

Minutes  
City of Syracuse  
Board of Zoning Appeals  
Thursday, January 16th, 2025  
1:00 p.m.  
Common Council Chamber

I. Meeting called to order at 1:03 p.m.

Members Present

Mr. Michael Cheslik	Yes
Ms. Honora Spillane	No
Ms. Karen Gillette	Yes
Mr. Otis. Jennings	Yes
Mr. Liam Kirst	Yes

Staff Present

Mr. Jake Dishaw	Yes
Ms. Meira Hertzberg	Yes
Mr. Cristian Toellner	Yes
Mr. Zhitong Wu	No
Mr. Nate Pan	Yes
Ms. Amber Dillon	No
Mr. Noah Garcia	Yes

II. Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve December 12th, 2024, meeting minutes was made by Mr. Jennings and seconded by Mr. Kirst. The motion carried unanimously.

III. Public Hearings

A. New Business

1) V-24-25

**A Use Variance to allow parking between the front building facade of a future Children Rising Center and Adjacent Street Frontage**

311 East Taylor Street

William J. Simmons, Syracuse Housing Authority Owner/Applicant

MX-2 Zone District

Robert Seeley, the architect for the project, presented the application. He explained the site plan and design, stressing that the success of the project depends on utilizing the full potential of the area. He further explained that the site emphasizes safety because of the many children that would be utilizing the space. He wants parking close to the building to promote this focus on safety. There is currently a total of 65 parking spaces, along both Taylor St. and State St. S.

Mr. Cheslik asked if the trees on the site would remain. Mr. Sealy replied that they would and that they are attempting to reduce the amount of disruption to existing vegetation, especially trees.

Ms. Millerschinn with King + King Architects, explained that the goal is for a linear neighborhood park to go in to connect the northern area and bound the site by four roads.

Mr. Corridors with the Allyn Foundation explained why the current plans have been designed with this configuration. The site is being planned around having children from

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0-5 year old, and having parking in the back is not the normal layout for sites such as schools and learning programs due to safety concerns, operation concerns and New Market Tax Credits \$5.5 million in equity, moving the parking lot could reduce the square footage of buildings, and would result in a lower amount of tax credits over the 7 year tax credit timeline.

Mr. Kirst asked if the project would still be feasible if the variance were not granted. Mr. Corridors responded that while it wouldn't be completely infeasible, it put the project funding at risk.

Mr. Cheslik opened public comment. No one spoke in favor or in opposition to the application. Mr. Cheslik closed public comment.

Staff went through the four Use Variance Criteria with the BZA, concluding the hardship is not self-created, the project addresses community needs moving forward, and there are a number of City regulations that limit parking options for the applicant.

Mr. Cheslik asked if the projections of losing money were substantiated without the variance being granted. Staff explained the applicant outlined their financial analysis in their application, which projects the lost financial income if this variance was not to be granted. Mr. Jennings says that he felt the application was well explained due to the loss of square footage of development, which is directly connected to the funding the project is receiving.

Mr. Kirst discussed the neighborhood character as being "in transition" and feels that the project could help move the neighborhood character in a new direction.

Asst. Corporation Counsel Hertzberg assisted the BZA in its SEQR review and determination of the proposed Unlisted action for V-24-25. Mr. Jennings moved to make a negative SEQR declaration. Mr. Kirst seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Kirst moved to approve Use Variance V-24-25 with additional staff and general conditions. Ms. Gillette seconded the motion. Mr. Kirst stated that the applicant would face significant challenges in achieving a reasonable return due to potential funding loss and emphasized that approval would be contingent upon the staff's recommendations. He highlighted that the unique circumstances surrounding the railroad, the nature of the project, and the neighborhood's "transitional" character demonstrate that the project aligns with both the criteria for reasonable return and neighborhood character. Additionally, he affirmed that this application does not constitute a self-created hardship. The motion to approve Use Variance V-24-25 was passed unanimously.

#### IV. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Jennings and seconded by Mr. Kirst. The motion carried unanimously. Meeting called to adjourn at 1:30 p.m.