



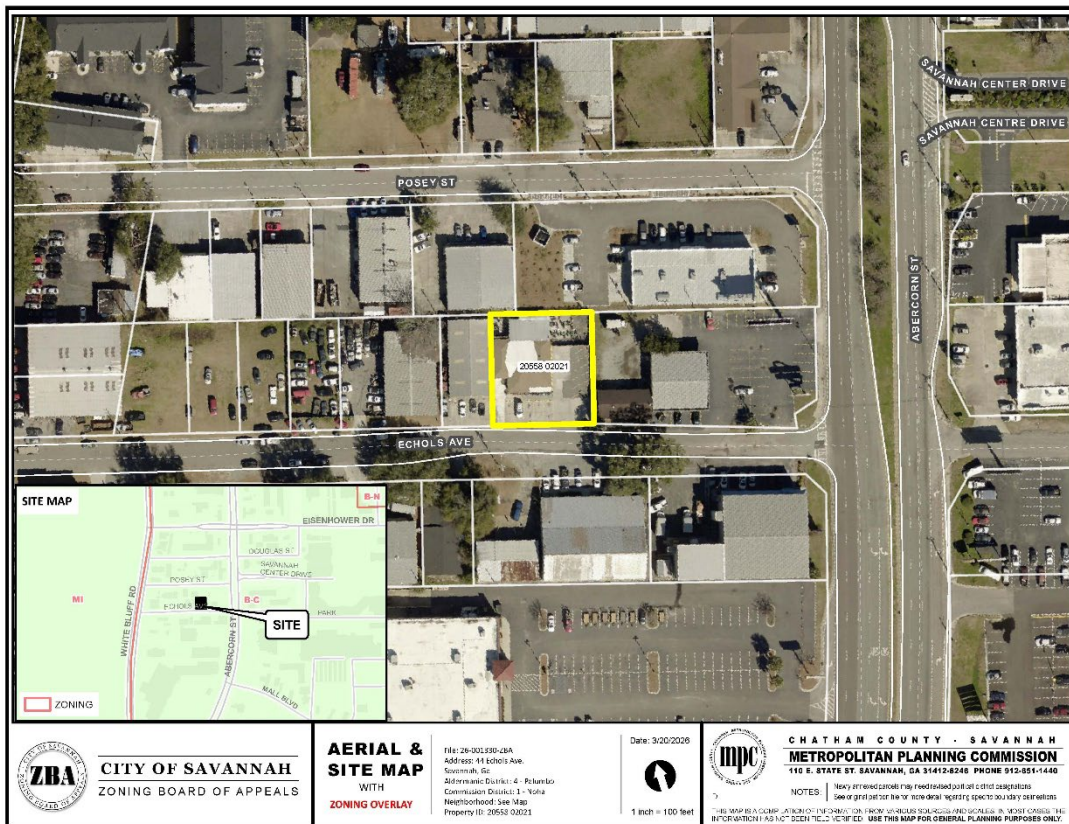
SAVANNAH ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

STAFF REPORT

PETITIONER: Deborah Pembroke
MPC FILE No: 26-001330-ZBA
ADDRESS: 44 Echols Ave
PIN: 20558 02021
DATE: April 23, 2026
MPC Staff: Ely Zarka

Nature of Request – 1) Reduce the required parking spaces to 12.

The Petitioner would like to reduce the required number of parking to 12 spaces to bring the existing establishment under compliance for the minimum number of parking spaces allowed for the existing use.



The exhibit above indicates the subject property and surrounding vicinity.

Facts & Findings

1. Subject property is on Echols Ave between Abercorn St and White Bluff Rd.
2. The property is within an area that is completely zoned B-C (Community Business) in all directions. The existing land use of Bar/Tavern is legally non-conforming.
3. The property has public water and sewer services available from the City of Savannah.
4. A fence was installed to the rear of the existing parking area, blocking several parking spaces. This area is now used for outdoor seating.
5. A letter of corrective action has been issued by Savannah Code Compliance. The petitioner was given the opportunity to restore the parking to the previous state or to request a variance. If the parking variance is granted, the use would then be considered conforming to the required parking standards.
6. The site was already non-conforming with regards to minimum parking prior to the alteration to the parking lot. With a square footage of 2,276, typically 31 spaces would be required (1 space per 75 square feet).

Standards at Issue:

1. The current use of bar/tavern is not in compliance with minimum required number of parking spaces.

Table 9.3-1 Minimum Space Requirements

Eating and Drinking Establishments		
Bar, tavern	1 per 75 SF	n/a
Nightclub	1 per 50 SF of area open to the public	n/a
Restaurant	1 per 100 SF (including outdoor seating area)	5% of vehicle parking

The original structure was constructed in 1950. The use was considered legal non-conforming with regards to parking prior to the unauthorized alteration to the parking lot.

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: The requested variance is **inconsistent** with the Ordinance, current zoning and future land use. The current use is permitted with certain development standards. A lack of parking supply has caused issues with neighboring uses.

B. Special Conditions

- 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: The property had an existing non-conforming parking lot that already supplied less than the required number of parking spaces, but was considered legal-nonconforming. However, the petitioner altered the parking lot with the addition of a fence and outdoor seating that reduced the supply further.

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

MPC Comment: The circumstances result from the petitioner's actions altering the parking lot.

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: The petitioner is seeking a variance to satisfy the letter of corrective action from the City of Savannah Code Compliance. Alternatively, the parking lot can be restored to the previous layout.

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 deny the applicant of rights commonly enjoyed by other property owners.

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 requested variances are not required for the use of Bar/Tavern to continue. The amount of parking provided prior to the alteration of the parking lot was considered legal-nonconforming as it already did not meet the required number of parking spaces. MPC staff and Code Compliance received concerns about the lack of parking supply. The applicant should return the parking lot to the previous layout, returning to the status of legal-nonconformity.

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 variance would convey a special privilege to the Petitioner. The parking requirement already was not met, and this would supply nearly 30% of the required parking spaces.

Summary:

The request to reduce the required number of parking spaces, and as a result coming into compliance after and unauthorized alteration to the site. This application has been submitted by the Petitioner as a result of a letter of corrective action by the City of Savannah Code Compliance.

Deborah Pembroke
26-001330-ZBA
44 Echols Ave

Recommendation:

MPC staff recommends **denial** of the requested variances due to the circumstances originating with the actions of the petitioner. This action would not deprive the Petitioner of the use of the property and would confer special conditions.

Note: This recommendation could change subject to new information provided at the Zoning Board of Appeals meeting. Final decisions will be made by the Zoning Board of Appeals at the public hearing based on information provided at the meeting, as well as information submitted for the staff report.