



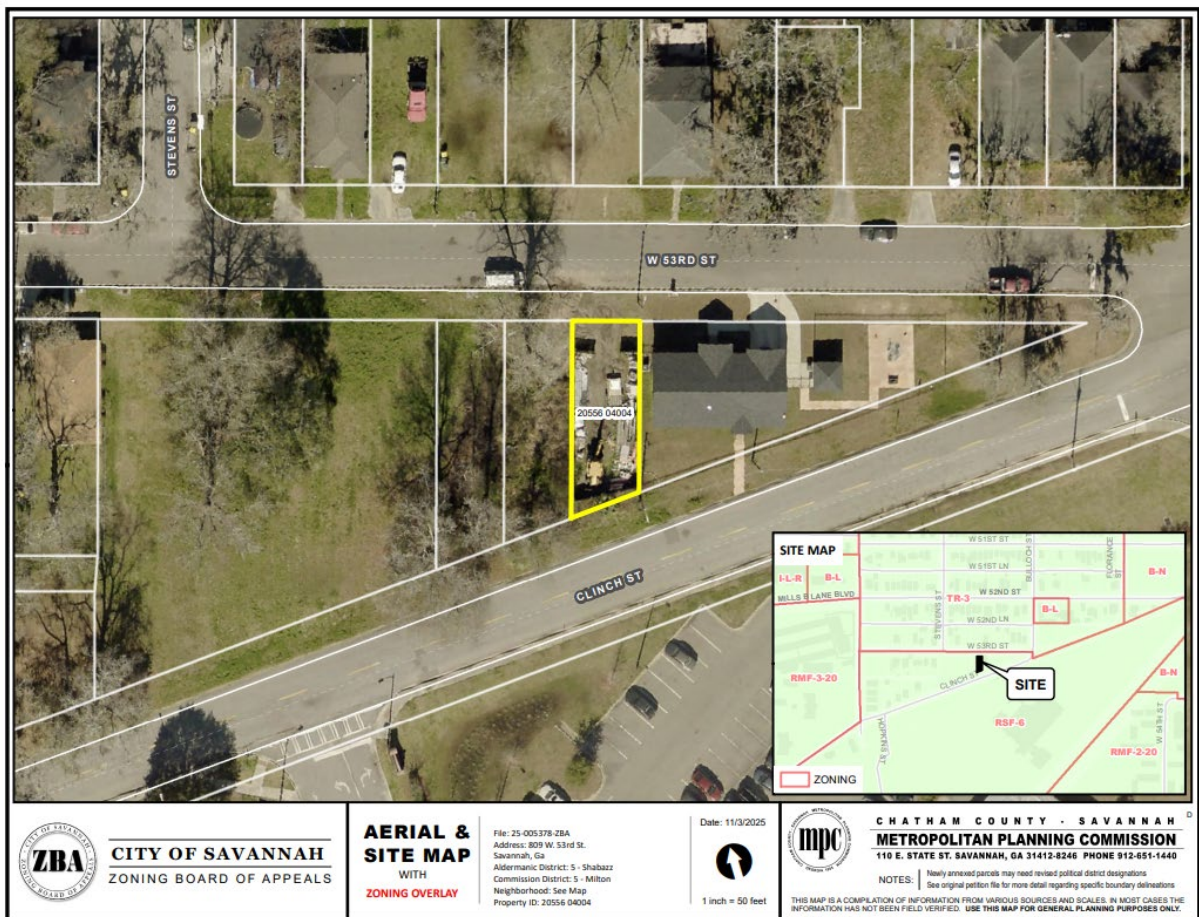
SAVANNAH ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

STAFF REPORT

PETITIONER: Joel Thomas Maddox
FILE NO: 26-000832-ZBA
ADDRESS: 809 W 53rd St
DATE: May 28, 2026
MPC Staff: Subhashi Karunarathne

Nature of Request

The Petitioner requests a variance to reduce the required rear yard setback from 20 feet to 12 feet, associated with the construction of a primary dwelling on a vacant, nonconforming lot in the RSF-6 zoning district. The variance is necessary to accommodate off-street parking requirements.



Aerial & Site Map for 809 W 53rd St

Facts & Findings

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1. The property is located at 809 W 53rd St, with a PIN of 20556 04004, in the Liberty City/Summerside/Southover/Richfield neighborhood.
2. According to the Chatham County Tax Assessor and information submitted from the Petitioner, the subject property measures approximately 2,370 square feet (30 feet of width by 76-82 feet of depth). The parcel is irregularly shaped. The property is zoned RSF-6 (Residential Single-family-6). It is a nonconforming parcel in this zoning district due to lot width and area.
3. The lot is currently vacant. The Petitioner is proposing to build a primary dwelling with a building footprint of approximately 660 square feet. The lot is significantly smaller than expected by the zoning district. The Petitioner is requesting a variance to build a single-family dwelling.
4. [Section 5.7.5](#) of the Zoning Ordinance requires a rear setback of 20 feet for single-family dwellings. The Petitioner is requesting to reduce the rear yard setback to 12 feet.

