WHITE LAKE TOWNSHIP

ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS APPLICATION

APPLICANT INFORMATION

NAME: Brandon (Audrey) Steele PHONE: 248-431-4080 (AS) 248-330-6348 (BS)

ADDRESS: 9430 Thornyside Street

EMAIL: [redacted]

INTEREST IN PROPERTY: ☒ PROPERTY OWNER ☐ BUILDER ☐ OTHER: _____

PROPERTY INFORMATION

ADDRESS: 9430 Thornyside St ZONING: R1-D

VALUE OF IMPROVEMENT: $ _____ SEV OF EXISTING STRUCTURE: $ _____

REASONS TO SUPPORT REQUEST (ADDITIONAL SHEETS MAY BE ATTACHED):

See attached Sheet

APPLICATION FEE: ☒ $440 ☐ $550

APPLICANT'S SIGNATURE: Brandon Steele Audrey Steele DATE: 10.8.2026

REVISED 5/2025

WHITE LAKE TOWNSHIP COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
248-698-3330 X 5

Rik Kowall, Supervisor
Anthony L. Noble, Clerk
Mike Roman, Treasurer

Trustees
Scott Ruggles
Steve Anderson
Andrea C. Voorheis
Liz Fessler Smith

WHITE LAKE TOWNSHIP
7525 Highland Road • White Lake, Michigan 48383-2900 • (248) 698-3300 • www.whitelaketwp.com

September 29, 2026

Brandon Steele
9430 Thornyside St
White Lake, MI 48386

Re: Proposed 2nd Story Addition

Based on the submitted plans, the proposed 2nd story does not satisfy the White Lake Township Clear Zoning Ordinance for R1-D zoning district.

Article 3.1.6 of the White Lake Township Clear Zoning Ordinance: Requires a minimum front yard setback of 30 ft
Article 7.23(A) of the White Lake Township Clear Zoning Ordinance: No such nonconforming structure may be enlarged or altered in a way which increases its nonconformity.

The existing structure is legal non-conforming. The residential structure does not meet the required front yard setback requirements. The proposed 2nd story addition increases the cubic content of the non-conforming structure over the existing garage which has an approximate 16 ft front yard setback measured from the road right of way

Approval of the building plans is subject to a variance to the schedule of regulations, Article 7 of the White Lake Township Clear Zoning Ordinance. To be eligible for the November 12th Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) meeting, complete application must be submitted to the White Lake Township Planning Department no later than October 15th at 4:30 PM. ***Be advised, a certified boundary and location survey showing existing structures, proposed structures, and setbacks will be required by the ZBA.*** The Planning Department can be reached at (248)698-3300, ext. 5

Sincerely,

Nick Spencer, Building Official
White Lake Township

WHITE LAKE TOWNSHIP

ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS - APPLICATION ATTACHMENT

REASONS TO SUPPORT REQUEST FOR VARIANCE
Proposed Second-Story Residential Addition
Parcel No. 12-26-411-029

We respectfully request approval of the necessary zoning variance to construct a second-story addition above the existing garage-side portion of our single-family residence.

Our home dates to approximately 1970 and occupies an established, nonconforming location relative to current setback requirements. The dimensions and configuration of the lot, the existing building placement, and the physical conditions of the site create practical difficulties in expanding the residence outward.

To the right of the garage, ground-level expansion is constrained by the applicable side-yard setback and an existing septic disposal field. On the opposite side of the home, the land slopes substantially downward toward the driveway, where a retaining wall measures approximately 6 to 6 1/2 feet in height. Expansion in that direction would require addressing significant grade differences and existing driveway access.

Expansion behind the residence would occupy additional usable yard area near our private well, which is approximately 18 feet from the rear of the house, and would require further site and utility considerations. The centrally located fireplace and existing interior configuration also complicate alternative locations for a second-story addition.

