

Lorraine Cochran-Johnson

DeKalb County Zoning Board of Appeals

Department of Planning & Sustainability 178 Sams Street, Decatur, GA 30030

Wednesday July 9, 2025

Planning Department Staff Analysis



Cedric Hudson

Interim Director

Chief Executive Officer

N4. Case No: A-25-1247538

Parcel ID(s): 18 086 02 007

Commission District 02 Super District 06

Applicant:	Scott Young 1156 Springdale Road NE Atlanta, GA 30306
Owner:	Scott Young 1156 Springdale Road NE Atlanta, GA 30306
Project Name:	1156 Springdale – Retaining wall height
Location:	1156 Springdale Road NE, Atlanta, GA 30306

Requests: Application by Scott Young to request variance from Section 27-5.4.7 of the DeKalb County Zoning Ordinance to increase retaining wall height from four (4) to eight (8) feet in the R-75 (Residential Medium Lot-75) zoning district.

Staff Recommendation: Approval with conditions

Conditions:

1. The following information about this variance shall be noted on any site plan prepared for the subject property: case number, approval date, type of variance and condition(s) of approval.

2. Safety fencing or railings shall be installed on top of any retaining wall exceeding 4 feet in height to ensure compliance with applicable safety codes and to protect residents and visitors.

STAFF FINDINGS:

The applicant requests a variance from Section 27-5.4.7 of the DeKalb County Zoning Ordinance to increase the maximum allowable retaining wall height from 4 feet to 8 feet on a residential parcel located at 1156 Springdale Road NE within the R-75 zoning district. The property is a narrow, deep lot with significant grade changes and is developed with a historic home built in 1910.

The variance request seeks to construct a system of perimeter retaining walls and terraces in the rear yard to address the property's steep slope, which rises over 35 feet from the rear door of the home to the back of the property. The proposal would allow the owners to safely and reasonably utilize the rear yard, which is currently inaccessible due to the severe topography.

1. There is an extraordinary or exceptional physical condition(s) pertaining to the particular piece of property (such as, but not limited to, lot size, lot shape, specimen tree(s), steep slope(s), or preservation of historic characteristics of the property), which was not created by the current owner, previous owner, or applicant; by reason of a clearly demonstrable condition(s), the strict application of the requirements of this chapter would deprive the property owner of rights and privileges enjoyed by other property owners in the same zoning district, as distinguished from a special privilege or convenience sought by the property owner.

The subject property exhibits exceptional topographical conditions, dropping over 50 feet across its 450-foot depth. This slope, combined with the narrow configuration of the lot and the presence of historic structures that limit grading options, significantly constrains the usable outdoor space for the homeowners. The grade changes are natural and were not created by the applicant or prior owners.

Given these conditions, the construction of taller retaining walls is necessary to create functional, terraced outdoor areas that can be safely accessed and maintained. Without these modifications, the property's rear yard remains unusable, placing the owners at a disadvantage compared to other property owners in the district who can use their outdoor spaces.

2. The requested variance does not go beyond the minimum necessary to afford relief, and does not constitute a grant of special privilege inconsistent with the limitations upon other properties in the zoning district in which the subject property is located:

The applicant's request is limited to the height necessary to address the property's slope while ensuring safe, usable terraces. The proposed walls will appear as minimal height extensions above existing grades from neighboring viewpoints, maintaining privacy and minimizing visual impacts on adjacent properties.

The proposal has been reviewed and approved by the Historic Preservation Commission, confirming that the design is appropriate within the context of the historic property. The applicant has demonstrated that the requested increase in wall height is the minimum necessary to achieve functional use of the property without unnecessary intrusion or overbuilding.

3. The grant of the variance will not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the property or improvements in the zoning district in which the subject property is located:

The proposed retaining walls will not result in any material detriment to the public welfare or adjacent properties. The walls will facilitate the creation of safe, landscaped terraces, enhancing the usability and value of the property while preserving the site's aesthetic and privacy.

The applicant plans to install evergreen plantings along the exterior of the walls to provide additional screening, ensuring that the improvements are compatible with the neighborhood's character. No noise, traffic, or drainage concerns are anticipated as a result of the project, and the work will improve the property's stability and usability.

4. The literal interpretation and strict application of the applicable provisions or requirements of this chapter would cause undue and unnecessary hardship:

Strict application of the ordinance would limit the retaining wall height to 4 feet, rendering the proposed terraced system infeasible.

