

ITEM FOR ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION AGENDA

COMMISSION MEETING

February 5, 2020

DATE:

NAME & NUMBER OF

XSpace Group SP-2019-0189D PROJECT:

NAME OF APPLICANT OR

ORGANIZATION:

Garett-Ihnen Civil Engineers (applicant)

4229 N. FM 620, Austin, TX, 78734 LOCATION:

COUNCIL DISTRICT: Council District does not apply in Extraterritorial Jurisdiction

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

STAFF:

Jonathan Garner, Environmental Program Coordinator, Development

Services Department, (512) 974-1665, Jonathan.Garner@austintexas.gov

Lake Austin Watershed, Water Supply Rural Classification, Drinking WATERSHED:

Water Protection Zone

REQUEST: Variance request is as follows:

1. Request to vary from LDC 25-8-301 to construct a driveway on

slopes in excess of 15 percent gradient

2. Request to vary from LDC 25-8-342 to allow fill in excess of

four feet of depth

Staff recommends these variances, having determined the findings of fact **STAFF**

to have been met. **RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff Findings of Fact Variance to LDC 25-8-301



Development Services Department Staff Recommendations Concerning Required Findings

Project Name: XSpace Group SP-2019-0189D Ordinance Standard: Watershed Protection Ordinance

Variance Request: Construction of a driveway on slopes in excess of 15 percent

(LDC 25-8-301)

Include an explanation with each applicable finding of fact.

- A. Land Use Commission variance determinations from Chapter 25-8-41 of the City Code:
 - 1. The requirement will deprive the applicant of a privilege available to owners of similarly situated property with approximately contemporaneous development subject to similar code requirements.

Yes. The entire portion of the property fronting the public right-of-way contains slopes in excess of 15 percent. The other three sides of the property are bound by private development, and there is no other alternative access into the site. Therefore, the only available access into the property and to the approximate 1.33 acres of developable land on the property (e.g., slopes 0-15 percent) is by crossing the existing slopes with a private driveway.

2. The variance:

- a) Is not necessitated by the scale, layout, construction method, or other design decision made by the applicant, unless the design decision provides greater overall environmental protection than is achievable without the variance;
 - Yes. The only available access into the property and to the approximate 1.33 acres of developable land on the property (e.g., slopes 0-15 percent) is by crossing the existing slopes with a private driveway.
- b) Is the minimum deviation from the code requirement necessary to allow a reasonable use of the property;
 - Yes. Code and Criteria allow a driveway to be constructed on slopes over 15% when the driveway provides primary access to a minimum of two contiguous acres of land with a slope less than 15 percent. However, the topography of the property is

characterized by alternating bands of slopes less than 15 percent and slopes greater than 15 percent (see slope exhibit, p. X). Collectively, there are over three acres of land with slopes less than 15 percent, yet they are not contiguous. The proposed driveway is directly perpendicular to FM 620, and is located on the narrowest band of slopes in excess of 15 percent. This allows for the remaining portion of the development to be located on an area of approximately 1.33 acres of land with slopes less than 15 percent. The variance is based on the development's requirement to access the buildable land and to comply with vertical slope requirements set forth by Austin Fire and Travis County Fire and Rescue. If the driveway were proposed elsewhere along the property frontage, it would have to cross slopes in excess of 25 percent gradient, and would locate other development on slopes steeper than 15 percent.

c) Does not create a significant probability of harmful environmental consequences.

Yes. No significant trees or vegetation will be removed for the construction of the driveway, the driveway is not proposed to cross a naturally occurring waterway, and there are no critical environmental features (CEFs) present that will be impacted by the construction of the driveway.

3. Development with the variance will result in water quality that is at least equal to the water quality achievable without the variance.

Yes. The fill required to construct the driveway on slopes will be structurally contained to minimize or eliminate any erosive flows post-construction, and appropriately sized culverts will be included to allow offsite flows to continue through the site in accordance with existing conditions.

- B. The Land Use Commission may grant a variance from a requirement of Section 25-8-422 (Water Supply Suburban Water Quality Transition Zone), Section 25-8-452 (Water Supply Rural Water Quality Transition Zone), Section 25-8-482 (Barton Springs Zone Water Quality Transition Zone), Section 25-8-368 (Restrictions on Development Impacting Lake Austin, Lady Bird Lake, and Lake Walter E. Long), or Article 7, Division 1 (Critical Water Quality Zone Restrictions), after determining that::
 - 1. The criteria for granting a variance in Subsection (A) are met;

N/A.

2. The requirement for which a variance is requested prevents a reasonable, economic use of the entire property;

N/A.

3. The variance is the minimum deviation from the code requirement necessary to allow a reasonable, economic use of the entire property.