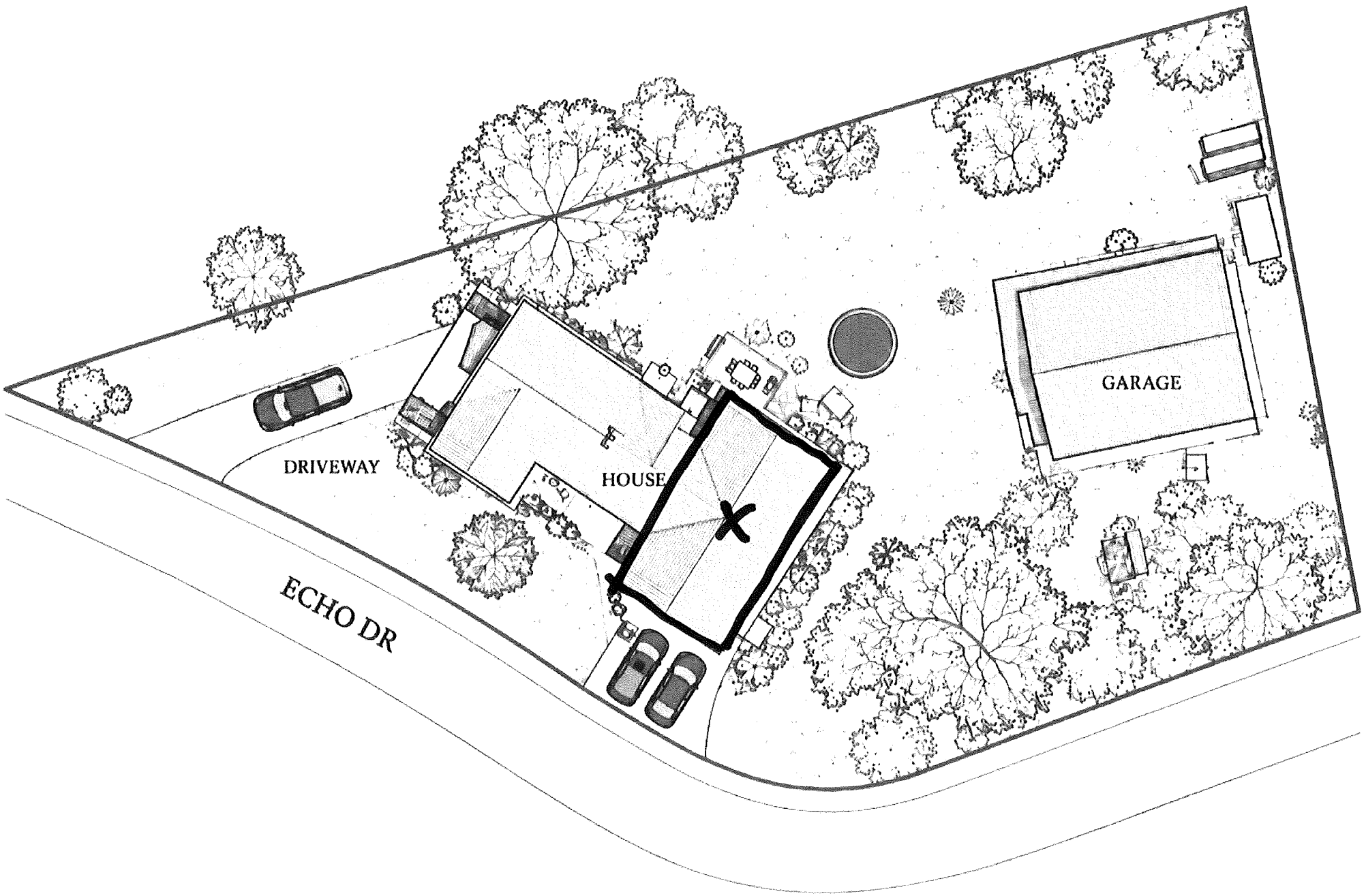
The proposed second-story addition would remain entirely over the existing ground-level building footprint, without extending the exterior walls horizontally toward the road or adjacent property lines. By building upward in this location, we can avoid additional ground-level setback encroachments, minimize disturbance to established utilities and drainage, and preserve existing yard and access areas.

