



ZBOA Agenda Item # 2

FEBRUARY 4, 2020

Variance Request by Keith Quarles

File #: APP-2020-01

Keith Quarles is requesting a Variance to LDR Section 214-1, Table 3 as it pertains to the minimum heated floor area for a single-family dwelling in R-15 zoning. The subject property consists of 15,006 square feet (0.344 acres) and is located at 16 Bellemeade North. The property contains an existing building (977-sf) that was designed and built as a simple “clubhouse” for the Bellemeade North neighborhood. The property is still owned by the Bellemeade North Property Owners Association, Inc. who no longer wants to maintain it as a clubhouse and has been marketing it to be sold and converted to a residence. The applicant has the property under contract and is proposing to simply renovate the interior of the building for conversion to a single-family residence. However, the building does not meet the minimum 1,200 square feet heated floor area requirement for dwellings in R-15 zoning, and the applicant is not proposing any building expansions.

The clubhouse reportedly consists of 977 heated square feet, although it is listed by the Lowndes County Tax Assessor (tax card) as being 1,125 square feet. This is likely due to a difference between a simplified interior measurement, and an exterior measurement of the enclosed building. But either way, the building is a little short of meeting the minimum heated (gross) floor area for dwellings, and it cannot be converted into a dwelling without a sufficient building addition, or obtaining a Variance. As a comparison with the other 15 existing dwellings in Bellemeade North, based on tax card data they each range from 1,454 to 3,192 square feet with the overall average being 2,222 square feet.

It should be noted that this building also has a covered porch on both the front and rear (each being 222-sf). Enclosing even just the rear porch, as a heated floor area addition, would likely be sufficient. Therefore, staff can find no legitimate hardship supporting this Variance, and is concerned about approving a dwelling unit size that is only about half the size of the average dwelling unit in the neighborhood.

The only extenuating circumstances here, are that the neighborhood collectively desires to see this building sold and converted to a dwelling and is supportive of the Variance request, that this is an isolated building site in the very rear of the development, it has existed here for more than 30 years, and that this particularly building design seems to fit in well with the neighborhood. The only other possible argument in favor of the request is that most of the parcel is heavily encumbered by various easements that greatly limit other options for building expansion – other than enclosing one or both (or portions) of the existing porches.

Variations are intended to relieve situations in which strict application of the regulations prohibits reasonable development or usage of the property. Although there is no legitimate hardship here and the logical solution is to simply enclose some existing porch space, a Variance approval in this case should carry the stipulation that it be for this existing building ONLY. This would preclude the possibility of a future owner from demolishing this building and replacing it with another smaller dwelling that would not fit in as well with the neighborhood.

Staff Recommendation: Find inconsistent with the Variance Review Criteria and deny the Variance request.