



C H A T H A M C O U N T Y - S A V A N N A H

METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION

"Planning the Future - Respecting the Past"

STAFF REPORT

To: The Planning Commission

Through: Melanie Wilson, Executive Director and CEO

From: DeAndrae Spradley, Senior Planner - Development Services

Date: July 14, 2026

Subject: GDP Variance for Minimum Lot Area and Lot Width

Petitioner: Alex Chiapetta and Erin Holub (Frame Savannah, LLC.)

Agent: N/A

Address: 18 and 22 W. 61st Street

PIN(s): 20093 33006 and 20093 33007

Site Area: 0.2 acres total

Alderman District: 5 – Dr. Estella Shabazz

Chatham County Commission District: 5 – Tanya Milton

File Number: 26-002850-ZA

Request

The Petitioner is requesting MPC approval for variances to the minimum lot area and minimum lot frontage requirements of the Residential Two Family (RTF) Zoning District to resolve a longstanding structural encroachment of nine feet (9 ft.) and to consolidate a fence-enclosed yard into a single legal description. Due to a construction error, the existing single-family residential dwelling unit at 18 W. 61st Street encroaches onto the adjacent property at 22 W. 61st Street by 1.15 feet. This request will resolve a boundary dispute on the Petitioner's property. The minimum lot size requirements for permitted single-family residential dwelling units in the Residential Two Family (RTF) Zoning District is 6,000 square feet. The minimum lot width permitted in the RTF District is seventy feet (70 ft.). Per Section 5.7.5. of the City's Zoning Regulations, a variance is needed for both 18 and 22 W. 61st Street.

The Petitioner's requests are as follows:

1. Reduce the minimum lot area requirement from 6,000 square feet to 4,419 square feet at 18 W. 61st Street and 4,365 square feet at 22 W. 61st Street.

2. Reduce the minimum lot width requirement from sixty feet (60 ft.) to fifty-one feet (51 ft.) for 18 W. 61st Street and forty-eight and a half feet (48.5 ft.) at 22 W. 61st Street.

