

Minutes
City of Syracuse
Board of Zoning Appeals
Thursday, June 04, 2026
1:00 p.m.
Common Council Chamber

I. Meeting called to order by Board Member Katelyn Wright at 1:00 PM

Member Present

Mr. John Auwaerter	Yes
Ms. Honora Spillane	No
Mr. Otis Jennings	Yes
Mr. Liam Kirst	Yes
Mr. Vincent Ryan	Yes
Ms. Katelyn Wright	Yes

Staff Present

Mr. Jake Dishaw	Yes
Mr. Conor Rourke	Yes
Mr. Nate Pan	Yes
Mr. Samuel Prescott	Yes
Mr. Masihullah Omary	Yes

II. Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the of the May 14, 2026 meeting was made by Mr. Ryan. Mr. Jennings seconded the motion.

The motion for approval passed unanimously.

III. Public Hearings

A. New Business

1) **V-2026-5**

Area Variance to seek relief from the minimum three-story building requirement constructing a two-story office building

1201 E Fayette St.

East Side Business Ctr LLC/Housing Vision Unlimited, Inc. (Owner)

Andrew Burns & Tim Guyer, Passero Associates (Applicant & Representative)

MX-4 Zone District

Zoning Administrator Jake Dishaw introduced the sole item of new business: Area Variance V-2026-5 seeking relief from the MX-4 Zone District's minimum three-story building requirement in order to construct a two-story office building at 1201 East Fayette Street owned by Housing Visions who is represented by Passero Associates.

The application was represented by Diana Jakimoski of Housing Visions (1201 E. Fayette Street) and Tim Guyer and Andrew Burns of Passero Associates (242 West Main Street, Rochester, New York), serving as architect and engineer, respectively.

Ms. Jakimoski provided background on the overall development concept. Housing Visions currently operates the Eastside Business Center at 1201 East Fayette Street as its headquarters and a commercial office facility. The existing structure has deteriorated to the point where rehabilitation costs would exceed those of new construction, and the decision was made to demolish and redevelop the site. The proposed redevelopment involves two buildings: a 144-unit residential building comprised entirely of workforce housing at or below 80% of area median income, and a new two-story office building to serve as Housing Visions' headquarters. The residential component would include a small commercial office for Housing Visions' "Connect" support services arm to serve the general public. Financing for the residential building is anticipated to be pursued through New York State's Housing Finance Agency, utilizing 4% tax credits, tax-exempt bonds, and soft subsidy financing. The project also proposes geothermal energy systems to improve energy efficiency and offset operational costs. Ms. Jakimoski indicated the team is working to secure all necessary approvals in 2026, with a financing application to the agency planned for 2027 and a projected groundbreaking around 2028.

Zoning Administrator Dishaw noted that the project had recently appeared before the Planning Commission for purposes of SEQR review and project introduction, and that the project will go back to the Planning Commission for completion of the SEQR review.

Ms. Wright opened the floor for discussion.

Mr. Ryan inquired about the rationale for choosing two stories over three. Ms. Jakimoski explained that the decision was driven primarily by construction cost considerations. Rising costs in the current environment have prompted New York State to encourage developers to identify cost-saving alternatives. A two-story design achieved the necessary programmatic goals without incurring the additional structural, mechanical, and elevator costs associated with a third floor, and was also responsive to the type of cost scrutiny typically applied by the Housing Finance Agency during its review process.

Mr. Auwaerter also raised a question regarding the placement of parking at the corner of Washington and Walnut Streets, asking whether that configuration was compliant with MX-4 zoning standards. Zoning Administrator Dishaw explained that for a full-block development, one frontage is designated as the primary street in this case East Fayette Street and that parking placement on the secondary frontage would therefore be compliant with the applicable zoning provisions.

Ms. Wright called for a motion.

Mr. Jennings made a motion to approve Area Variance V-2026-5. Mr. Kirst seconded the motion.

Zoning Administrator Dishaw requested that the statutory criteria applicable to an area variance be reviewed and discussed for documentation in the resolution. Two staff recommendations were pointed out on page nine to be considered in the motion.

Ms. Wright walked the Board through the five statutory criteria applicable to area variances, noting that this is a balancing test and that the applicant need not satisfy every criterion:

- *Neighborhood Character*: The proposed development would significantly enhance neighborhood character relative to existing conditions, bringing the site into closer alignment with the city's adopted land use plan by introducing a mixed-use, multi-story development in place of the current single-story, single-use structure.
- *Feasibility of Alternatives*: The applicant demonstrated that a three-story design is not financially feasible given the cost constraints of the financing structure and the requirements of the state funding agency.
- *Substantiality*: The variance represents a substantial deviation — a 33% reduction from the minimum story requirement — and this criterion was acknowledged as not being met.
- *Adverse Effect*: No adverse effect on the surrounding neighborhood was identified.
- *Self-Created Difficulty*: The hardship was acknowledged as self-created, as the applicant was aware of the applicable zoning requirements at the outset of the project. This criterion was also acknowledged as not being met.

Ms. Wright opened discussion to the Board and there was none.

Mr. Jennings amended his motion to include the two staff recommendations in addition to the general conditions for area variance approval: 1) any decrease in the buildings story beyond the approved plans shall require prior approval from the Board of Zoning Appeals; and 2) the site floor plan shall be updated to be consistent with approved Major Site Plan Review MaSPR-2026-14 prior to issuance of any permits.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Kirst.

The motion to approve Area Variance V-2026-5 passed unanimously.

IV. Adjournment

Ms. Wright asked for a motion to adjourn. A motion was made by Mr. Ryan and seconded by Mr. Kirst. The motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 1:30 p.m.