



SAVANNAH ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

STAFF REPORT

PETITIONER: Brooks Stillwell, Agent for DJ Desai with Aditi Hotel Investments
FILE NO: 25-005839-ZBA
ADDRESS: 7312 & 7412 White Bluff Rd
DATE: January 22, 2026

Nature of Request

The Petitioner requests a variance to allow a residential use in the Hunter Army Airfield Accident Potential Zone I in association with a proposal to change the existing hotel use into a single room occupancy (SRO) use in the B-C zoning district. The APZ-I Overlay is intended to safeguard the public and limit the danger from potential accidents related to the operation of aircraft within a prescribed distance from the runways. For this reason, residential uses are prohibited in this zone.

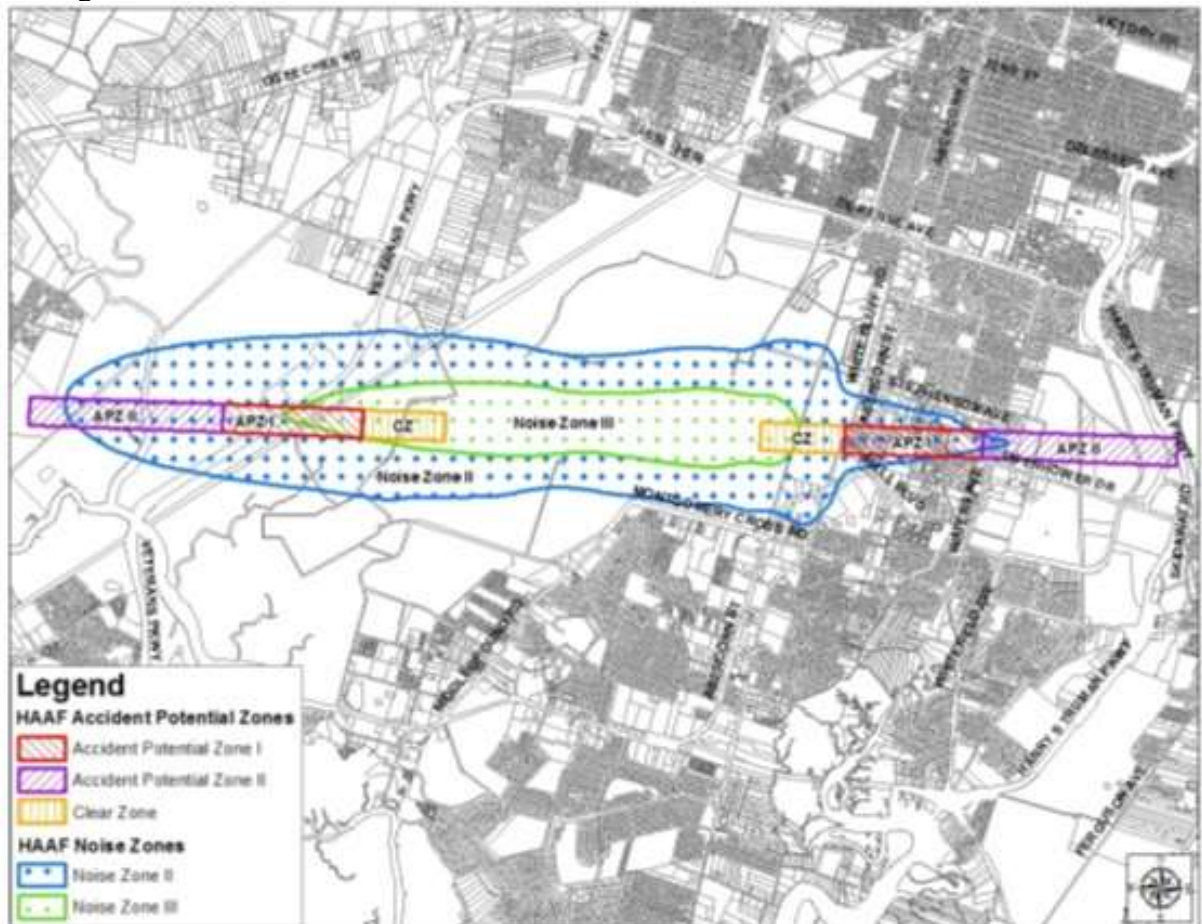


Aerial & Site Map for 7312 & 7412 White Bluff Rd

The property is currently used as a transient hotel/motel operation with guests staying for visits of less than 30 days. Transitioning to an SRO would increase the duration of stay to a minimum of monthly or longer and represent a more permanent living condition. This would increase the risk to both the occupants who are more likely to be present and to additional personal property that would be expected in a more apartment-like living situation. APZ-I is imposed to limit the risk of personal harm and significant loss due to destruction of property and possessions related to residential zoning uses within a hazard zone.

Facts & Findings

1. The property is located on White Bluff Road between Posey & Douglas Streets and is almost directly in line with the runway at Hunter Army Airfield (HAAF). This location puts the property within the HAAF Accident Potential Zone I (APZ I) of the Airport Overlay District. See Figure 7.2-4 below:



2. Savannah Zoning Ordinance 7.2.6c prohibits any residential use within the HAAF APZ I. The overall intent is to limit the risk of incident and substantial loss within residential settings.

c. HAAF Zones

- i. **Clear Zone (CZ).** An area 1,000 feet wide by 3,000 feet long at the immediate ends of the runway. The accident potential in this area is sufficient to recommend the prohibition of any structures.
 - ii. **Accident Potential Zone I (APZ I).** An area 1,000 feet wide extending 2,500 feet beyond the CZ that possesses significant potential of accidents.
 - iii. **Accident Potential Zone II (APZ II).** An area 1,000 feet wide extending 2,500 feet beyond the APZ I that carries some risk of an accident.
3. The Chief of the Master Planning Branch of HAAF issued a letter on December 1st, 2025 that they do not support the current hotel use nor the proposal of any residential uses within APZ I and recommends that this variance be denied.

The Zoning Board of Appeals may grant variances to certain development standards.

Per Section 3.21.10, the granting of variances shall be based on the following criteria:

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 not consistent with the intent of the Zoning Ordinance due to the risk caused by close proximity to the runway at HAAF.

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: The subject property's location within the APZ I could be considered a special circumstance that restricts use based upon the Airport Overlay District. It is common and consistent that limitations exist within overlay districts in numerous locations across Savannah.

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

MPC Comment: The fact that the property falls within the Airport Overlay Zone and specifically the APZ I is not the fault nor result of any action by the applicant. The specific condition of trying to sell the property subject to a variance for a residential use that is restricted or incompatible with the overlay zone would be a self-imposed hardship.

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 requested variance was described by the applicant as financially motivated, relating to the sale of the property.

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 within the APZ I overlay areas.

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 variance is not required to make use of the subject 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: Approval of the variance would confer special privilege upon the Petitioner, and would increase risk to public safety due to hazards related to the HAAF APZ I.

Staff Recommendation

Based on the intent of the code and the recommendation of the Master Planning Branch of Hunter Army Airfield; MPC Staff recommends **denial** of the requested variance to allow single occupancy residence use at this property due to its location within Accident Potential Zone I.

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.