

181 Pearl St
Narrative for Hardship Variance - Primary Entrance
December 17, 2024

Seeking relief on **SZO Section 2.4.5.b.i.a** "Buildings must have at least one (1) principal entrance. Principal entrances must be located on the facade." Facade is defined in SZO as "any exterior wall of a building oriented in whole or in part toward a front lot line, or civic space, excluding the exterior walls of any roof elements."

a). Special circumstances exist relating to the soil conditions, shape, or topography of a parcel of land or the unusual character of an existing structure but not affecting generally the zoning district in which the land or structure is located;

- 181 Pearl Street is a small, corner MR3 parcel. At 2,024 SF, it is less than 1/3 the size of an average MR3 parcel.
- It is abutted on each side by NR parcels. A 10' side setback is required per SZO for any building type in the MR3 district when it abuts NR.
- A 12' curb setback is required at the primary and secondary fronts of the building.
- These proportionally large setbacks on all four sides of the parcel leave a very small developable area.

b). Literal enforcement of the provision of this Ordinance for the district where the subject land or structure is located would involve substantial hardship, financial or otherwise, to the petitioner or appellant due to said special circumstances;

Since there is only a small developable area after the setbacks are met, the residential unit layouts were carefully planned to create two bedrooms in each, which makes the project financially viable. Without the second bedrooms, the project is not possible. The proposed residential unit layouts with two bedrooms only work with the stairs in the proposed location. The ground floor lobby and associated Primary Entrance were located to work with the proposed stair location. An exterior ramp is required to meet two more SZO requirements: a zero step entrance and a ground floor that is raised two feet above adjacent grade. The ramp was located to land as close as possible to the entrance. This preserves as much exterior space as possible for landscape to meet the required Green Score, and interior space to make the project financially viable. Adding a second entrance from the street or reconfiguring the lobby would leave less space for residential units, which would be a substantial financial hardship.

c). Desirable relief could be granted without causing substantial detriment to the public good and without nullifying or substantially derogating from the intent and purpose of a specific district in this Ordinance or the Ordinance in general.

Allowing the building to have a courtyard entrance does not cause detriment to the public good. On the contrary, the proposed single courtyard entrance allows everyone, regardless of physical

abilities, to enter the building in the same place. This is fair and just. Adding a second, separate street-facing entrance marginalizes people who must use the ramp to enter the building. We believe the intent of the zoning ordinance is to promote this kind of fair and just access to the city and its buildings.