



# MEMORANDUM

Report Date: February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2026  
To: City of Madison Heights Zoning Board of Appeals  
Meeting Date: March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2026  
From: Matt Lonnerstater, AICP – City Planner  
Subject: Variance for Parking in a Front Yard  
PZBA 26-02 – 32420 Stephenson Hwy.

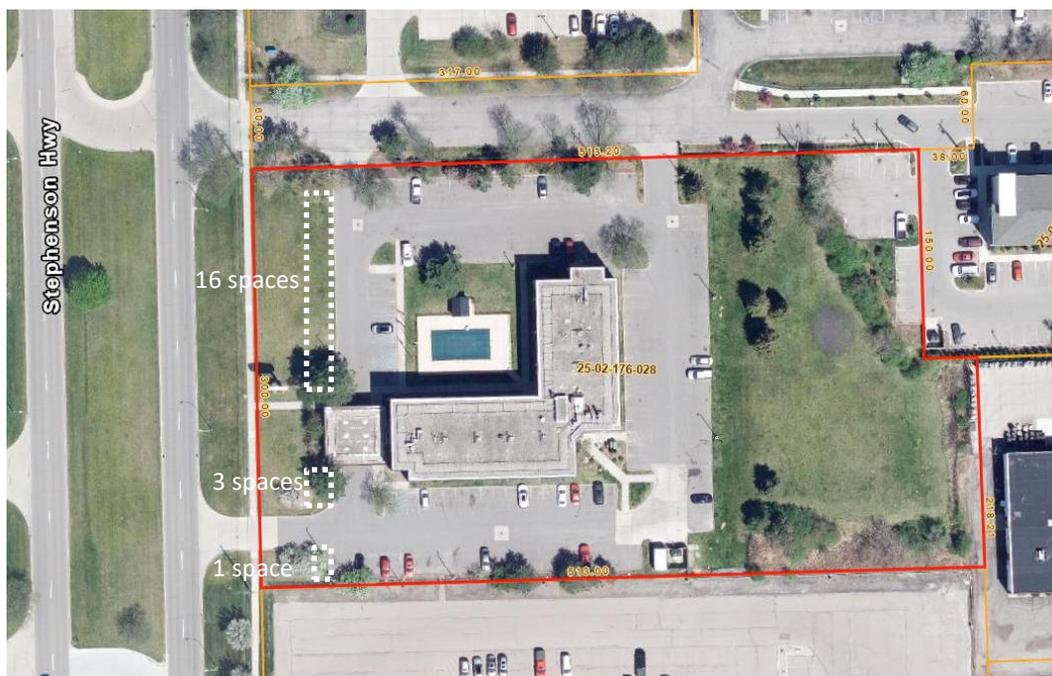
## REQUEST

The applicant, Troy Madison Extended Stay, requests a variance from the Madison Heights Zoning Ordinance pertaining to off-street parking location standards. The property is located at 32420 Stephenson Highway (tax parcel # 44-25-02-176-028) and is zoned MUI-2, Mixed-Use Innovation 2. The property is 3.44 acres in size and is located on the east side of Stephenson Highway south of 14 Mile Road. The site is currently improved with a 120-room hotel (Hampton Inn) but has a large grass lawn at the rear. The applicant intends to construct a new 82-room hotel at the rear of the site with shared parking between the two hotels.