<u>Staff Determination</u>: Staff determines that the findings of fact have been met. Staff recommends the following conditions:

1. Compliance with LDC 25-2, Subchapter C, Division 3, §25-2-1024 and restore the vegetated area in front of the structural retaining walls with a dense massing of native trees, shrubs, and grasses;

Environmental Reviewer (DSD)	Jonathan Garner	Date <u>December 31, 2019</u>
Environmental Review Manager (DSD)	Mbl Mike McDougal	Date <u>January 2, 2020</u>
Environmental Officer (WPD)	Chris Herrington	Date <u>January 10, 2020</u>

Application Form Variance to LDC 25-8-301



ENVIRONMENTAL BOARD VARIANCE APPLICATION TEMPLATE

December 11, 2019

Dennis Lucas, Director Planning and Zoning Department City of Austin P.O. Box 1088 Austin, TX 78767

RE: Variance Request Letter

X Space Group 4229 N FM 620 RD SP-2019-0189 D

§ 25-8-301 - CONSTRUCTION OF A ROADWAY OR DRIVEWAY

Dear Ms. Lucas:

On behalf of the owners, 4229 N. FM 620 / X Space Group, we are requesting a variance for constructing a segment of driveway on sloes that exceed 15% for the proposed development of the X Space Group site development permit (SP-2019-0189d) located at 4229 N FM 620 RD.

The subject project is located approximately 0.4 miles west of the full purpose annexed area of Lake Austin and therefore is within the 2-mile ETJ. The property is currently undeveloped and is located at the south west corner of FM 620 and Scenic Overlook Drive.

The applicant plans to develop a new building with fire lanes and parking area. The applicant proposes to place new improvements on the property in a way to minimize adverse impacts to the natural character of the property.

The site is located within the Drinking Water Protection Zone; however, the subject tract is not located over the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone. The site is in the Lake Austin Watershed of the Colorado River Basin and is classified as a Water Supply Suburban Watershed by Chapter 25-8 of the City's Land Development Code. The property is within the Golden-cheeked Warbler-Zone 1 (Confirmed habitat) and will be seeking participation in the Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Program as administered by Travis County.

At least forty percent (40%) of the site, excluding dedicated right-of- way, shall be left in a natural state.

The project requires leniency from the following code sections:

Division 5. - Cut, Fill, and Spoil.

Division 3. - Construction on Slopes.

§ 25-8-301 - CONSTRUCTION OF A ROADWAY OR DRIVEWAY.

- (A) A person may not construct a roadway or driveway on a slope with a gradient of more than 15 percent unless the construction is necessary to provide primary access to:
 - (1) at least two contiguous acres with a gradient of 15 percent or less; or
 - (2) building sites for at least five residential units.
- (B) For construction described in this section, a cut or fill must be revegetated, or if a cut or fill has a finished gradient of more than 33 percent, stabilized with a permanent structure. This does not apply to a stable cut.

The Land Development Code allows Land Use Commission Variances per the following:

Division 3. - Variances.

§ 25-8-41 - LAND USE COMMISSION VARIANCES.

- (A) It is the applicant's burden to establish that the findings described in this Section have been met. Except as provided in Subsections (B) and (C), the land use commission may grant a variance from a requirement of this subchapter after determining that:
 - (1) the requirement will deprive the applicant of a privilege available to owners of other similarly situated property with approximately contemporaneous development subject to similar code requirements;
 - (2) the variance:
 - (a) is not necessitated by the scale, layout, construction method, or other design decision made by the applicant, unless the design decision provides greater overall environmental protection than is achievable without the variance;
 - (b) is the minimum deviation from the code requirement necessary to allow a reasonable use of the property; and
 - (c) does not create a significant probability of harmful environmental consequences; and
 - (3) development with the variance will result in water quality that is at least equal to the water quality achievable without the variance.

Below you will find the findings of fact concerning the need for the variance.

Your favorable consideration and support of our request would be appreciated. If you have any questions, please feel free to call.

Sincerely,



Steven L. Ihnen, P.E. TBPE Firm #F-630

PROJECT DESCRIPTION **Applicant Contact Information**

Name of Applicant	Garrett-Ihnen Civil Engineers	
Street Address	12007 Technology Blvd.	
City State ZIP Code	Austin, TX 78727	
Work Phone	512-454-2400	
E-Mail Address	permitting@gice.us	
Variance Case Informat	ion	
Case Name	XSpace Group Storage	
Case Number	SP-2019-0189D	
Address or Location	4229 N. FM 620	
Environmental Reviewer Name	Jonathan Garner	
Applicable Ordinance	Current Code	
Watershed Name	Lake Austin	
Watershed Classification	☐ Urban ☐ Suburban ☐ Water Supply Suburban ☐ Barton Springs Zone	
Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone	☐ Barton Springs Segment ☐ Northern Edwards Segment ☐ Not in Edwards Aquifer Zones	
Edwards Aquifer Contributing Zone	☐ Yes No	
Distance to Nearest Classified Waterway	0.40 mile	
Water and Waste Water service to be provided by	WCID#17 and On-site septic	
Request	§ 25-8-301 - CONSTRUCTION OF A ROADWAY OR DRIVEWAY	