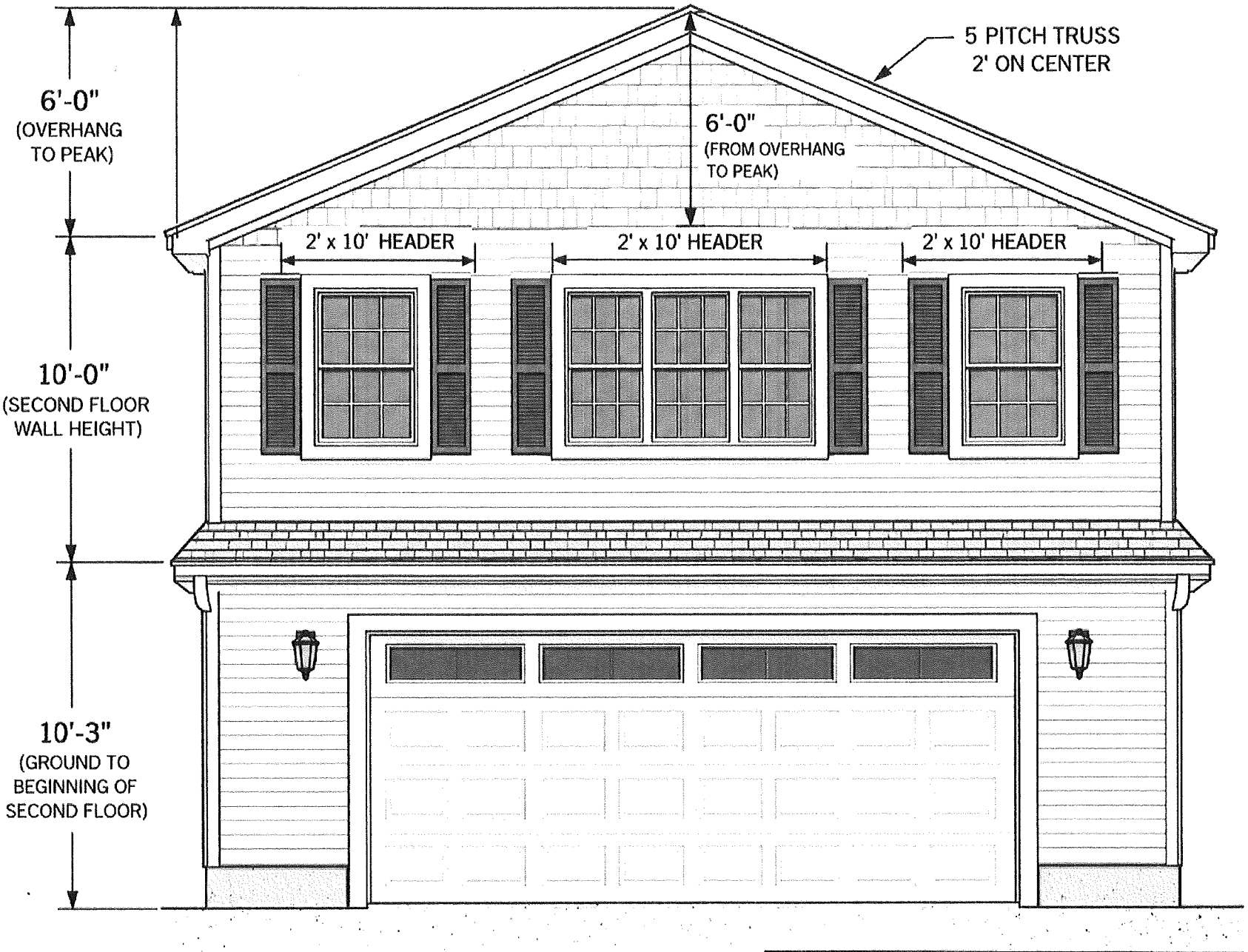
These practical difficulties arise from the lot's physical characteristics and the established location of the home, rather than conditions created by the proposed addition. We believe the requested relief is a reasonable, limited approach to improving the functionality of our existing residence while remaining consistent with the residential character of the neighborhood and minimizing effects on neighboring properties.

We respectfully ask the Board to consider these site-specific circumstances and approve the variance necessary for the proposed second-story addition.

Submitted as an attachment to the Zoning Board of Appeals application.