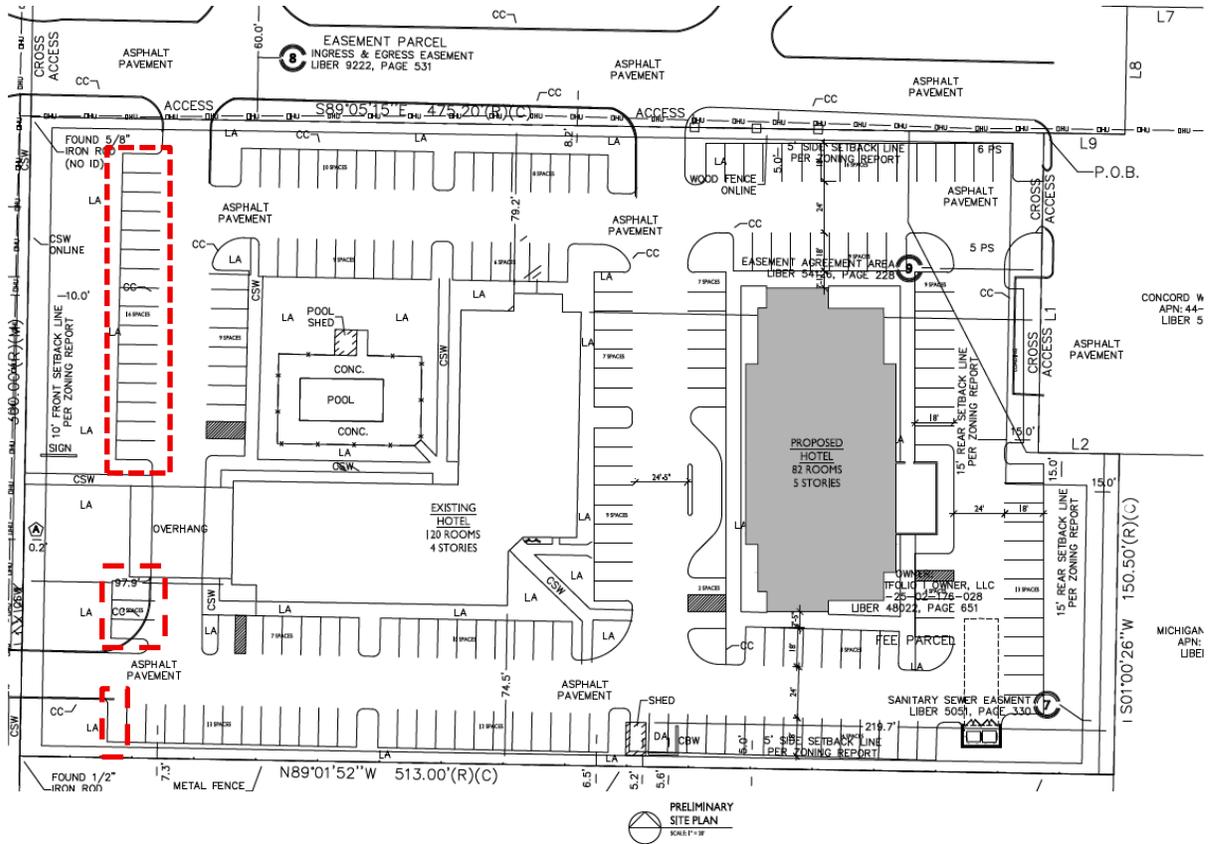
A variance is requested from Section 10.01.2.B.4 (Intent and General Parking Requirements – Location) which states:

***Mixed-Use Districts (CC and MUI):*** Off-street parking shall be located in the side or rear yard only, as further restricted in Article 6 (City Center), Section 3.20 (MUI-1), and Section 3.21 (MUI-2). [...].

Concurrent with the new hotel development, the applicant proposes to construct twenty (20) new parking spaces within the front yard area of the Hampton Inn between the building and the road right-of-way. The image below shows an existing aerial view of the property, with the new parking areas shown in the white boxes.



**Preliminary Site Plan [new front-yard parking denoted in red]**



**Current Streetview from Stephenson Hwy.**



## ZONING ORDINANCE STANDARDS

### Parking

The applicant is seeking relief from Section 10.01.2.B.4 of the Zoning Ordinance, reading in full as follows:

**(4) Mixed-Use Districts (CC and MUI):** *Off-street parking shall be located in the side or rear yard only, as further restricted in Article 6 (City Center), Section 3.20 (MUI-1), and Section 3.21 (MUI-2). Parking areas within a side yard shall be located behind the front setback line of the principal building but shall in no case be located less than five (5) feet from the front property line or street side property line. Off-street parking spaces shall further be sited in a manner that achieves Perimeter Landscaping requirements, Section 11.06, and Transitional Landscaping Requirements, Section 11.04.*

Within the MUI-2 district, front-yard parking is not permitted. The Zoning Ordinance defines a “front yard” as, “an open space extending the full width of the lot, the depth of which is the minimum horizontal distance between the front lot line or street and the nearest point of the closest structure. Where the lot does not abut a public or private street and is served by a private easement, the front lot line shall be the lot line abutting the easement.”

The proposed hotel necessitates additional parking on site to satisfy the minimum parking requirements of Section 10.03 of the Zoning Ordinance. Parking for hotels is required at a rate of one space per hotel room, broken down for the site as follows:

Hampton Inn (existing) = 120 Rooms = 120 Parking Spaces  
Proposed Hotel = 82 Rooms = 82 Parking Spaces  
**Total = 202 Parking Spaces**

The concept plan shows a total of 200 parking spaces (including the front yard parking) which is less than the minimum required. However, the applicant may seek a 20% administrative reduction in minimum parking spaces through the site plan process, which could reduce the total amount of parking spaces to 162. With 200 proposed spaces, the parking count is within the range permitted through the administrative reduction.