Impervious cover	Existing	Proposed
square footage:	_702 sf	44,518_sf
acreage:	5.43 ac	5.43 ac
percentage:	0.4%	25.73%
Provide general description of the	The property has slopes that vary from 0% to over 35%. The slope breakdown is as follows:	
property (slope range, elevation range, summary of vegetation / trees, summary of the geology, CWQZ, WQTZ, CEFs, floodplain, heritage trees, any other notable or outstanding characteristics of the	0-15% Slopes 3.236 acres 15-25% Slopes 0.630 acres 25-35% Slopes .107 acres Over 35% Slopes 0.080 acres Elevation ranges from a low point of 739.23 to a high point of 843. The ground vegetation is typical hill country grasses in poor condition due to a heavy over cover of cedar trees and poor topsoil due to limestone substrata. The geology is hard to slightly weathered limestone with no or little top soils. In areas where topsoil exists, the soil is brown hard flat clay with limestone gravel fragments.	
property)	The site as no CWQZ, WQTZ, CEFs, floodplain notable or outstanding characteristics of the	

Clearly indicate in what	
way the proposed project	
does not comply with	The plan complies with all current codes.
current Code (include	
maps and exhibits)	

FINDINGS OF FACT

§ 25-8-41(A)(1):

The requirement will deprive the applicant of a privilege available to owners of other similarly situated property with approximately contemporaneous development subject to similar code requirements.

ANSWER: There exists 1.33 acres of land with slopes of 0 to 15% that is separated for access to FM 620 by a band of slopes greater than 15%. Without a variance, this property is rendered undevelopable compared to similarly situated properties located along FM 620.

§ 25-8-41(A)(2)(a):

The variance is not necessitated by the scale, layout, construction method, or other design decision made by the applicant, unless the design decision provides greater overall environmental protection than is achievable without the variance.

> ANSWER: Existing conditions of the property necessitate the construction on slopes variance. There exists 1.33 acres of land with slopes of 0 to 15% that is inaccessible without crossing slopes greater than 15% without a variance. The project proposes to construct all of its developable area concentrated in this 1.33 acre area and is scaled appropriately.

§ 25-8-41(A)(2)(b):

The variance is the minimum deviation from the code requirement necessary to allow a reasonable use of the property.

> ANSWER: The proposed building site is located in the only area that is developable on the site. In order to access this point, the construction on slopes is required.

§ 25-8-41(A)(2)(c):

The variance does not create a significant probability of harmful environmental consequences.

ANSWER: Exceeding the construction on slopes limitation on this project will not create a significant probability of harmful environmental consequences

§ 25-8-41(A)(3):

The development with the variance will result in water quality that is at least equal to the water quality achievable without the variance.

> ANSWER: Exceeding the construction on slopes limitation on this project will not create a significant probability of harmful environmental consequences

Staff Findings of Fact Variance to LDC 25-8-342



Development Services Department Staff Recommendations Concerning Required Findings

Project Name: XSpace Group SP-2019-0189D Ordinance Standard: Watershed Protection Ordinance

Variance Request: Fill in excess of four feet (LDC 25-8-342)

Include an explanation with each applicable finding of fact.

- A. Land Use Commission variance determinations from Chapter 25-8-41 of the City Code:
 - 1. The requirement will deprive the applicant of a privilege available to owners of similarly situated property with approximately contemporaneous development subject to similar code requirements.

Yes. The only access into the property is from FM 620, which, at the time of its construction elevated the roadway far above the existing contours of the site. The topographic difference between the roadway elevation and the property line is approximately 20 feet. As such, to meet vertical curvature guidelines for emergency access, the additional fill is needed for construction of the driveway. The property is bound on all other sides by private development, and there is not an alternative point of access into the property.

2. The variance:

- a) Is not necessitated by the scale, layout, construction method, or other design decision made by the applicant, unless the design decision provides greater overall environmental protection than is achievable without the variance;
 - Yes. The excess fill is required to meet vertical curvature requirements set by Austin Fire Department and Lake Travis Fire and Rescue.
- b) Is the minimum deviation from the code requirement necessary to allow a reasonable use of the property;
 - Yes. The excess fill proposed is only at an elevation necessary to meet vertical curvature requirements set by Austin Fire Department and Lake Travis Fire and Rescue, and the majority of the required fill is structurally contained with concrete retaining walls.

c) Does not create a significant probability of harmful environmental consequences.

Yes. The majority of the required fill is structurally contained with concrete retaining walls, thereby eliminating the need for an excess volume of fill material to meet 3:1 back slope requirements, and reducing the probability of erosive flows.