The hardship is directly tied to the property's steep grade and narrow layout, conditions that are not self-imposed. The requested variance is necessary to allow for reasonable use of the property consistent with its residential zoning.

5. The requested variance would be consistent with the spirit and purpose of this Chapter and the DeKalb County Comprehensive Plan Text:

The requested variance aligns with the Suburban Character Area goals of the DeKalb County Comprehensive Plan by supporting traditional land use patterns while improving accessibility and connectivity within residential properties. The project maintains the character of the historic site while enabling functional improvements that enhance property usability.

Approval of the variance will allow the homeowners to enjoy their property in a manner consistent with neighborhood standards while ensuring that improvements are safe, visually appropriate, and environmentally responsible.

FINAL STAFF ANALYSIS:

Staff recommends approval with conditions of the variance request, subject to conditions ensuring safety and compliance with zoning and building standards.

Staff Recommendation: Approval with conditions

Conditions:

- 1. The following information about this variance shall be noted on any site plan prepared for the subject property: case number, approval date, type of variance, and condition(s) of approval.
- 2. Safety fencing or railings shall be installed on top of any retaining wall exceeding 4 feet in height to ensure compliance with applicable safety codes and to protect residents and visitors.



Michael Thurmond

Development Services Center 178 Sams Street Decatur, GA 30030 www.dekalbcountyga.gov/planning 404-371-2155 (o); 404-371-4556 (f)

Chief Executive Officer DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & SUSTAINABILITY Interim Director

Cedric Hudson

ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS APPLICATION FOR PUBLIC HEARING (VARIANCES, SPECIAL EXCEPTIONS, APPEALS OF ADMINISTRATIVE DECISIONS)

Applicant and/or Authorized Representative: Scott Young
Mailing Address: 1493 SANDEN FERRY DRIVE
City/State/Zip Code: DECATUR GEORGIA 30033
Email: <u>Scottyoung 365@ gmail. Con</u>
Telephone Home: (678) 822-3115 Business: (678) 822-3115
OWNER OF RECORD OF SUBJECT PROPERTY
Owner: IVAN RIDISO & GRETCHEN COLON
Address (Mailing): 1156 SPRINGDALE ROAD ATUNN GA. 30306
Email: gretchenacolor egma: 1. Com Telephone Home: (678) 907-3310 Business: (678) 907-3310
ADDRESS/ ACATION OF OUR FOT PROPERTY
ADDRESS/LOCATION OF SUBJECT PROPERTY
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Address: <u>1156 SPRINGDALE ROAD</u> City: <u>ATUANTA</u> State: <u>GA</u> Zip: <u>30306</u> District(s): <u>18th</u> Land Lot(s): <u>2</u> Block: <u>11</u> Parcel:
Address: 1156 SPRINGDALE ROAD City: ATUANTA State: GA Zip: 30306
Address: 1156 Spring Dale Repo City: ATMANTA State: Ga Zip: 30306 District(s): 18th Land Lot(s): 2 Block: 11 Parcel:
Address: 1156 SPRINGDALE Read City: ATMANTA State: Ga Zip: 30306 District(s): 18th Land Lot(s): 2 Block: 11 Parcel:
Address: 1156 Spring Date Read City: AT MARKA State: Ga Zip: 30306 District(s): 18th Land Lot(s): 2 Block: 11 Parcel:
Address: 1156 SPRING DALE Read City: ATUANTA State: Ga Zip: 30306 District(s): 18th Land Lot(s): 2 Block: 11 Parcel:

PLEASE REVIEW THE FILING GUIDELINES ON PAGE 4. FAILURE TO FOLLOW GUIDELINES MAY RESULT IN SCHEDULING DELAYS.

Email plansustain@dekalbcountyga.gov with any questions.



DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & SUSTAINABILITY

ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS APPLICATION

AUTHORIZATION OF THE PROPERTY OWNER

I hereby authorize the staff and members of the Zoning Board of Appeals to inspect the premises of the Subject Property.

I hereby certify that the information provided in the application is true and correct.

I hereby certify that I am the owner of the property subject to the application.

21/25 DATE

Applicant Signature:

IMN Ridgo

DATE:

Applicant _ Signature:



Jean 7. Sherwood



DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & SUSTAINABILITY

ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS APPLICATION

AUTHORIZATION TO REPRESENT THE PROPERTY OWNER

I hereby authorize the staff and members of the Zoning Board of Appeals to inspect the premises of the

I hereby certify that the information provided in the application is true and correct.