SITE LAYOUT



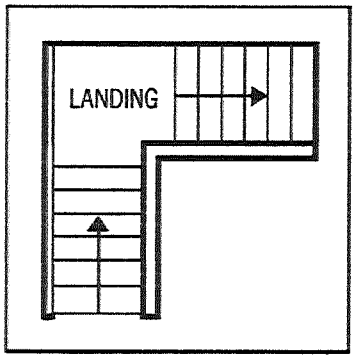


FRONT ELEVATION

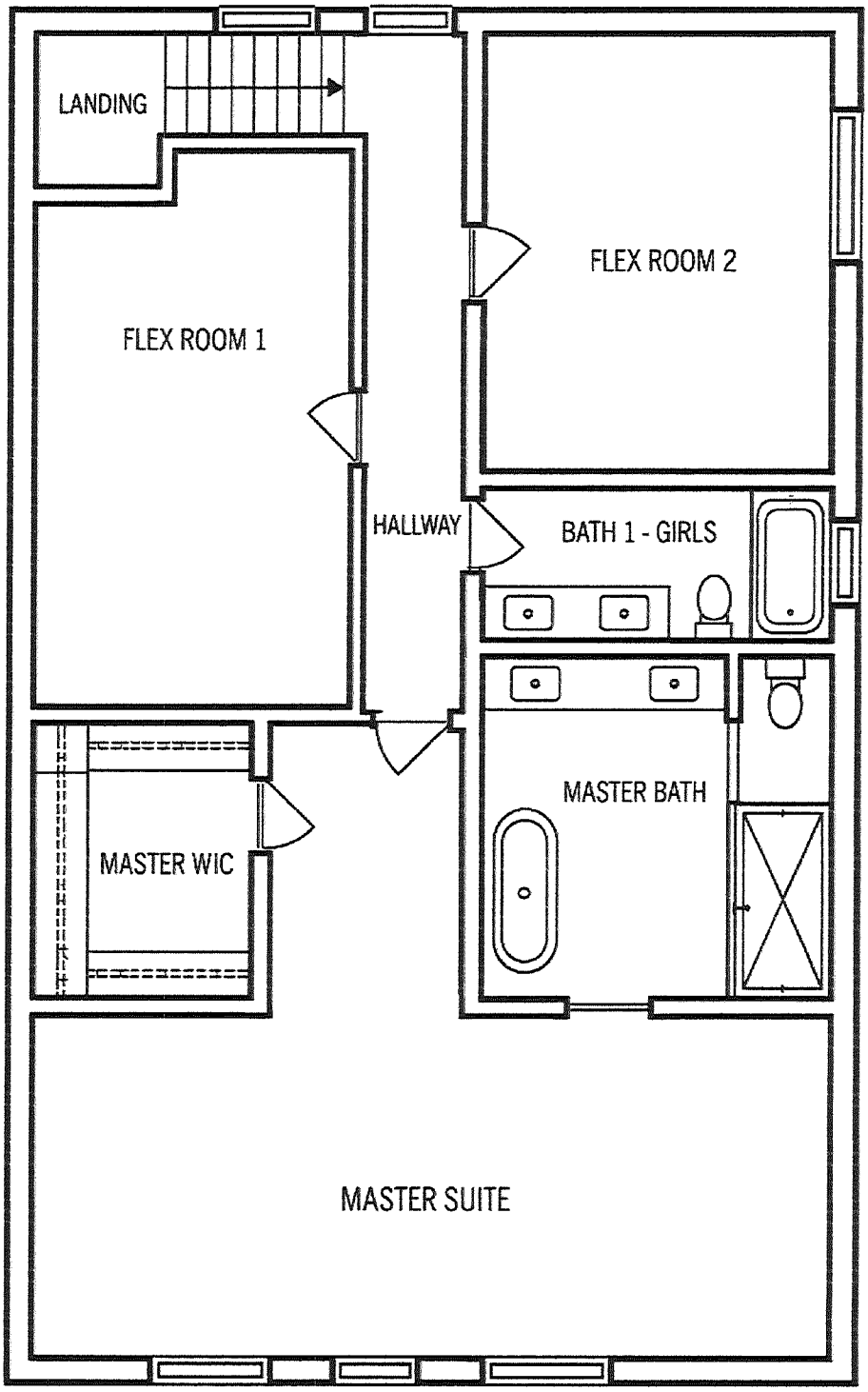
SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0"