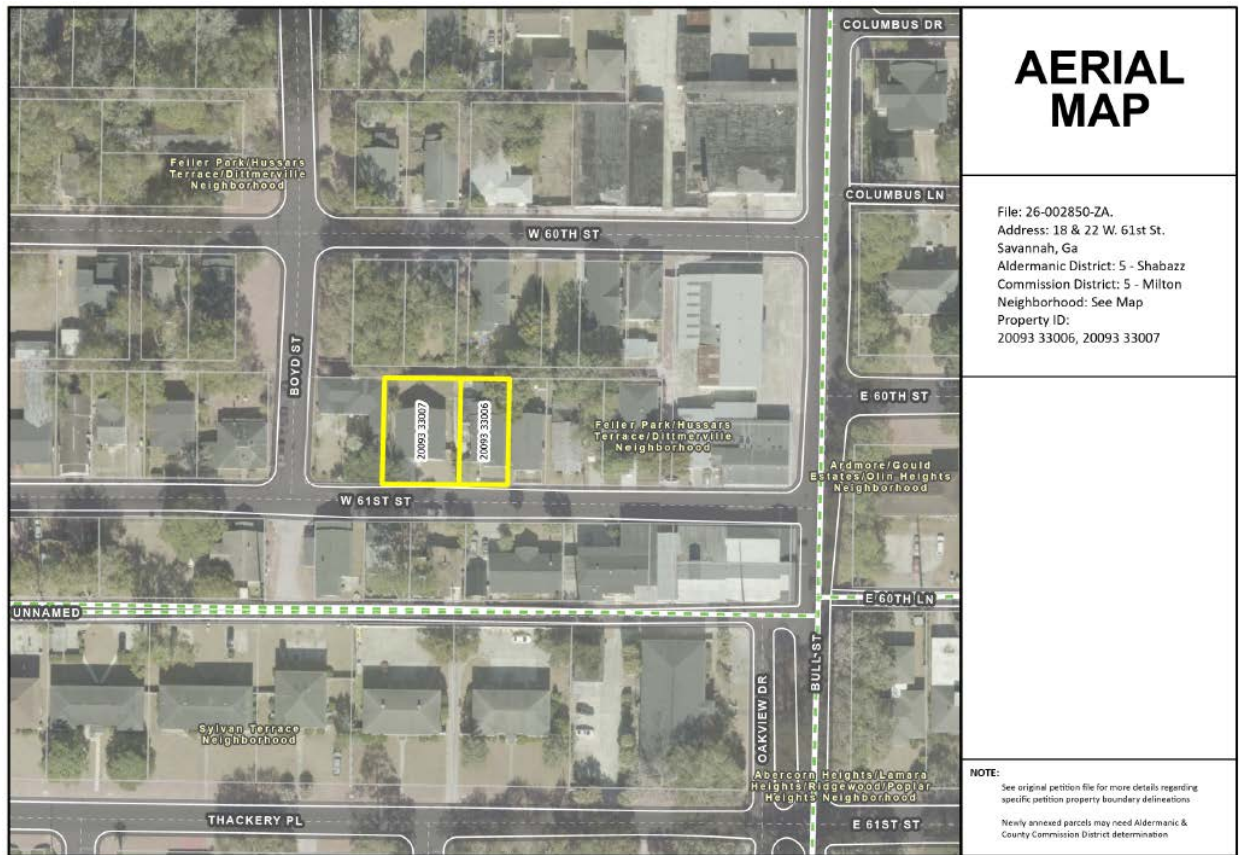
Facts and Findings

- 1) Per the Chatham County Tax Assessor's records, 18 W. 61st Street is 0.07 acres (2,970 square feet) and 22 W. 61st Street is 0.13 acres (5,850 square feet). The current lots are non-conforming with the Residential Two Family (RTF) Zoning District standards regarding the lot size and lot width requirements.
- 2) The minimum lot size requirements for permitted single-family residential dwelling units in the Residential Two Family (RTF) Zoning District is 6,000 square feet. The minimum lot width permitted in the RTF District is seventy feet (70 ft.). Per Section 5.7.5. of the City's Zoning Regulations, a variance is needed for both 18 and 22 W. 61st Street.
- 3) The Petitioner is seeking to resolve a longstanding structural encroachment of nine feet (9 ft.) and to address the existing encroachment issue of 1.15 feet at 18 W. 61st Street due to a construction error.

Existing Zoning and Development Pattern

The Residential Two-family ("RTF") district is established to allow single and two-family development as well as a limited number of nonresidential uses that are harmonious with residential areas.

Location	Land Use	Existing Zoning
North	Single-family Residential	RTF
South	Single-family Residential	RTF and RMF-2-18
East	Single-family Residential	RTF
West	Single-family Residential and Commercial	RTF and TC-1



Aerial Map for 18 and 22 W. 61st Street

Public Notice

Mailed notice of the Planning Commission meeting was sent to all property owners within 300-feet of the subject property, signs were posted on site and required newspaper advertisements were run at least 15 days prior to the meeting. The mailed notice included instructions on how to access the public meeting via the internet.

Standards at Issue

1. Per Section 5.8.5 of the Zoning Ordinance, this property is within the Residential Two Family (RTF) Zoning District. The Zoning Ordinance requires a minimum lot area of 6,000 square feet and a minimum lot width of 60 feet. The existing lot does not meet the lot area requirements of the RTF Zoning District.

Zoning Ordinance Review

The Planning Commission is authorized to grant variances to the standards of Article 5, Base Zoning Districts, upon the basis of the criteria established in Sec. 3.21.10.

The following review criteria for variances are prescribed in the Savannah Zoning Ordinance Sec. 3.21.10:

A. General Consistency

The variance shall be consistent with the intent of this Ordinance and the Comprehensive Plan and shall not be injurious to the neighborhood or otherwise detrimental to the public health, safety, or welfare.

MPC Comment: There are existing single-family residential dwelling units at 18 and 22 W. 61st Street and the surrounding area has a primarily single-family residential dwelling character. The Petitioner is not changing the overall use on the property. Therefore, the Petitioner's variance request is consistent with the intent of the City's Zoning Regulations and the requested variance appears to be non-detrimental to the public health, safety, and welfare.

B. Special Conditions

- i. Special conditions and/or circumstances exist which are peculiar to the land, buildings or structures involved and which are not applicable to other lands, buildings or structures in the same zoning district

MPC Comment: There's an existing encroachment of nine feet (9 ft.) and 1.15 feet at 18 W. 61st Street due to a construction error that's causing the Petitioner's property to be in non-conformance with the City's adopted Zoning Regulations. This situation is peculiar to the land that's not applicable to the other lands, buildings or structures in the same zoning Residential Two-family Zoning District.

- ii. The special conditions and/or circumstances do not result from the actions of the applicant.

MPC Comment: The condition of Petitioner's variance request is a result of the previous property owners and errors during the time of construction. The Petitioner's variance request does not result in a direct action from the Petitioner.

- iii. The special conditions and/or circumstances are not purely financial in nature so as to allow the applicant to use the land, buildings or structures involved more profitably or to save money.

MPC Comment: No information has been submitted to Staff to give reason indicating that the Petitioner's actions are purely financial in nature. Based on the standards for the Two-family

Residential Zoning District, the Petitioner still can utilize the property still can be used for single-family and two-family residential dwelling uses by right.

C. Literal Interpretation

Literal interpretation of the provisions of the regulations would deprive the applicant of rights commonly enjoyed by other properties in the same zoning district under the terms of the Ordinance and would result in unnecessary and undue hardship on the applicant.

MPC Comment: The literal interpretation of the regulations would not deprive the applicant of rights commonly enjoyed by other properties in the same zoning district. The existing single-family residential dwelling units on the property are consistent with and compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.