- 3. Development with the variance will result in water quality that is at least equal to the water quality achievable without the variance.
 - Yes. By containing the fill in concrete structural retaining walls, and reducing the probability of erosive flows, the proposed project will achieve the same level of water quality achievable without the variance. Additionally, all impervious cover stormwater runoff will be captured and treated on site in a water quality facility that meets compliance with the Land Development Code and Environmental Criteria Manual.
- B. The Land Use Commission may grant a variance from a requirement of Section 25-8-422 (Water Supply Suburban Water Quality Transition Zone), Section 25-8-452 (Water Supply Rural Water Quality Transition Zone), Section 25-8-482 (Barton Springs Zone Water Quality Transition Zone), Section 25-8-368 (Restrictions on Development Impacting Lake Austin, Lady Bird Lake, and Lake Walter E. Long), or Article 7, Division 1 (Critical Water Quality Zone Restrictions), after determining that::
 - 1. The criteria for granting a variance in Subsection (A) are met;

N/A.

2. The requirement for which a variance is requested prevents a reasonable, economic use of the entire property;

N/A.

3. The variance is the minimum deviation from the code requirement necessary to allow a reasonable, economic use of the entire property.

N/A.

<u>Staff Determination</u>: Staff determines that the findings of fact have been met. Staff recommends the following conditions:

1. Compliance with LDC 25-2, Subchapter C, Division 3, §25-2-1024 and restore the vegetated area in front of the structural retaining walls with a dense massing of native trees, shrubs, and grasses;

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Environmental Reviewer		Date <u>December 31, 2019</u>
(DSD)	Jonathan Garner	

Environmental Review Manager (DSD)	Mike McDougal	Date <u>December 30, 2019</u>
Environmental Officer (WPD)	Chris Herrington	Date <u>January 10, 2020</u>

Application Form Variance to LDC 25-8-342



ENVIRONMENTAL BOARD VARIANCE APPLICATION TEMPLATE

December 11, 2019

Dennis Lucas, Director Planning and Zoning Department City of Austin P.O. Box 1088 Austin, TX 78767

RE: Variance Request Letter

> X Space Group 4229 N FM 620 RD SP-2019-0189 D

§25-8-342 Fill Requirements

Dear Ms. Lucas:

On behalf of the owners, 4229 N. FM 620 / X Space Group, we are requesting a variance for fill in excess of four (4) feet for the proposed development of the X Space Group site development permit (SP-2019-0189d) located at 4229 N FM 620 RD.

The subject project is located approximately 0.4 miles west of the full purpose annexed area of Lake Austin and therefore is within the 2-mile ETJ. The property is currently undeveloped and is located at the south west corner of FM 620 and Scenic Overlook Drive.

The applicant plans to develop a new building with fire lanes and parking area. The applicant proposes to place new improvements on the property in a way to minimize adverse impacts to the natural character of the property.

The site is located within the Drinking Water Protection Zone; however, the subject tract is not located over the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone. The site is in the Lake Austin Watershed of the Colorado River Basin and is classified as a Water Supply Suburban Watershed by Chapter 25-8 of the City's Land Development Code. The property is within the Golden-cheeked Warbler-Zone 1 (Confirmed habitat) and will be seeking participation in the Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Program as administered by Travis County.

At least forty percent (40%) of the site, excluding dedicated right-of- way, shall be left in a natural state.

The project requires leniency from the following code section:

Division 5. - Cut, Fill, and Spoil.

§ 25-8-342 - FILL REQUIREMENTS.

- (A) Fill on a tract of land may not exceed four feet of depth, except:
 - (1) in an urban watershed;
 - (2) in a roadway right-of-way;
 - (3) under a foundation with sides perpendicular to the ground, or with pier and beam construction:
 - (4) for construction of a water quality control or detention facility and appurtenances for conveyance such as swales, drainage ditches, and diversion berms, if:
 - (a) the design and location of the facility within the site minimize the amount of fill over four feet;
 - (b) the fill is the minimum necessary for the appropriate functioning of the facility; and
 - (c) the fill is not located on a slope with a gradient of more than 15 percent or within 100 feet of a classified waterway;
 - (5) for utility construction or a wastewater drain field; or
 - (6) in a state-permitted sanitary landfill located in the extraterritorial jurisdiction, if:
 - (a) the fill is derived from the landfill operation;
 - (b) the fill is not placed in a critical water quality zone or a 100-year floodplain;
 - (c) the landfill operation has an erosion and restoration plan approved by the single
 - (d) all other applicable City Code and County Code provisions are met.
- (B) A fill area must be restored and stabilized.
- (C) Fill for a roadway must be contained within the roadway clearing width described in Section 30-5-322 (Clearing For A Roadway).

The Land Development Code allows Land Use Commission Variances per the following:

Division 3. - Variances.

§ 25-5-41 - LAND USE COMMISSION VARIANCES

- (A) It is the applicant's burden to establish that the findings described in this Section have been met. Except as provided in Subsections (B) and (C), the land use commission may grant a variance from a requirement of this subchapter after determining that:
 - (1) the requirement will deprive the applicant of a privilege available to owners of other similarly situated property with approximately contemporaneous development subject to similar code requirements;
 - (2) the variance:

- (a) is not necessitated by the scale, layout, construction method, or other design decision made by the applicant, unless the design decision provides greater overall environmental protection than is achievable without the variance;
- (b) is the minimum deviation from the code requirement necessary to allow a reasonable use of the property; and
- (c) does not create a significant probability of harmful environmental consequences; and
- (3) development with the variance will result in water quality that is at least equal to the water quality achievable without the variance.

