights want to replace the existing garage in order (i) to make the garage more functional and attractive, (ii) to provide storage space, and (iii) to maximize on-site parking.

In order to construct the proposed garage, the following variances are required:

- To increase the height of the garage from a maximum height of 18 feet to 21 feet
- To reduce the rear setback from 5 feet to 3 feet
- Increase the rear yard coverage from a maximum of 480 square feet to 682 square feet.

Standards for the Granting of a Zoning Variance

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

The purpose and intent of the setback, height and bulk requirements of the Zoning Regulations are to insure (i) an adequate supply of light and air and (ii) compatibility with the surrounding neighborhood. This proposed garage, with the requisite variances, is consistent with these objectives.

- **Height Variance:** The Wrights' house was constructed in the late 1800's. Due to the original construction of the house, some sections of the basement have head clearance of less than six feet and the basement can be subject to water infiltration. As with many older houses, the Wrights' house does not provide adequate storage space. Storage is necessary to curtail theft and vandalism, to extend the useful life of vehicles, yard equipment, and seasonal furnishings, and to enhance the aesthetics of the yard. The proposed garage will provide that necessary additional storage. There are several detached two-story garages/accessory buildings within this neighborhood which are used

for residential units, offices and storage. Two of these buildings are located along this block of the Loomis Street alley.

- **Rear Setback Variance:** The garage is proposed to be located three feet from the east (rear) property line. This is necessary so as to achieve a sufficient depth for the garage to accommodate today's vehicles. The Wrights' property has a deep front yard and a shallow rear yard. This variance is necessary in order to maintain adequate separation between the garage and the house. Many garages in the neighborhood do not maintain a five foot setback adjacent to the alley.
- **Rear Yard Coverage Variance:** The Wrights propose to construct a 22 ft x 31 ft garage so as to provide parking for their vehicles. Due to the location of the house, a driveway cannot be accommodated on the property. Therefore, the garage needs to be accessed from the rear alley.

The proposed garage will maintain and enhance the residential character of the neighborhood in compliance with the Comprehensive Master Plan.

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

The special and unusual conditions of this property are (i) its location within the Historic District neighborhood and (ii) the existing front yard setback.

This area has substantial vehicular and pedestrian traffic. The Wrights' property is located on Loomis Street across from the Campus of North Central College; the on-street parking is generally not available as it is used by the College's students and visitors and overnight parking is prohibited. To the rear of the property across the alley is Ellsworth School; the parking spaces along the alley are located on school property and are reserved for the school's teachers and staff. Therefore, the only parking available for the Wrights' house is whatever parking that can be provided on their property. The requested setback and bulk variances will allow the Wrights to maximize parking on their property.

As with many older homes in the Historic District, storage space is minimal and inadequate by today's standards. The requested height variance will allow the Wrights to provide additional storage capacity.

- **Height Variance:** As on-street parking is generally not available, the Wrights need to provide on-site parking for their visitors. That parking is located on the rear of the property off of the alley. If they expanded the width of the garage so as to provide an area for storage, that would reduce the number of on-site parking spaces. Also, the Wrights' property does not have a driveway. In order to maximize the parking area and to provide some storage space, the Wrights propose to increase the height of the garage by three feet so as to create an upper level. The increased height would resolve the issues relative to the constricted nature of the Wrights' property and their neighborhood.
- **Rear Setback Variance:** The Wrights' house is setback thirty-five feet from Loomis Street, which is ten feet greater than the required minimum front yard setback. This

setback constricts the rear yard. This variance allows the Wrights to construct a proper-depth garage and to maintain adequate separation between the garage and the house.

- **Rear Yard Coverage Variance:** The Wrights need to provide parking on the property for their visitors as well as their personal vehicles. This variance would allow the Wrights to construct an adequately-sized garage.

If the setback, height and bulk regulations as pertain to this proposed garage were strictly enforced, the objectives of this renovation, ie parking and storage, could not be fulfilled.

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

The Wrights' property is located in the Historic District which includes a variety of land uses, housing products, housing styles, building heights and lot layouts. The proposed garage complies with the guidelines of the Historic Building Design and Resource Manual in that the garage (a) will be located behind the primary structure, (b) will be built with materials that are similar with those of the primary structure, (c) will be compatible in style, size, roof profile and details of the primary structure and (d) will maintain the original driveway access from the alley. In this neighborhood, many detached garages exceed eighteen feet in height and have alley access on the rear property line. The new garage will improve the aesthetics of the Wrights' property and the alley in general. The garage is compatible in terms of size, scale and placement with other garages and structures in the Historic District and along this alley. The garage will not be visible from Loomis Street. It will blend in with the surrounding neighborhood aesthetics. This proposed garage will maintain and enhance the residential character of the neighborhood.