NOTES:

1. GROUND TO BEGINNING OF SECOND FLOOR: 10'-3"
2. SECOND FLOOR WALL HEIGHT: 10'-0"
3. ROOF (OVERHANG TO PEAK): 6'-0"
4. ROOF: 5 PITCH TRUSS @ 2'-0" ON CENTER
5. HEADERS ABOVE WINDOWS: (3) 2' x 10'



STAIR CONFIGURATION



SECOND FLOOR LAYOUT

12-26-11-029

WHITE LAKE TOWNSHIP

ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

Applicant: Brandon Steele

Owners: Brandon and Audrey Steele

Address: 9430 Thornyside Road, White Lake, Michigan 48386

Parcel Number: 12-26-411-029

Zoning: R1-D, Single Family Residential

Request Summary: Front Yard Setback and Nonconforming Structure Variances

Meeting Date: November 12, 2026

Attachments: Application, Applicant's Written Justification, Proposed Building Plans, Site Plans, Survey (if submitted), and Building Division Denial Letter

Project Description

The subject property is located at 9430 Thornyside Road and is legally described as Lot 274 of the Cedar Crest Subdivision No. 4. The approximately 0.664-acre property is irregularly shaped, with frontage along Echo Drive and Thornyside Road, and is improved with an existing single-family residence and detached garage.

The applicant proposes a second-story addition above the existing garage-side portion of the residence. The approximately 1,269-square-foot addition would include a primary bedroom suite, two bathrooms, and two flex rooms.

Although the existing residence is utilized as a three-bedroom home, the applicant has indicated that the Oakland County Sanitarian does not consider the existing primary bedroom a bedroom because it contains a water heater, nor the proposed flex rooms because they lack closets. Township staff has requested confirmation from the County but has not received a response. Bedroom classification and septic capacity remain subject to County review and are separate from the variance request.

Section 3.1.6 of the White Lake Township Zoning Ordinance requires a minimum front yard setback of 30 feet in the R1-D District. According to the Building Division's denial letter, the existing garage-side portion of the residence is located approximately 16 feet from the road right-of-way.

Although the proposed addition would maintain the existing ground-level footprint, it would increase building volume within the required setback. Accordingly, the applicant requests a dimensional variance to permit the second-story addition approximately 16 feet from the road right-of-way, representing a 14-foot reduction from the required front yard setback.

Interpretation of Variance vs. Substandard Lot Review

The existing residence is considered legally nonconforming because a portion of the structure does not satisfy the current front yard setback requirements of the R1-D Residential District.

Section 7.23(A), as amended by Ordinance Amendment 26-001, allows the Zoning Board of Appeals to authorize enlargement or alteration of lawful nonconforming structures pursuant to Section 7.36(B)(vi), subject to the variance standards established under Section 7.37.

Although the proposed second-story addition would not extend the existing building footprint or further reduce the front yard setback, it would increase the building volume within the required setback. Accordingly, the request is appropriately considered a dimensional variance from the 30-foot front yard setback requirement established under Section 3.1.6.

The Zoning Board of Appeals must determine whether the property's physical characteristics and existing development conditions establish a practical difficulty sufficient to justify the requested variance under Section 7.37.

Site History

The subject property consists of Lot 274 of the Cedar Crest Subdivision No. 4, containing approximately 0.664 acres with frontage along Echo Drive and Thornyside Road. The parcel is irregularly shaped and is situated near the intersection of the two roads.

Township assessing records identify the existing single-family residence as having been constructed in 1970, containing approximately 1,903 square feet of living area. A 575-square-foot attached garage was added in 1988, followed by a separate 1,280-square-foot detached garage in 2020.

The residence is situated within the required front yard setback and is considered legally nonconforming. The property is served by a private well and septic system and exhibits significant changes in topography along one side of the residence.

The property has remained in single-family residential use and is currently developed with the residence, attached and detached garages, driveway, and associated residential improvements.

