

ORIGINAL

Introduction:

The attached application is being submitted to the Township's zoning board, in order to request a c(2) variance for a proposed construction of a front porch at 27 Carolina St. The premises is currently used as a single family residence, and the proposed use will remain the same. As it stands today, the home's exterior is severely lacking curb appeal. The main issue at hand is an unconventional side facing front door. This unique physical characteristic of the property causes an unpleasant appearance to the home, and is out of character with the homes in the immediate neighborhood. In order to address this, minor structural changes are needed to the property aimed at improving the curb appeal. The proposed improvements to the premises is an addition of a front porch, and relocating the front door to be street facing as shown in drawing V-1. We feel this is the best solution as front porches are a highly desirable architectural feature that will promote the street-side appeal of the property, it will increase the home's value, and will provide many benefits to the Cranford community. In order to proceed with this plan, we are requesting relief from zoning ordinances. There are circumstances that was not created by us as current homeowners, our property has an existing non-confirming setback condition at 30'-4." We have owned the property for 4 years and intend to remain in the community for the long term. Recently there has been a lot of development to other homes in the neighborhood, and as such we are eager to make reasonable improvements to the property that are aimed at improving the curb appeal and in turn benefiting the immediate community. We feel the addition of this porch will be welcomed and well received by our neighbors. Given there are numerous benefits from the addition of a front porch and no detriments, we felt a variance submission is worth your consideration.

Arguments in support of the requested relief:

The R-1 zone contains a required minimum front yard setback of 35 feet, and the subject property has existing non-conforming front yard setback condition at 30'-4" feet. The subject property features an unconventional side facing front door. This unique physical characteristic of the property causes an unpleasant appearance to the home, and is out of character with the homes in the immediate neighborhood. This condition is peculiar to the subject lot and adds challenges to reasonable improvements for the property. Compliance with the strict application of the code requirements will totally prevent improvement of the property in a manner which is reasonable, customary and consistent with other improved lots in the area. Additionally, the dimensions of the property's entrance platform and steps are limited by strict application of said setback code requirements, and this condition has created accessibility challenges to the property owners' young children and family due the small entry landing. The current entry landing has only 4 inches of clearance between the open door and the first step of the stairway, which results in undue hardship for the property owners. We are seeking relief in order to allow improvements to the property that include construction of a new front porch, and relocating the front door to be street facing. The proposed plans will not alter the essential character of the neighborhood. The proposed encroachment into the front yard is minimum, and not impactful to the neighborhood.

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Benefits:

We are confident the addition of a front porch will bring substantial benefits to the subject property and to the Cranford community. As described earlier, the subject property is in need of improvement, it is lacking curb appeal and contains physical characteristics inconsistent with the character of the neighborhood. Front porches are a highly popular and desirable architectural feature that will promote the street-side appeal of the property. The introduction of this improvement will not only improve value of the subject property, but will benefit the property values in the surrounding area as well. The addition of the porch will create a space for the homeowners to more easily connect with their neighbors and in turn strengthen ties with the community. Additionally, the front porch will enable the homeowners to promote and grow town-wide community events such as porch fest. The placement and location of the front porch will allow the homeowners to comfortably spend more time street-facing which further benefits the community by helping to deter crime, improve the public safety of the area and general welfare of others. The proposed deviation from the Zoning Ordinance is in harmony with the general intent and purpose of the MLUL: it will not in any way impair the public health, morals and comfort of the nearby lots. The improvements will promote desirable visual environment through creative development techniques and good civic design and arrangement.

Detriments:

The proposed improvement will not result in any detriment to the public good or substantially impair the intent and purpose of the Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance. The proposed improvement will only require encroachment into the front yard, with a proposed setback is 26'-4". This proposed encroachment is minimum and not impactful to the neighborhood. We are still proposing to meet the minimum setback figures set forth for R-1 zone of 25 feet per 255 Attachment 1:3. The proposed variance to the setback minimum does not alter the character of the neighborhood, as a prevailing setback below 35 feet minimum has been established on the lots located within 200 feet of the property in Carolina St.