Below you will find the findings of fact concerning the need for the variance.

Your favorable consideration and support of our request would be appreciated. If you have any questions, please feel free to call.

Sincerely,

Steven L. Ihnen, P.E. TBPE Firm #F-630

PROJECT DESCRIPTION Applicant Contact Information

Name of Applicant	Garrett-Ihnen Civil Engineers	
Street Address	12007 Technology Blvd.	
City State ZIP Code	Austin, TX 78727	
Work Phone	512-454-2400	
E-Mail Address	permitting@gice.us	
Variance Case Informat	ion	
Case Name	XSpace Group Storage	
Case Number	SP-2019-0189D	
Address or Location	4229 N. FM 620	
Environmental Reviewer Name	Jonathan Garner	
Applicable Ordinance	Current Code	
Watershed Name	Lake Austin	
Watershed Classification	☐ Urban ☐ Suburban ☐ Water Supply Suburban ☐ Barton Springs Zone	
Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone	 □ Barton Springs Segment □ Northern Edwards Segment ■ Not in Edwards Aquifer Zones 	
Edwards Aquifer Contributing Zone	☐ Yes No	
Distance to Nearest Classified Waterway	0.40 mile	
Water and Waste Water service to be provided by	WCID#17 and On-site septic	
Request	LDC §25-8-342 Fill Requirements	

Impervious cover	Existing	Proposed
square footage:	_702 sf	44,518_sf
acreage:	5.43 ac	5.43 ac
percentage:	0.4%	25.73%
Provide general description of the	The property has slopes that vary from 0% to over 35%. The slope breakdown is as follows:	
property (slope range, elevation range, summary of vegetation / trees, summary of the geology, CWQZ, WQTZ, CEFs,	0-15% Slopes 3.236 acres 15-25% Slopes 0.630 acres 25-35% Slopes .107 acres Over 35% Slopes 0.080 acres Elevation ranges from a low point of 739.23 to a high point of 843. The ground vegetation is typical hill country grasses in poor condition due to a	
floodplain, heritage trees, any other notable or outstanding	heavy over cover of cedar trees and poor topsoil due to limestone substrata. The geology is hard to slightly weathered limestone with no or little top soils. In areas where topsoil exists, the soil is brown hard flat clay with limestone gravel fragments.	
characteristics of the property)	The site as no CWQZ, WQTZ, CEFs, floodplainotable or outstanding characteristics of the	

Clearly indicate in what way the proposed project does not comply with	The plan complies with all current codes.
current Code (include maps and exhibits)	The plan complies with an earlest codes.

FINDINGS OF FACT

The following is provided to support the code test conditions:

§ 25-8-41(A)(1):

The requirement will deprive the applicant of a privilege available to owners of other similarly situated property with approximately contemporaneous development subject to similar code requirements.

ANSWER: The only access point to the public roadway is off FM 620 along the north property line. The topographic change between the roadway elevation and the property line is ~20 feet in elevation difference.

The storage facility immediately to the east of this project named Morningstar Storage obtained a permit under the name of "Bulldog Storage" (SP-2011-0235D). That project received approval from the commission to exceed 4' fill in order to building due to the exact same conditions as this project.

The Morningside Storage project is a similar use, is similarly situated and received the same variance that this project seeks. Without a variance, this property is rendered undevelopable compared to similarly situated properties located along FM 620.

§ 25-8-41(A)(2)(a):

The variance is not necessitated by the scale, layout, construction method, or other design decision made by the applicant, unless the design decision provides greater overall environmental protection than is achievable without the variance.

> ANSWER: Existing conditions of the property necessitate the fill variance. Due to required access point restrictions set by TxDOT on FM 620 and max slopes allowed by Austin Fire Department and Lake Travis Fire, the fill is required to exceed 4 foot.

§ 25-8-41(A)(2)(b):

The variance is the minimum deviation from the code requirement necessary to allow a reasonable use of the property.

> ANSWER: The proposed building site is located in the only area that is developable on the site. In order to access this point, the fill is exceeded.

§ 25-8-41(A)(2)(c):

The variance does not create a significant probability of harmful environmental consequences.

ANSWER: Exceeding the fill limitation on this project will not create a significant probability of harmful environmental consequences.