I hereby certify that I am the owner of the property and that I authorize the applicant/agent to apply for a hearing to the ZoningBoard of Appeals for the requests as shown in this application.

DATE:

Applicant/Agent Signature:

Riobo

VAN

TVAN Klobo

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

(I)/ (WE): (Name of Owners)

being (owner/owners) of the property described below or attached hereby delegate authority to the above signed agent/applicant.

7. Sperwood

Notary Public

Owner Signature

Notary Public

Owner Signature

Notary Public

Owner Signature



Letter of Intent

Dear members of the Zoning Board of Appeals,

My name is Scott Young, and I am writing formally request a variance from section 27-2.2.1 of the DeKalb County Zoning Ordinance. My request pertains to the increase in retaining wall heights from 4' up to 8'. This will allow the owners to utilize the rear yard, which is now steep and climbs 35'-6" from the rear door of the home to the rear of the property at its highest point.

The plan utilizes a perimeter retaining wall that maintains existing grades as the property climbs to the rear of the site. The area inside the walls will be a system of three terraces to allow the owners to safely use the space for their rear yard in a way they can not do at this time.

1. Physical conditions of the site:

The unique conditions of this property constitute a special case necessitating this variance. The property is narrow and deep (with steep grade changes) which require the need for the taller walls to get more utilization of the property.

2.<u>Mimnimum Variance Necessary:</u> Variance request for Retaining wall increase from 4' to 8'-Section 27-2.2.1

I assure you that my request is solely for the minimum variance necessary to render the property usable. The walls from neighboring views will be seen as a 6-9" height above the existing grades. The area between the walls will be terraced and not viewable from either neighbor. This will not impact the neighboring properties and keep the privacy of neighbors and the owners safe. The plan has been reviewed and approved by the Historical Preservation Board as well.

3. Public Welfare:

The proposed addition these walls will allow, bring the value and accessibility of the property to the owners in a way that they were not able to do at this time. The neighbors will not see any drastic changes or noisy conditions as a result of these request. The exterior of the property will also be planted with evergreen plantings to maximize privacy for the owners and the neighbors.

4. Ordinace Hardship:

A strict interpretation of the zoning laws, in this case, would cause undue hardship for the owners. The addition of additional walls to limit the height of the proposed walls to 4' would limit the usable space in the rear yard and add additional impervious materials and create the need for additional steps as well. The variance is, therefore, essential to prevent unnecessary hardship and allow for a reasonable use of their property.

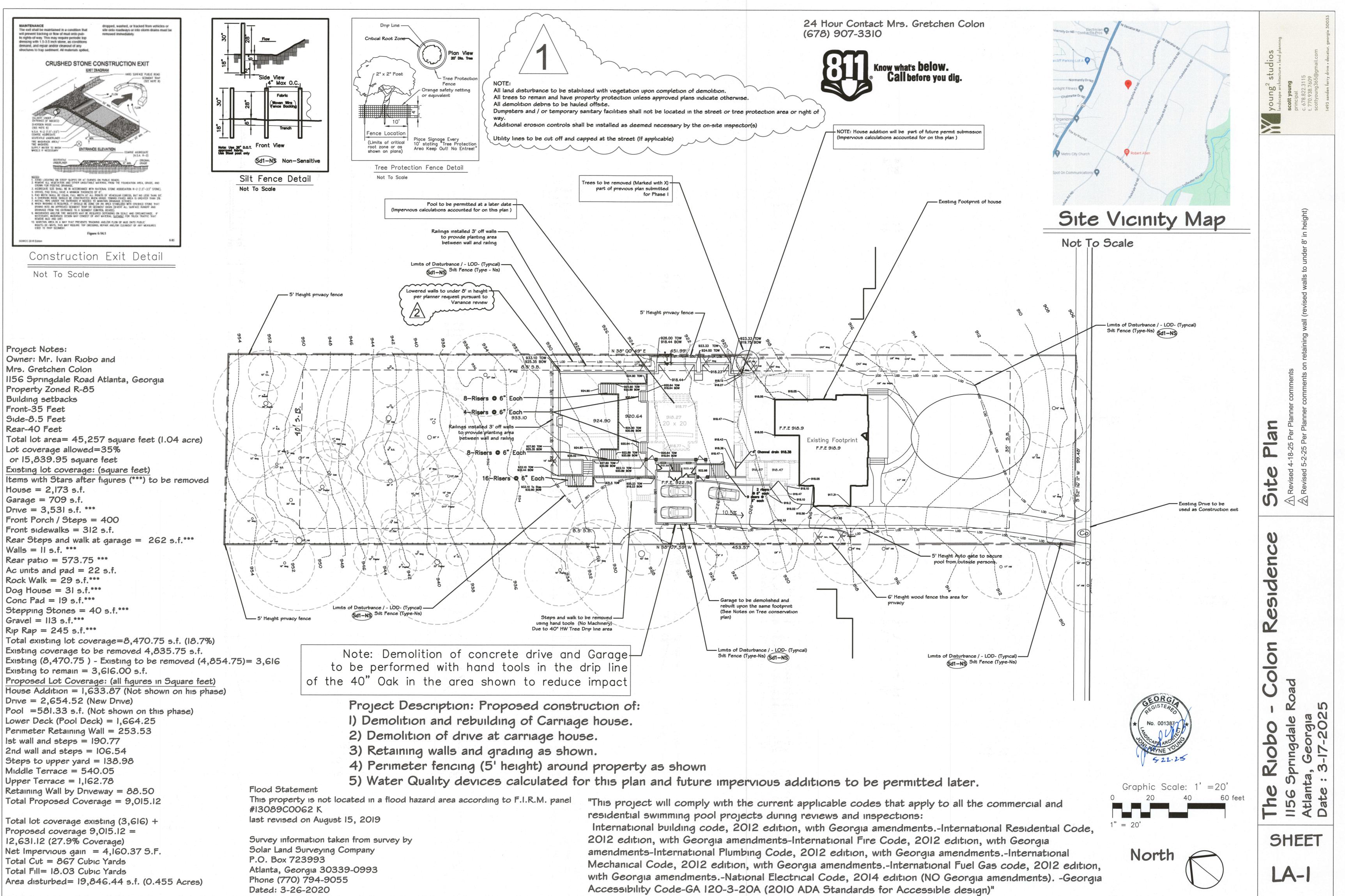
5. Alignmment with the spirit of the law:

