

ITEM06/1-LTR FROM OWNER

From: [REDACTED]
Subject: 705 Brownlee - Item 6 for Monday Oct. 14th hearing
Date: Wednesday, October 9, 2024 1:27:19 PM

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Good Morning Elaine,

I was going to leave you a voicemail but your message says that you prefer email so I'll reach out this way. My partner Brad Hoskins and I are listed as item six on the agenda for Monday's hearing about two requests for variances on our project to remodel our home at 705 Brownlee.

This has been a VERY long and arduous process and I want to provide the context for the request so that the Board can move forward with hearing our case on Monday. Even though the case has been dragging on for over two years, the request for variance is relatively simple, and can easily be outlined for the Board in advance of the hearing.

Our architect, Robert Allison of Webber Studios is the applicant on our behalf but we will obviously attend as our needs are material to the case. I have heard that some members of the OWANA Zoning committee may ask for a postponement, but I want you to have all of the information about how that postponement would negatively impact our family. Pushing our case to the November BoA meeting will mean that Brad will not be able to attend as he some overseas business travel that cannot be rescheduled. Pushing the date two months will mean that I can not attend as I am donating a kidney to my brother and will be away at Northwestern in Chicago for the surgery and that cannot be rescheduled either. I have been in direct contact with neighbors and with members of that committee and so far, no one has voiced any opposition to our request for variances to me. The acting chair of that committee may not remember the history of this case, though I have provided her with significant background and information about the project. Since that committee has been consulted about his project over the last two years, and our request is aligned with what they have always advocated for, I would ask the Board to go forward with hearing our case on Monday as scheduled so that we can be a part of it.

Our plan to remodel our property at 705 Brownlee is the same that it was in July of 2022 when we first approached the OWANA zoning committee. We wish to rebuild an existing carport as a garage, add an elevator, and add a second story to

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the existing duplex as a third unit on the site. We are not real estate developers, nor builders, nor home designers. We are a family trying to build an accessible home for our multigenerational blended family. My son Peter has multiple disabilities, uses a wheelchair at all times, and requires round the clock medical supervision. Maintaining the existing duplex as separate residences for caregivers for Peter and other family members provides an affordable option to these important members of Team Peter to live on site in an increasingly expensive city. Providing affordable housing options for caregivers is the best way that we have to continue to have the high quality care for Peter that he deserves, especially as he has aged out of the public school system. Keeping the family in Central Austin, close to transit and other services is also an important part of keeping him engaged and integrated in our community.

We met with that committee three times from July to the following January in an attempt to determine HOW to build our addition and fell into a gaping hole in the Austin Land Development Code - that is, there was no way to have a third unit on a site that was zoned as SF. The committee and neighbors opposed upzoning to MF and wished for us to find a way to build using SF zoning but ultimately, after a LONG discussion at the January Planning Commission meeting in 2023, the property was rezoned to allow for the third unit. Members of the Planning commission, staff and even the ex-officio member of the Board of Adjustment considered other SF codes and variance, but in the end, the ONLY way to accomplish this and even though it makes building much more difficult, was to upzone the property to MF.

Since that time, Austin's land development code has caught up to fill in that gap with the passage of the HOME ordinances. Once the amendments were ratified, we researched their provisions and it seems once again that our project is a perfect fit. Even though it is a more restrictive code, it is much more in keeping with our project, and they are simpler for our family. Webber Studios has designed a beautiful renovation to the property that allows Peter to access the entire property and respects our neighbors wishes to not have a multifamily commercial building on the lot.

The hardships outlined in our request for a variance relate to the maximum unit size of a single unit and to impervious cover. As our application explains, we are not asking to increase the total FAR to the plan, but the way that HOME ordinance calculates square footage means that the accessible garage and the elevator lobby on three levels now count into that one unit's square footage.

With regards to the impervious cover, we know that HOME did not increase the maximum allowable impervious cover, but the reality of a fully accessible site for a wheelchair means more concrete overall. In some ways, this plays into the question

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about square footage of the structure but also for landscape paving. However, we are willing to do what we can to mitigate this. We would include use of pervious concrete for landscaping paving and off-street parking spots (which respond to our neighbors concerns) and even use hollywood strips on the driveway if that could help. Brad and I would also like to collect rainwater from the roof to use as landscape irrigation. I don't know that any of this would absolutely get back to 45% but we are committed to reducing that as much as possible.

I am available all day today to answer questions but I teach on campus all day tomorrow. I remain available to my neighbors and neighborhood committees as we attempt to finally get some resolution on how to move forward in this two-year long process. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me if I can provide more information or documentation to the Board.

Sincerely,

Melissa Skidmore and Brad Hoskins (512)294-8863

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