D. Minimum Variance

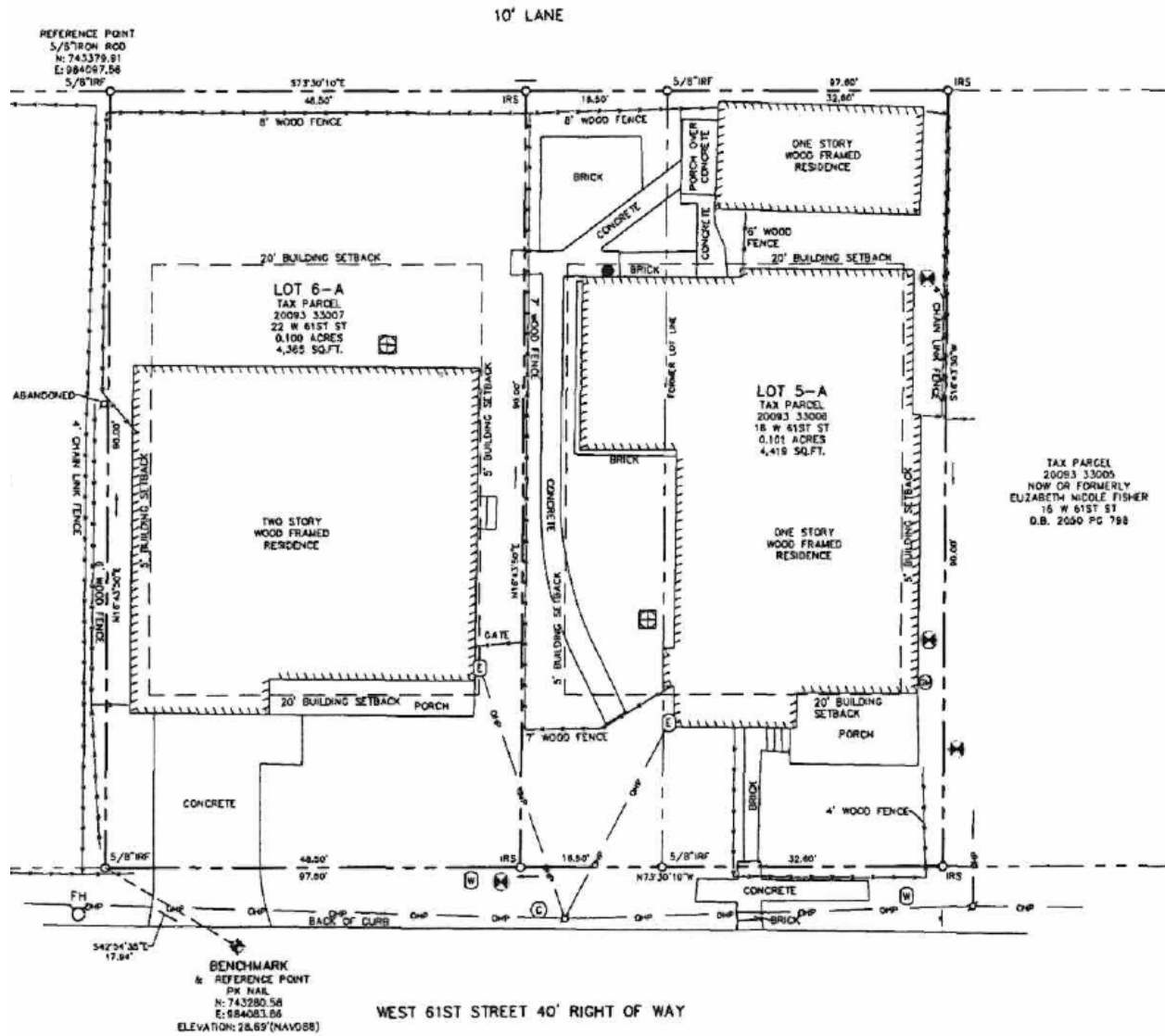
The variance, if granted, is the minimum variance necessary to make possible the reasonable use of land, buildings, or structures.

MPC Comment: The Petitioner's variances are not required to make use of the property.

E. Special Privilege Not Granted

The variance would not confer on the applicant any special privilege that is denied by this Ordinance to other lands, buildings, or structures in the same zoning district.

MPC Comment: The Petitioner's variances will not confer special privilege on the Petitioner that's denied to all similarly situated property owners in the same zoning district.



Plan for 18 and 22 W. 61st Street

Staff Recommendation

MPC Staff recommends APPROVAL of the Petitioner's requested following two (2) variances:

1. Reduce the minimum lot area requirement from 6,000 square feet to 4,419 square feet at 18 W. 61st Street and 4,365 square feet at 22 W. 61st Street.
2. Reduce the minimum lot width requirement from sixty feet (60 ft.) to fifty-one feet (51 ft.) for 18 W. 61st Street and forty-eight and a half feet (48.5 ft.) at 22 W. 61st Street.