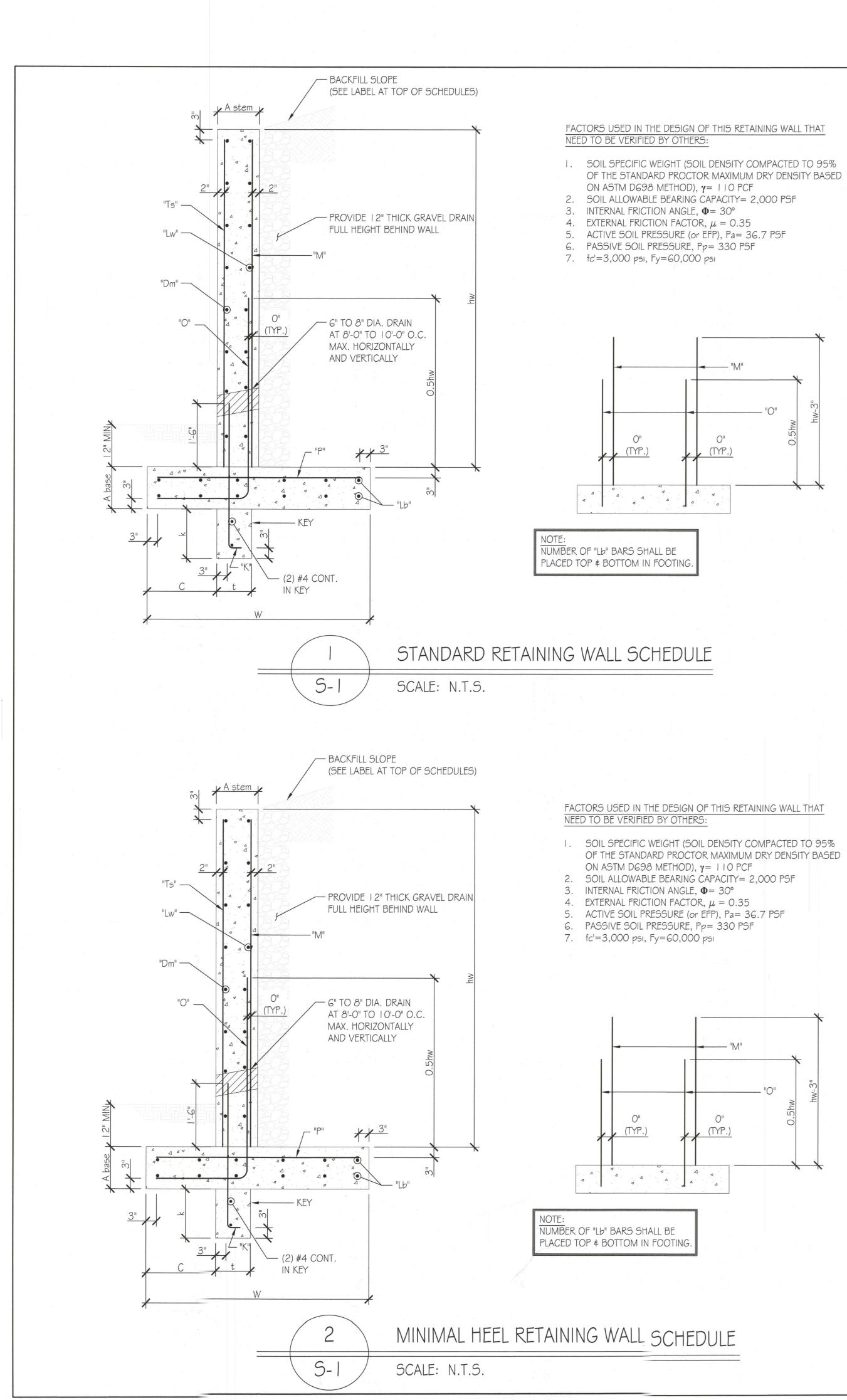
I firmly believe the variance request aligns with the intent of the Suburban Character area, as outlined in the DeKalb County Comprehensive Plan. The proposed construction of these walls and terraces is in line with the Goals of recognizing traditional suburban land use patterns while encouraging increased connectivity and accessibility. The request aims to help the owners better utilize the property, while preserving the character of the site.