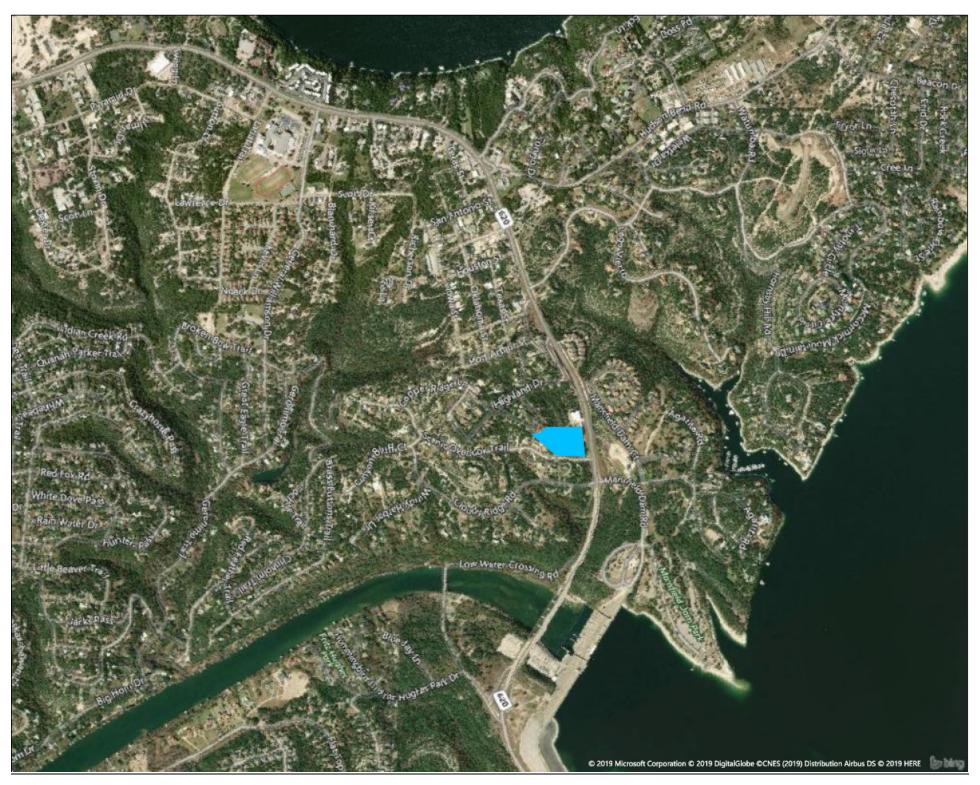
§ 25-8-41(A)(3):

The development with the variance will result in water quality that is at least equal to the water quality achievable without the variance.

> ANSWER: Exceeding the fill limitation on this project will not create a significant probability of harmful environmental consequences.

