

Zoning Variances in the Fan District Timeline and Helpful Tips

When city residents want to make changes to their property's structure, and/or its uses, variances to the city code are often involved. These frequently involve set-backs and single vs. multi-family uses. The Fan District Association (FDA) is one of the participants that Richmond includes in the process for applying for a variance.

The following informational timeline has been developed by the FDA to help property owners understand the process.

The property owner decides they would like to make a change from the current status of a property. Typical variances in the Fan include new fences, additions, garages and zoning designations (single family, multi-family, business).

- Contact the FDA committee chair for advice, guidance and information. The current chair's name can be obtained from the FDA's web site~www.fandistrict.org
- Develop plans for the change.
- Contact City Hall for a building permit. They will ultimately determine if a zoning variance is necessary.
- Submit an application to the Richmond City Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA).
- Contact owners and neighbors who are within a close proximity of the property to get their opinions on the variance. Neighborhood input is important to both the FDA and the BZA. It is not necessary to have neighborhood support in writing, but it is helpful in gaining consensus. To notify them of the variance request, the city will send a letter to any business or residence within 150 feet of the property. The city will collect neighborhood correspondence regarding the variance.
- Two to three weeks before the hearing, the city publicizes the BZA agenda. They also forward any neighborhood correspondence to the FDA. *BZA hearings are generally held on the first Wednesday of every month.*
- The Fan District Association's Zoning committee will meet with the zoning variance requestor at the property. The plans are reviewed and the site is briefly examined. Photos will be taken of the site. These, along with an explanation of the request, are emailed to the FDA Board. The property owners' meeting with the zoning committee is usually set for 1-2 weeks before the BZA hears the case.
- The FDA's Zoning committee presents the zoning variance request at the monthly FDA board meeting. The requester is welcome to attend the meeting to offer additional information and answer any questions. The FDA board meets monthly on the Monday before any BZA hearing.
- To help their request, the applicant should specifically state why the change is needed. It is also helpful to attend a BZA hearing before your request is on the

docket. Presentations are scheduled in blocks that begin on the hour – 1:00, 2:00 and 3:00. Because testimony is allowed by parties who are both for and against the requests, the scheduled sessions can run longer. Your case will not be heard before your assigned time, but because of the testimony allowed for all cases, it could be heard much later. The process is fluid so pay attention to your parking meter!

The FDA board will vote on a request based on precedent, neighborhood input, practicality, and guiding principles of the FDA (density, master plan, parking concerns etc.).

The FDA will take one of two positions: oppose, or not oppose the request.

The board's position on a zoning variance is not a legal judgment. The FDA board's stance, however, does factor in heavily with the BZA as representing the neighborhood opinion.

- The FDA's position is faxed to the Secretary of the BZA the morning of the hearing. A representative from the FDA's Zoning committee will attend the BZA meeting to further represent the FDA's position.
- The Board's position will have also been communicated to the applicant.

For More information, contact the Chairperson of the FDA Zoning Committee, zoning@fandistrict.org or the Richmond Zoning Administration Office: 900 East Broad Street room 110, Richmond VA 23219. (804) 646-6340.