In conclusion, I appreciate your time and consideration of my variance request. I am committed to working collaboratively to ensure that the proposed changes align with the broader goals and policies of DeKalb County. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Scott Hanne





LEVEL BACKFILL

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CONCRETE DIMENSIONS (1)						REIN			
Height Above Base (hw)	Stem Thickness (A stem)	Toe Dim.	Width of Base (W)	Base Depth (A base)	Key (t x k)	"O" Bars (2) (5)	"M" Bars (5)	"Dm" Bars	"l B
ft	in	ft-ın	ft-ın	IN	ın x ın	Size@in	Size@in	Sıze@ın	Size
4	8	0-6	2-6	10	N/A	#4@18	#4@18	N/A	#4(
6	8	0-9	3-0	12	N/A	#4@18	#4@18	N/A	#4(
8	8	1-0	5-0	12	N/A	#4@10	#4@18	N/A	#4(
10	10	1-6	7-3	12	N/A	#5@10	#4@18	N/A	#4(
12	12	2-6	8-0	14	6x12	#5@8	#4@18	#4@16	#4(
14	14	3-0	9-0	15	10 x 18	#6@10	#4@18	#4@14	#4(
16	16	4-0	10-9	16	12 x 24	#7@8	#4@18	#4@12	#4(
18	18	5-0	12-0	18	16 x 30	#7@8	#4@18	#5@16	#5(

(1) PROVIDE CONTRACTION JOINTS AT 25'-0" O.C. MAX. AND EXPANSION

- JOINTS @ 200'-O" MAX. ALONG CONTINUOUS WALL SECTION. (2) ALL "O" BARS TO HAVE A 90° HOOK INTO TOE OF FOOTING.
- (3) "K" BARS SHALL HAVE 90° HOOK IN BOTTOM OF KEY. KEY TO HAVE (2) #4 CONT. BARS PLACED LONGITUDINALLY. "K" BARS SHALL EXTEND 1'-6" INTO STEM ABOVE.
- (4) NUMBER OF "Lb" BARS SHALL BE PLACED TOP & BOTTOM IN FOOTING.
- (5) IF "O" BARS ARE FULL WALL HEIGHT, "M" BARS MAY BE OMITTED. (6) IF RETAINING WALL IS SURCHARGED BY A DRIVEWAY, CONSTRUCT THE
- WALL USING SPECIFICATIONS FROM THE SCHEDULE FOR A WALL 2'-0" GREATER IN HEIGHT.
- (7) THIS DESIGN IS NOT APPLICABLE WITH ANY SURCHARGE.

