



CITY OF ALBUQUERQUE
OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS
ZONING HEARING EXAMINER
NOTIFICATION OF DECISION

Jared Congdon (Agent, Roger Congdon) requests a variance of 4 ft for a retaining wall in the rear yard for Lot 19A, Stonegate Village located at 4909 Oso Grande PL NE, zoned R-T [Section 14-16-5-7(D)]

Special Exception No:..... **VA-2021-00390**
Project No: **Project#2021-006174**
Hearing Date: 07-19-22
Closing of Public Record: 07-19-22
Date of Decision: 08-03-22

On the 19th day of July, 2022, Roger Congdon, agent for property owner Jared Congdon (“Applicant”) appeared before the Zoning Hearing Examiner (“ZHE”) requesting a variance of 4 ft for a retaining wall in the rear yard (“Application”) upon the real property located at 4909 Oso Grande PL NE (“Subject Property”). Below are the ZHE’s finding of fact and decision:

FINDINGS:

1. This matter came before the ZHE after a continuance from the ZHE hearing of June 21, 2022.
2. Applicant is requesting a variance of 4 ft for a retaining wall in the rear yard.
3. The City of Albuquerque Integrated Development Ordinance, Section 14-16-6-6(O)(3)(a) (Variance-Review and Decision Criteria) reads: “... *an application for a Variance-ZHE shall be approved if it meets all of the following criteria:*
 - (1) *There are special circumstances applicable to the subject property that are not self-imposed and that do not apply generally to other property in the same zone and vicinity such as size, shape, topography, location, surroundings, or physical characteristics created by natural forces or government action for which no compensation was paid. Such special circumstances of the property either create an extraordinary hardship in the form of a substantial and unjustified limitation on the reasonable use or return on the property, or practical difficulties result from strict compliance with the minimum standards.*
 - (2) *The Variance will not be materially contrary to the public safety, health, or welfare.*
 - (3) *The Variance does not cause significant material adverse impacts on surrounding properties or infrastructure improvements in the vicinity.*
 - (4) *The Variance will not materially undermine the intent and purpose of the IDO or the applicable zone district.*
 - (5) *The Variance approved is the minimum necessary to avoid extraordinary hardship or practical difficulties.*”
4. The applicant bears the burden of providing a sound justification for the requested decision, based on substantial evidence, pursuant to IDO Section 14-16-6-4(E)(3).

5. The applicant bears the burden of showing compliance with required standards through analysis, illustrations, or other exhibits as necessary, pursuant to IDO Section 14-16-6-4(E)(4).
6. Agent appeared and gave evidence in support of the Application.
7. All property owners within 100 feet of the subject property and the affected neighborhood association were notified.
8. The subject property is currently zoned R-T.
9. Based on evidence submitted by or on behalf of Applicant, it appears that there are special circumstances applicable to the Subject Property that are not self-imposed and that do not apply generally to other property in the same zone and vicinity such as size, shape, topography, location, surroundings, or physical characteristics created by natural forces or government action for which no compensation was paid, as required by Section 14-16-6-6(N)(3)(a)(1). Specifically, Applicant testified and provided written evidence that, the Subject Property has special circumstances because of its topography and location in relation to existing development, and the location of pre-existing improvements on the parcel, which give rise to the need for this request. These special circumstances create an extraordinary hardship in the form of a substantial and unjustified limitation on the reasonable use or return on the Subject Property, because compliance with the minimum standards would not allow for the reasonably proposed use that otherwise would be in compliance with the IDO.
10. Based on evidence submitted by or on behalf of Applicant, the variance will not be contrary to the public safety, health and welfare of the community as required by Section 14-16-6-6(N)(3)(a)(2). Specifically, evidence was submitted supporting that the proposed wall, aside from needing the requested variance, would be consistent with the IDO and the Development Process Manual (DPM).
11. Based on evidence submitted by or on behalf of Applicant, the variance will not cause significant adverse material impacts on surrounding properties or infrastructure improvements in the vicinity as required by Section 14-16-6-6(N)(3)(a)(3). Specifically, the proposal is designed to be in harmony and consistency with what currently exists in the neighborhood, which was supported by written evidence and oral testimony. Photographs were submitted showing the neighborhood. The proposal would not be out of character with the surrounding area, but rather would reinforce the architectural character of the neighborhood by being in harmony with the other improvements existing and proposed for the Subject Property and the area.
12. Based on evidence submitted by or on behalf of Applicant, the variance will not materially undermine the intent and purpose of the IDO or applicable zone district as required by Section 14-16-6-6(N)(3)(a)(4). Specifically, Applicant presented evidence that the intent of IDO will still be met in that the subject site will be in harmony with existing uses and the proposed variance would merely add to the safety and useability of the site.
13. Applicant argued that the variance approved is the minimum necessary to avoid extraordinary hardship or practical difficulties as required by Section 14-16-6-6(N)(3)(a)(5). Specifically, Applicant submitted evidence that any smaller variance would be ineffective to provide for the useability of the site. However, the neighbor whose yard is located immediately adjacent to the Subject Property and bordering the proposed wall testified that the new wall has three courses of CMU block higher than the existing portions of the wall adjacent to the new portions. Photographic evidence of these facts exists in the record.

Given that the existing portions of the wall that are three courses of CMU block lower than the existing wall, which Applicant does not seek to alter, it appears that removing the three courses of CMU block from the new portion of the wall would still result in a wall that would be the minimum necessary to avoid extraordinary hardship or practical difficulties.

14. City Transportation submitted a report stating no objection.
15. The proper "Notice of Hearing" signage was posted for the required time period as required by Section 14-16-6-4(K)(3).
16. The Applicant has authority to pursue this Application.

DECISION:

APPROVAL WITH CONDITION of a variance of 4 ft for a retaining wall in the rear yard.

CONDITION:

Applicant must remove the three courses of CMU block from the new wall, with the result that the new wall is the same height as the adjacent existing wall.

APPEAL:

If you wish to appeal this decision, you must do so by August 18, 2022 pursuant to Section 14-16-6-4(V), of the Integrated Development Ordinance, you must demonstrate that you have legal standing to file an appeal as defined.

Successful applicants are reminded that other regulations of the City must be complied with, even after approval of a special exception is secured. This decision does not constitute approval of plans for a building permit. If your application is approved, bring this decision with you when you apply for any related building permit or occupation tax number. Approval of a conditional use or a variance application is void after one year from date of approval if the rights and privileges are granted, thereby have not been executed, or utilized.



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cc:

ZHE File
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