

**Recommendation for Council Action – Backup
Floodplain Variance Request – 7604 FM 969 (Council District 1)**

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:

1. **THE DEVELOPMENT DOES NOT CAUSE ADVERSE FLOODING ON OTHER PROPERTY.** The applicant’s engineer submitted an engineering certification which indicates that the proposed development will not increase flood heights.
2. **NO SAFE ACCESS.** The property lacks normal access from the building to an area in the right-of-way that is a minimum of one foot above the design flood elevation. The proposed access point for the property is located along FM 969. The proposed access point is entirely in the 25-year and 100-year floodplains. First responder personnel and building occupants do not have safe access to and from the building during a 100-year flood event.
3. **PROPOSED FINISHED FLOOR ABOVE MINIMUM REQUIRED ELEVATION.** The proposed building will have its finished floor elevation above the City of Austin minimum elevation requirements, which require the finished floor elevation to be at least one foot above the 100-year floodplain elevation. The finished floor elevation of the ground floor of the proposed building is 79.5 feet above the 100-year floodplain.
4. **HARDSHIP CONDITIONS FOR THE PROPERTY EXIST.** The property currently does not have any buildings on the site. Failure to allow this variance would impact the approval of this site plan application. The property meets the hardship conditions criteria as defined in the Building Code.

APPLICABLE CODE AND VARIANCES REQUESTED

- I. 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 the construction of a building located on the property without normal access, either vehicular or pedestrian, to an area that is a minimum of one foot above the design flood elevation. Portions of the lot are in 25- and 100-year floodplains of Walnut Creek. The depths of flood waters on the property driveway near where it connects to the FM 969 right-of-way are listed below.*

At the Main Entrance to Facility	25-year flood event	100-year flood event
Depth of Water	5.5 ft.	6.5 ft.
Approximate Velocity of Water	3.28 ft/s	4.53 ft/s

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.

FINDING

- 1) **CONDITION IS NOT MET.** The applicant has not demonstrated a good and sufficient cause that justifies the construction of a building where there is no safe access out of the floodplain.

- 2) **CONDITION IS MET.** No buildings currently exist on the site. Failure to grant this variance would not allow this site plan to be approved.

- 3) **CONDITION IS NOT MET.** The proposed development does not increase flood heights. The development does increase public safety threat because occupants could be located in building without safe access for the occupants and first responders during a flood event.

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.

4) **CONDITION IS MET.** The property will provide a reasonable use as a church. Failure to grant this variance would not allow this site plan to be approved. The proposed development does not increase the amount of parking in the floodplain or add any building area in the floodplain.

5) **CONDITION IS MET.** The finished floor elevations of the proposed building will be a minimum of one-foot above the 100-year floodplain elevation.