Twenty (20) new parking spaces are proposed within the required front yard area, including sixteen (16) spaces near the pool area, three (3) spaces to the southwest of the canopy, and one (1) additional space added to the southernmost row of parking. The variance request is limited to these spaces.

Staff notes that Section 11.06 states that no more than fifteen (15) parking spaces shall be provided in an uninterrupted row. Sixteen (16) new uninterrupted parking spaces are proposed in the front yard area near the pool; one (1) of these spaces will need to be removed

### Landscaping

Parking lot right-of-way screening is required between new parking areas and the right-of-way in accordance with Section 11.06. Screening can be provided in the form of a dense landscaping hedge, a row of shrubs, or an ornamental screen wall. A double-row of shrubs is shown in front of the 16-space and 3-space parking areas, but not in front of the new parking space in the southwest corner. Additional frontage landscaping in the form of linden trees and white fir trees are proposed within the front yard area.

## VARIANCE FINDINGS AND CRITERIA

Section 15.06.2 of the Zoning Ordinance grants the Zoning Board of Appeals the power to authorize dimensional variances from building setback requirements, provided that such variances will not be inconsistent with the purpose and intent of such requirements. In granting a variance, the Zoning Boards of Appeals shall make findings that the petitioner has adequately proven the existence of a “practical difficulty”, explicitly with regard to the following criteria:

- A. That strict compliance with area, setbacks, frontage, height, bulk, or density would unreasonably prevent the owner from using the property for a permitted purpose, and would thereby render the conformity unnecessarily burdensome for other than financial reasons; and
- B. That a variance will provide and preserve a substantial property right similar to that possessed by other properties within the same zoning district and in the neighboring area, provided that possible increased financial return shall not of itself be deemed sufficient to warrant a variance; and
- C. That the plight of the owner is due to unique circumstances of the property, such as the shape of the parcel, unique topographic or environmental conditions, or any other physical situation on the land, building or structure deemed by the Zoning Board of Appeals to be extraordinary; and
- D. That the requested variance is the minimum amount necessary to permit reasonable use of the land, building or structure; and
- E. That the authorization of such variance will not be of substantial detriment to adjacent properties and will not materially impair the intent and purpose of this Ordinance or the public health, safety, and general welfare of the community; and
- F. That the need for the requested variance is not the result of actions of the property owner or previous property owners (self-created).

In granting any variance, the ZBA may prescribe appropriate conditions and safeguards in conformity with the Ordinance, provided that said conditions are designed to protect natural resources, the health, safety, and welfare and social and economic well-being of the public. Such conditions shall be necessary to meet the intent and purpose of the Ordinance, be related to the standards established in the section for the land use or activity under consideration and be necessary to ensure compliance with those standards.

## STAFF ANALYSIS

The intent of the front-yard parking restriction is to ensure that the streetscape isn't dominated by the appearance of parked vehicles. This is especially true along Stephenson Highway which, for the most part, has been historically defined by industrial buildings and warehouses with deep front setbacks and large front yard areas. Over time, front yard parking areas have been established along Stephenson, particularly on properties associated with commercial and lodging uses. For example, the hotels and restaurants along Stephenson to the north of the subject property all feature front-yard parking areas.

While the extent of the proposed front yard parking is limited, efforts should be taken to ensure that proper landscape screening is planted to reduce the visual impact of parked vehicles. Right of way screening and frontage landscaping is proposed on the concept plan. Additional right of way screening will be required adjacent to the new parking space in the southwest corner of the site.

Staff is concerned about the proposed parking space located immediately to the southwest of the canopy. The visibility of a vehicle parked in this space could potentially be obstructed by the canopy column; this space should be removed.

One parking space will need to be removed from the row of sixteen (16) spaces to meet Zoning Ordinance standards.

Practical difficulties relating to a dimensional variance request should generally relate to unique physical constraints on the property, including but not limited to natural features (e.g. wetlands, topography, soil situations), existing structures, or extraordinary parcel shape. Where physical constraints severely limit the ability to operate a use on the property, variances may be warranted.