LEVEL	BACKFILL

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					"MINIMAL H	EEL" CANTILEVERE	ED RETAINING W	ALL SCHEDULE	(6) (7)
CONCRETE DIMENSIONS (1)									REINFO
Height Above Base (hw)	Stem Thickness (A stem)	Toe Dim.	Width of Base (W)	Base Depth (A base)	Key (t x k)	"O" Bars (2) (5)	"M" Bars (5)	"Dm" Bars	"Lw" Bars
ft	in	ft-ın	ft-ın	in	ın x ın	Size@in	Size@in	Sıze@ın	Size@
4	8	1-10	2-6	10	N/A	#4@18	#4@18	N/A	#4@1
6	8	2-10	3-6	12	6×6	#4@18	#4@18	N/A	#4@1
8	8	4-4	5-0	12	6 x 12	#4@10	#4@18	N/A	#4@1
10	10	5-4	6-2	14	12 x 18 (8)	#5@10	#4@18	N/A	#4@
12	12	7-3	8-3	16	12 x 24	#5@8	#4@18	#4@16	#4@1
14	4	12-4	13-6	24	18 x 36 (8)	#6@10	#4@18	#4@ 4	#4@1
16	14	12-10	14-0	24	18 x 36 (8)	#7@9	#4@18	#4@ 4	#4@1

(1) PROVIDE CONTRACTION JOINTS AT 25'-O" O.C. MAX. AND EXPANSION

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- (2) ALL "O" BARS TO HAVE A 90° HOOK INTO TOE OF FOOTING. (3) "K" BARS SHALL HAVE 90° HOOK IN BOTTOM OF KEY. KEY TO HAVE (2) #4 CONT. BARS PLACED LONGITUDINALLY. "K" BARS SHALL EXTEND 1'-6"
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- (6) IF RETAINING WALL IS SURCHARGED BY A DRIVEWAY, CONSTRUCT THE WALL USING SPECIFICATIONS FROM THE SCHEDULE FOR A WALL 2'-O" GREATER IN HEIGHT.
- (7) THIS DESIGN IS APPLICABLE WITH BUILDING SURCHARGE.
- a) 18'-0" TRIBUTARY WIDTH OF ROOF, CEILING \$ 2ND FLOOR OF SURCHARGE WAS CONSIDERED FOR DESIGN. SURCHARGE TO BE APPLIED ON THE TOE SIDE, CONTACT EOR IF SURCHARGE NEED BE APPLIED ON HEEL SIDE.
- (8) SINCE KEY IS WIDER THAN STEM, ALIGN REAR EDGE OF KEY WITH REAR EDGE OF FOOTING. BEND "K" BARS SO THEY ARE EMBEDDED IN STEM 2" FROM FRONT FACE OF STEM. (APPLIES TO 10' AND 14' WALL HEIGHTS ONLY.)

(7) REINFORCEM "Lw" Bars Size@in #4@12 #4@12 #4@12 #4@12 #4@14 #4@12 #4@14 #4@12 #5@16	ENT "P" Bars Size@in N/A #4@12 #5@10 #5@9 #5@8 #6@8 #6@8	"Ts" Bars Size@in N/A N/A N/A #4@18 #4@18 #4@18	"Lb" Bars (4) No. Size (2)#4 (2)#4 (2)#4 (3)#4 (5)#4 (6)#4 (10)#4 (12)#4	"K" Bars (3) Size@in N/A N/A N/A #4@18 #4@18 #4@12 #5@12	KOBLASZ & KENNISON E N G I N E E R I N G , P C 333 CREEKSTONE RIDGE WOODSTOCK, GEORGIA 30188 404 860 2600	etails ard Retaining Wall and I Toe Retaining Wall
6) (7) REINFORCEMI "Lw" Bars Size@in #4@12 #4@12 #4@12 #4@12 #4@12 #4@16 #4@14 #4@14	ENT "P" Bars Size@in N/A N/A N/A N/A N/A N/A N/A	"Ts" Bars Sıze@ın N/A N/A N/A N/A #4@18 #4@18 #4@18	"Lb" Bars (4) No. Size (2)#4 (3)#4 (4)#4 (3)#4 (4)#4 (5)#4 (8)#4 (12)#5 (12)#5	"K" Bars (3) Sıze@ın N/A #4@18 #4@18 #4@18 #4@18 #4@18 #4@10 #5@8 (8) #5@8 (8)	SUBMITTALS: 08-28-2024 STRUCTURAL DESIGN ISSUED Image: structural design issued	n Residence Wall Do Stands Minima
					STANDARD & MINIMAL HEEL RETAINING WALL DESIGN	The Riobo - Colo II56 Springdale Road Atlanta, Georgia Date : 3-17-2025

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