



CITY OF ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN  
Community Services Area

Planning & Development Services Unit  
301 E Huron St, Ann Arbor, MI 48107-8647  
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## **Housing Board of Appeals Staff Report**

Subject: **BBA14-002**  
1201 White St

### **Description and Discussion:**

The owners, the residence located at 1201 White St request a variance from the requirement of a min. 9" tread depth as required by section 8:504 (B) 4., for the stairs to the third floor finished attic and a variance from the requirement that habitable space have a min. 7' ceiling height

On numerous inspections the third floor attic space has been ordered to be vacated as it does not meet code for habitable space. The owner of the property would now like to make it a legal bedroom with variances and permits for all requirements.

The house was built in 1920 and appears to be original construction with 1 bedroom on the first floor and four bedrooms on the second floor with a walk up attic. I checked the third floor attic space for habitable requirements and found the following deficiencies; Stair tread depth is 8". The stair width is 30" wide, housing code allows 27". The ceiling height at the bottom of the stairs is 6', housing code allows this. The ceiling height at the top of the stairs is 5'-3" at the lowest point and 6'-9-1/2" at the high point due to the slope of the ceiling. The landing at the top of the stairs is 33-1/2", building code requires 36". There is approximately 144 square feet of "habitable space" pending a variance. The ceiling height is 6'-9-1/2" at its lowest point. The flat portion of the ceiling is approximately 2'-4" wide and slopes to 4'-8-1/2". The width of the room at the 5' ceiling height is 8' across by app. 18' to the stairwell. The required light for the space would be 11.52 square feet and the required ventilation would be 5.76 square feet. There are 2 windows, one on each end; each one is app. 33" wide by 27" high. That would give 12.36 square feet for light and 6.18 square feet for ventilation, this meets code. The windows are old casement styles that swing open. The window opening meets housing egress of 20" X 20" but the storm window only opens halfway and does not meet egress, this would need to be changed. The heat supply to this room is an electric baseboard heater along the front wall. The wiring in this house consists of knob and tube.

### **Section 8:515 (2) of the Ann Arbor Housing Code:**

The City of Ann Arbor Housing Code allows the Housing Board of Appeals to grant variances on existing structural elements of a building.

Subject: **BBA14-002 - CONTINUED**  
1201 White St., Zoning R4C

**Standards for Approval:**

*Practical difficulties or unnecessary hardship*

*Per the applicant:*

**[Enter applicants plea here]**

*The variance does not jeopardize the public health and safety.*

At this time there does not appear to be an immediate health and safety issue.

*The variance does not violate the intent of this chapter*

The first purpose of the Ann Arbor Housing Code is to protect the health, safety and welfare of residents. Granting this variance as requested by the petitioner **will not** violate this purpose.

**Recommendation:**

Staff recommends the following motion:

**MOTION**

1. In my opinion, it doesn't look like there is room to make the stairs meet code due to the structural elements of the home.
2. The ceiling height with exception of the top of the stairs does not seem to be a problem as most people are less than 6'-9" tall.
3. One window would need to meet egress.
4. The heat supply may or may not be adequate. That could be checked by a licensed mechanical contractor.
5. The knob and tube wiring could be checked by a licensed electrical contractor.
6. I recommend the board make a site visit to form their own opinion of how the space feels.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry Root  
Development Services Inspector

Lisha Turner-Tolbert  
Inspection Supervisor