Applicant Exhibits

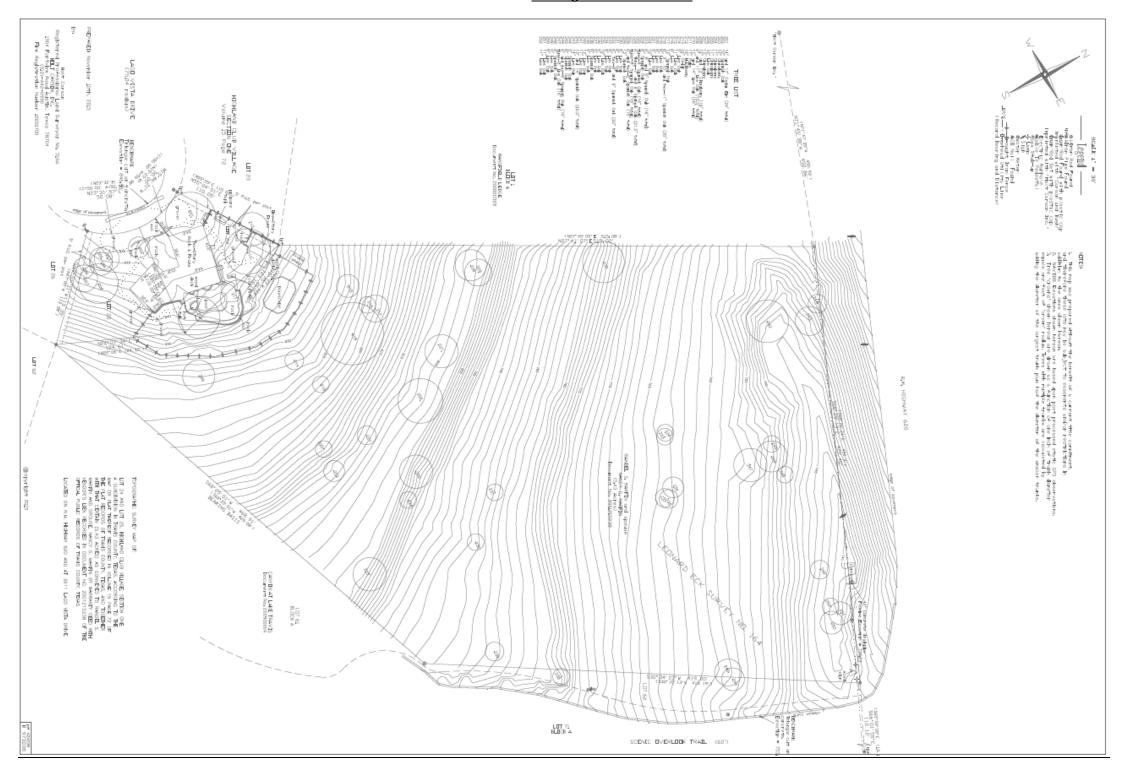
Aerial photos of the vicinity



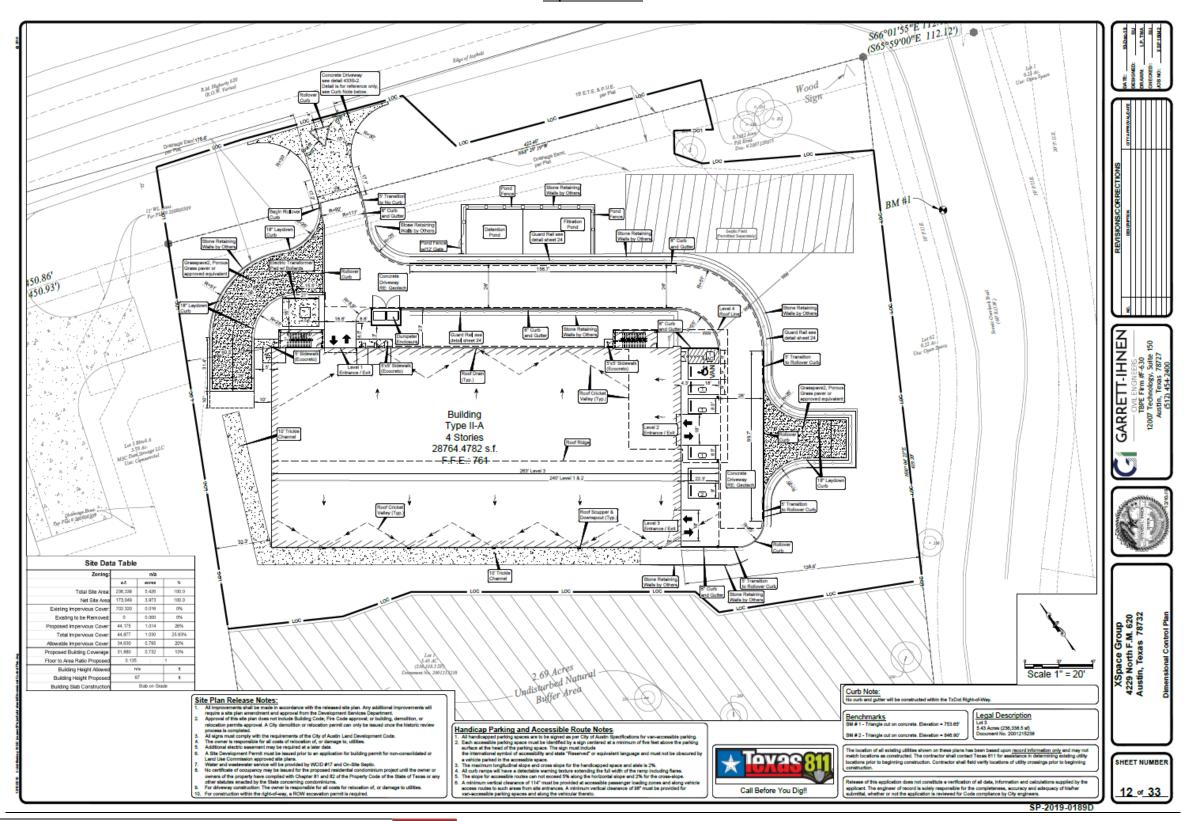
Aerial photo of the site



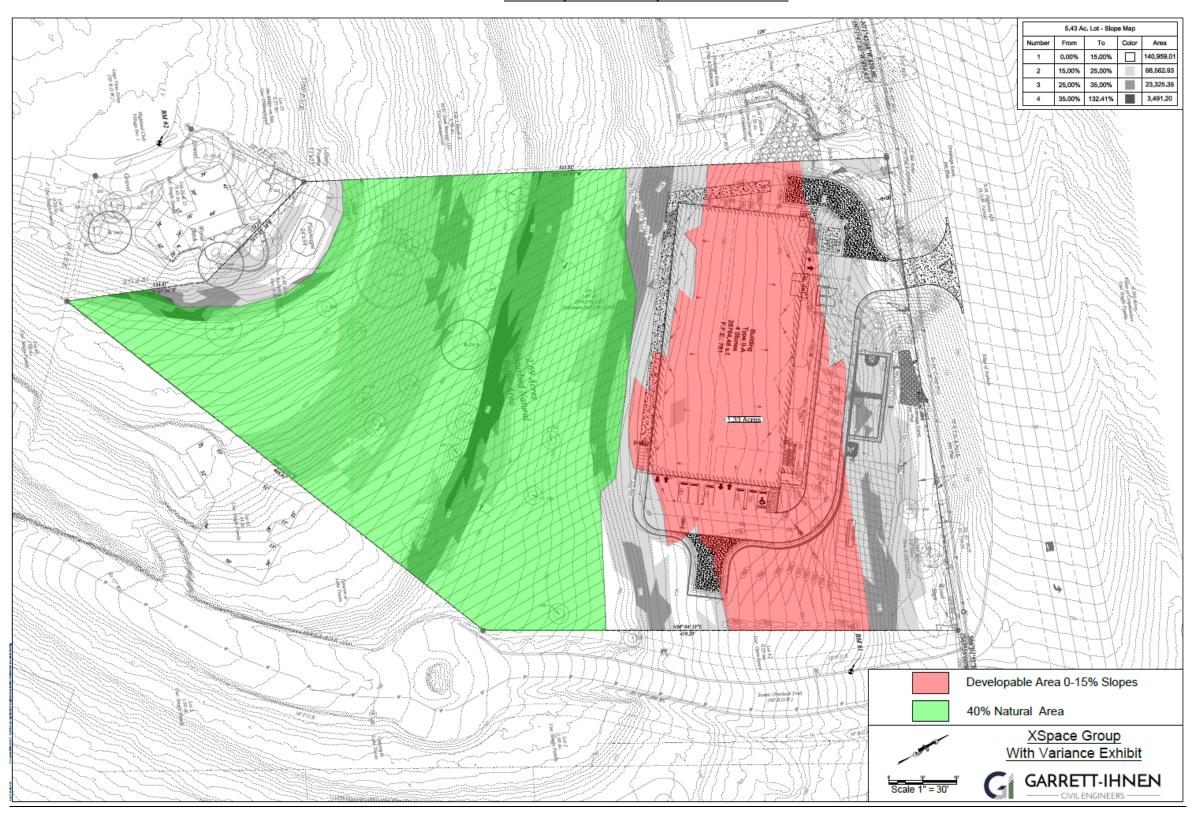
