

**Recommendation for Council Action – Backup
Floodplain Variance Request – 1000 North Lamar**

APPLICABLE CODE AND VARIANCES REQUESTED

- I. LDC Section 25-7-61 Criteria for Approval of Plats, Construction Plans, and Site Plans states that a final plat, subdivision construction plan, or site plan may not be approved unless the proposed development will not result in additional identifiable adverse flooding on other property.

VARIANCE REQUESTED: *The applicant requests a variance to allow the development to be constructed in a manner that causes adverse flooding impacts to other properties.*

- II. LDC Section 25-12-3 Local Amendments to the Building Code, Appendix G Flood-Resistant Construction, G103.4 Activities in riverine flood hazard areas states that the building official shall not permit any new construction, substantial improvement or other development, including fill, unless the applicant demonstrates that the cumulative effect of the proposed development, when combined with all other existing and anticipated development, will not increase the design flood elevation at any point that results in additional adverse flooding on other property.

VARIANCE REQUESTED: *This variance is due to the fact that the development causes increases in the level of the design flood that result in additional adverse flooding on other property.*

- III. LDC Section 25-12-3 Local Amendments to the Building Code, Appendix G Flood-Resistant Construction, G103.5 Floodway Encroachment states that prior to issuing a permit for any floodway encroachment, including fill, new construction, substantial improvements and other development or land-disturbing activity, the building official shall require submission of a certification by a Professional Engineer licensed by the State of Texas, along with supporting technical data in accordance with the City of Austin Drainage Criteria Manual, that demonstrates that such development will not cause any increase of the level of the design flood.

VARIANCE REQUESTED: *This variance is due to the fact that the development causes increases in the level of the design flood.*

- IV. LDC Section 25-12-3 Local Amendments to the Building Code, Appendix G Flood-Resistant Construction, G103.5.1 Floodway revisions states that a floodway encroachment that increases the level of the design flood may be considered for a variance only if the applicant has applied for a conditional Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) revision and has received the approval of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

VARIANCE REQUESTED: *This variance is due to the fact that the development encroaches into the floodway, causes increases in the level of the design flood, and the applicant has not applied for or received approval of the conditional revision from FEMA.*

- V. LDC Section 25-12-3, (Local Amendments to the Building Code), Section 1612.4.3 Means of Egress provides that normal access to a building shall be by direct connection with an area that is a minimum of one foot above the design flood elevation.

VARIANCE REQUESTED: *The applicant requests a variance to Building Code Section 1612.4.3, to allow a commercial building to be constructed without normal access, either vehicular or pedestrian, to an area that is a minimum of one foot above the design flood elevation. The entire lot is in the 100-year floodplain. The proposed building has multiple points of access to and from the building, all of which are located in the 100-year floodplain. The approximate depth of floodwater at the 10th Street exit is 6.7 feet during 25-year event and 8.2 feet during the 100-year event.*

- VI. LDC Section 25-12-3, (Local Amendments to the Building Code), Section G102.3 Nonconforming Uses prohibits expanding, changing, enlarging, or altering the use of a premises in a way which increases its nonconformity.

VARIANCE REQUESTED: *The applicant requests a variance to Building Code Section G102.3 to allow developing the property in a manner that increases flood heights and also enlarges the total conditioned area on the property that does not have safe access out of the floodplain.*

- VII. LDC Section 25-7-152 Dedication of Easements and Rights-of-Way requires that the owner of real property proposed to be developed dedicate to the public an easement or right-of-way for a drainage facility, open or enclosed, and stormwater flow to the limits of the 100-year floodplain.

VARIANCE REQUESTED: *The applicant requests a variance to exclude the footprint of the proposed building from the requirement to dedicate a drainage easement to the full extent of the 100-year floodplain.*

- VIII. LDC Section 25-7-92 (A) and (B) Encroachment on Floodplain Prohibited prohibits encroachment of a building and parking on the 25-year and 100-year floodplains.

VARIANCE REQUESTED: *The applicant requests a variance to allow placement of a building and associated parking within the 25-year and 100-year floodplains of Shoal Creek.*

PREREQUISITES FOR GRANTING VARIANCES AND FINDINGS:

Per LDC Section 25-12-3, Technical Codes, Section G105.7 Variances, variances shall only be issued upon consideration of the following prerequisites:

PREREQUISITE

1) A technical showing of good and sufficient cause based on the unique characteristics of the size, configuration or topography of the site.

Insufficient causes for issuing a variance may include the following:

- *Less than a drastic depreciation of property.*

- *Convenience of property owner.*
- *Circumstances of owner not land.*
- *To obtain better financial return.*
- *Property similar to others in neighborhood.*
- *Hardship created by owner's own actions.*

2) A determination that failure to grant the variance would result in exceptional hardship by rendering the lot undevelopable;

The location of the floodplain on the property is a characteristic of the land. Hardship refers to the effect of the floodplain status of the land on its use; it does not refer to personal or financial circumstances of the current owner of the land. In fact financial hardship, inconvenience, aesthetic considerations, physical handicaps, personal preferences or the disapproval of one's neighbors do not qualify as exceptional hardships. The applicant has the burden of proving exceptional hardship. FEMA advises that the reasons for granting floodplain management variances must be substantial and the proof compelling. The claimed hardship must be exceptional, unusual and peculiar to the property involved.

3) A determination that granting of a variance would not result in increased flood heights, additional threats to public safety, extraordinary public expense, nor create nuisances, cause fraud on or victimization of the public or conflict with existing laws or ordinances.

4) A determination that the variance is the minimum necessary, considering the flood hazard, to afford relief.

Relief is defined as respite from unnecessary hardship. Unnecessary hardship is defined as:

- *Loss of all beneficial or productive use.*
- *Deprivation of reasonable return on property.*
- *Deprivation of all or any reasonable use.*
- *Rendering property valueless.*
- *Inability to develop property in compliance with the regulations.*
- *Reasonable use cannot be made consistent with the regulation.*

5) Notification to the applicant in writing over the signature of the building official that the issuance of a variance to construct a structure below the base flood level will result in increased premium rates for flood insurance, and that such construction below the base flood level increases risks to life and property.