Zoning Analysis – Variance Review

The applicant proposes constructing a second-story addition above an existing portion of the residence located approximately 16 feet from the road right-of-way, where a 30-foot front yard setback is required. Although the addition would not extend the existing building footprint or further reduce the horizontal setback, it would increase building volume within the required front yard.

The property has an irregular configuration and significant changes in topography along one side of the residence. The applicant has also identified the existing septic field, private well, driveway, and interior building configuration as limitations on alternative expansion locations. These conditions are relevant when evaluating the practical difficulty associated with constructing a conforming addition.

The approximately 0.664-acre property also contains substantial open space behind the residence, including relatively level areas that may accommodate a ground-level addition. The applicant identifies the private well, located approximately 18 feet behind the home, as a constraint, along with the existing fireplace and interior layout. The extent to which these conditions limit reasonable alternatives has not been fully established.

Constructing the addition vertically would preserve the existing building footprint, avoid additional impervious surface coverage, and minimize disturbance to established site improvements. Conversely, the proposed construction would introduce additional building mass within the required front yard setback, which is intended to maintain separation between structures and the roadway.

The Zoning Board of Appeals should consider these circumstances collectively in determining whether the property's physical characteristics establish a practical difficulty under Section 7.37 and whether the requested variance represents the minimum relief necessary.

Conclusion

The proposed second-story addition would provide additional living space while maintaining the existing building footprint and avoiding an increase in impervious surface coverage. Although the addition would increase building volume within the required front yard setback, it would not extend the residence closer to the roadway.

The property's irregular configuration, changes in topography, existing building layout, and private utility infrastructure are relevant considerations in evaluating the request. However,

the presence of relatively level open space behind the residence also raises questions regarding the availability of alternative expansion locations.

The Zoning Board of Appeals should determine whether these circumstances establish a practical difficulty under Section 7.37 and whether the requested 14-foot setback reduction represents the minimum relief necessary, considering both the physical limitations of the property and the potential for conforming alternatives.

Motion of Approval

I move to approve the requested front yard setback variance for the property located at 9430 Thornyside Road, Parcel 12-26-411-029, pursuant to Sections 7.36(B)(vi) and 7.37 of the White Lake Township Zoning Ordinance, to permit construction of a second-story residential addition above the existing garage-side portion of the residence, with a front yard setback of approximately 16 feet where 30 feet is required under Section 3.1.6, representing a variance of approximately 14 feet, having found that the applicant satisfies the applicable criteria for granting a dimensional variance.

Approval is granted subject to the following conditions:

1. The proposed second-story addition shall be constructed substantially in accordance with the plans submitted with the variance application.
2. The approval shall be limited to the proposed second-story addition and shall not authorize any additional expansion or encroachment into the required front yard setback beyond the approved plans.
3. Any future proposal to increase the approved building footprint, height, or encroachment into the required front yard setback shall require Township review and may require additional Zoning Board of Appeals approval. Modifications that reduce the approved footprint, height, or setback encroachment may be approved administratively by Township staff, provided all other applicable ordinance requirements are met.
4. The proposed second-story addition above the existing garage shall not be converted to or utilized as an accessory dwelling unit (ADU) unless a Special Land Use permit has first been approved by the Planning Commission in accordance with the applicable provisions of the Zoning Ordinance. This variance approval shall not constitute authorization for an accessory dwelling unit.

Motion of Denial

I move to deny the requested front yard setback variance for the property located at 9430 Thornyside Road, Parcel 12-26-411-029, pursuant to Sections 7.36(B)(vi) and 7.37 of the

White Lake Township Zoning Ordinance, to permit a second-story residential addition with a front yard setback of approximately 16 feet where 30 feet is required under Section 3.1.6, having found that the request does not satisfy one or more of the applicable variance standards.

Denial is based upon the following findings:

[Identify the applicable standard(s) under Section 3190 and state the Board's findings on the record¡]

The Board may find that the applicant has not sufficiently demonstrated a practical difficulty requiring the requested variance or that the proposed setback reduction represents the minimum relief necessary, particularly given the potential for conforming expansion elsewhere on the property.

The Board finds that these deficiencies are sufficient to deny the variance as submitted.