Existing Conditions Exhibit



XSpace Site Plan



0-15% Slope Area Developable with a Variance



XSpace Cut/Fill Exhibit

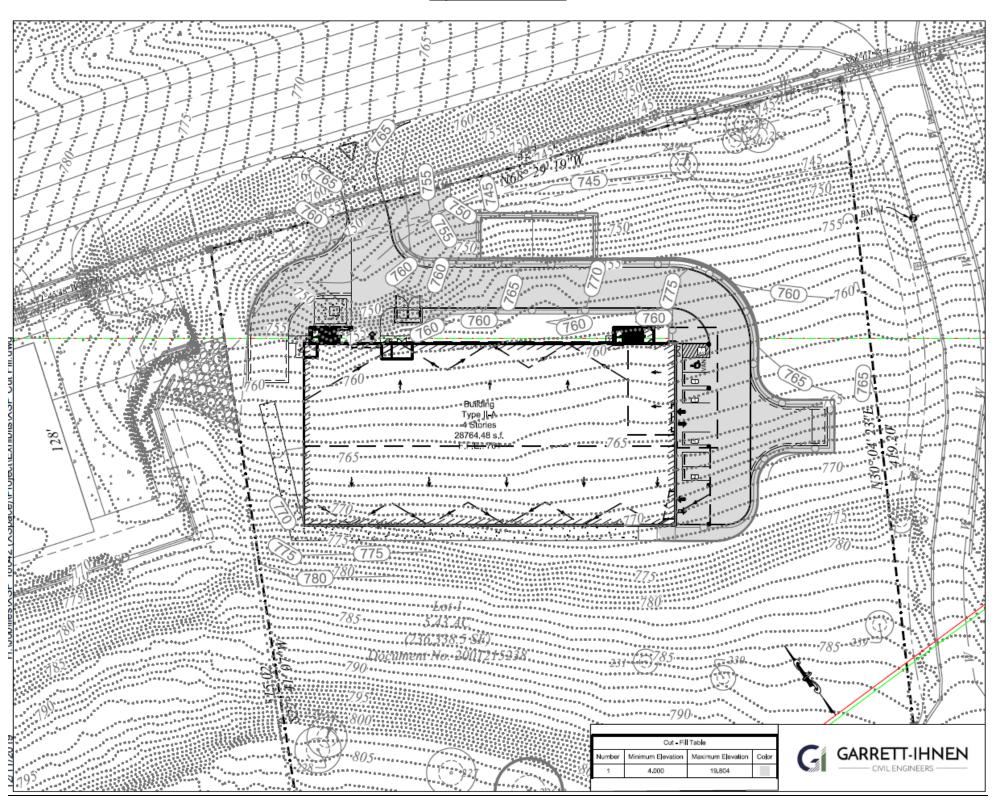


Photo of RM 620 Embankment with 4' Fill Measurement