If a motion to approve the variance is presented, staff recommends several conditions of approval to further limit adverse visual impacts on adjacent properties and the streetscape and meet the spirit of the Zoning Ordinance

Suggested conditions:

1. The Major Site Plan, when submitted, shall be substantially consistent with the conceptual site plan provided within this variance application as it pertains to front yard parking, with the exception of the following required modifications:
  - (a) Right-of-way landscaping shall be provided in front of all new parking areas, including the new space in the southwest corner of the site, in accordance with Section 11.06.2.
  - (b) Frontage landscaping shall be provided in accordance with Section 11.05 for the entire site frontage along Stephenson Highway.
  - (c) No more than fifteen (15) parking spaces shall be provided in an uninterrupted row, in accordance with Section 11.06.1.A
  - (d) The proposed parking space immediately to the southwest of the canopy shall be removed for visibility and safety purposes.
2. Additional front yard parking above and beyond that approved by this variance shall require new application in front of the Zoning Board of Appeals.

**ZBA ACTION**

**Any ZBA motion, including approval and denial, shall include findings of fact relating to the variance criteria listed in Sections 15.06.2 of the Zoning Ordinance. Template approval and denial motions are provided below for the ZBA's consideration, which may be modified at the discretion of the board.**

Attachments

- Maps
- ZBA Application and Documents
- Section 10.01.2.B(4) – [Parking, Loading and Access Management] Parking Location Standards
- Section 15.06 – Variances and Appeals
- Public Hearing Notice

## TEMPLATE MOTIONS

### Variance– Residential Setback Requirement

#### APPROVAL:

Move that the Zoning Board of Appeals APPROVE a variance from Section 10.01.2.B(4) of the Zoning Ordinance to permit parking spaces within a required front yard at 32420 Stephenson Highway. This motion, being made after the required public hearing, is based upon the following findings:

- 1) Section 10.01.2.B(4) limits the placement of new parking spaces to required side and rear yards; and
- 2) Strict compliance with the parking location standards would unreasonably prevent the owner from providing the minimum amount of required parking on site for the proposed use; and
- 3) A variance will provide and preserve a substantial property right similar to that possessed by other properties within the same zoning district and in the neighboring area, provided that possible increased financial return shall not of itself be deemed sufficient to warrant a variance; and
- 4) The plight of the owner is due to unique circumstances of the property; and
- 5) The requested variance is the minimum amount necessary to permit reasonable development of the land, building or structure; and
- 6) With conditions, the authorization of such variance will not be of substantial detriment to adjacent properties and will not materially impair the intent and purpose of this Ordinance or the public health, safety, and general welfare of the community.

Approval is granted with the following **conditions** designed to ensure compliance with the intent and purpose of the use-specific regulations:

1. The Major Site Plan, when submitted, shall be substantially consistent with the conceptual site plan provided within this variance application as it pertains to front yard parking, with the exception of the following required modifications:
  - (a) Right-of-way landscaping shall be provided in front of all new parking areas, including the new space in the southwest corner of the site, in accordance with Section 11.06.2.
  - (b) Frontage landscaping shall be provided in accordance with Section 11.05 for the entire site frontage along Stephenson Highway.
  - (c) No more than fifteen (15) parking spaces shall be provided in an uninterrupted row, in accordance with Section 11.06.1.A
  - (d) The proposed parking space immediately to the southwest of the canopy shall be removed for visibility and safety purposes.
2. Additional front yard parking above and beyond that approved by this variance shall require new application in front of the Zoning Board of Appeals.

#### DENIAL (NOTE: ONLY ONE NON-COMPLIANT STANDARD NEEDS TO BE LISTED TO MOVE FOR DENIAL)

Move that the Zoning Board of Appeals DENY a variance from Section 10.01.2.B(4) of the Zoning Ordinance to permit parking spaces within a required front yard at 32420 Stephenson Highway. This motion, being made after the required public hearing, is based upon the following findings:

- 1) Section 10.01.2.B(4) limits the placement of new parking spaces to required side and rear yards; and
- 2) Strict compliance with the parking location standards would not unreasonably prevent the owner from continuing to utilize the existing site as a hotel use, or developing a new hotel at the rear of the property; and
- 3) The authorization of such variance will materially impair the intent and purpose of this Ordinance to prohibit front yard parking areas within the MUI-2 district; and
- 4) The plight of the owner is not due to unique or extraordinary physical or natural circumstances on the property; and
- 5) The need for the requested variance is a result of actions of the property owner to add a new hotel building to the rear of a site which already contains a hotel use.