5.7.5 Development Standards for Permitted Housing Types							
Standards	RSF-E	RSF-30	RSF-20	RSF-10	RSF-6	RSF-5	RSF-4
Building Setbacks (min ft)							
Street Access							
Front yard	40	30	30	25	20	20	15
Side (interior) yard	20	10	10	7	5	5	5
Side (street) yard	15	15	15	15	10	10	10
Rear yard	40	30	30	25	20	20	20
From access easement	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Lane Access							
Front yard	--	--	--	--	15	15	12.5
Side (interior) yard	--	--	--	--	5	5	5
Side (street) yard	--	--	--	--	10	5	5
Rear yard	--	--	--	--	20	20	20
From access easement	--	--	--	--	5	5	5

5. The proposed plan shows a driveway with a depth of 20 feet, where 25 feet is required by Traffic Engineering standards.
6. On May 22, 2025, a rear setback variance (25-002254-ZBA) was granted from the Zoning Board of Appeals for the adjacent lot to the west, at 811 W 53rd St. The development on this lot will have a rear yard setback of 13 feet where 20 feet is requirement and will meet all other development standards, including the front yard setback of 20 feet. Further, their front yard setback will be 25 feet to accommodate a driveway in the front of the property.
7. 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.

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MPC Comment: The requested variance is not consistent with the intent of the Zoning Ordinance. However, the parcel is significantly smaller than expected by the zoning district.

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 parcel has an irregular shape, where the rear property line is angled. Additionally, the lot is nonconforming regarding both lot area and lot width.

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

MPC Comment: The request is the result of the Petitioner's chosen design and the lot configuration.

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 variances are likely financially motivated.

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 deprive the applicant of rights commonly enjoyed by other properties in the same zoning district.

D. Minimum Variance

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

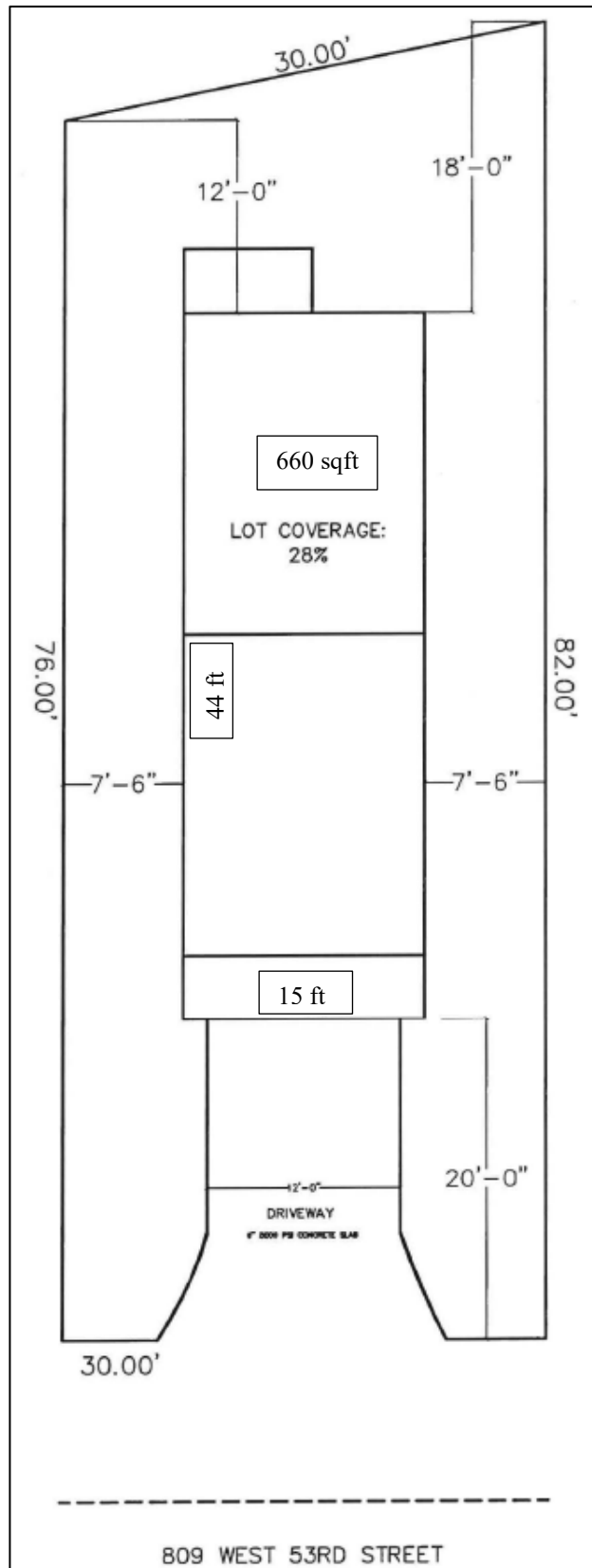
MPC Comment: The variance is required to make use of the subject property.

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 rear yard setback variance would not confer special privilege upon the Petitioner. In 2025, a rear yard setback variance was granted on the lot directly to the west.

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Plan for 809 W 53rd St

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Staff Recommendation

MPC staff recommends **denial** of the requested variance to reduce the required rear yard setback from 20 feet to 12 feet, associated with the construction of a primary dwelling on a vacant, nonconforming lot in the RSF-6 zoning district. The variance is necessary to accommodate off-street parking requirements.

Alternatively, to accommodate the off-street parking requirement and to align the rear yard setback with the lot to the west based on the angle of the lots, MPC Staff recommends **approval** of a variance to reduce the rear yard setback from 20 feet to 10 feet.

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.



Staff Recommendation