



DeKalb County Zoning Board of Appeals
Department of Planning & Sustainability
178 Sams Street,
Decatur, GA 30030



Lorraine Cochran-Johnson

Wednesday, May 13, 2026

Juliana
Njoku

Planning Department Staff Analysis

Chief Executive Officer

Director

N7. Case No: A-26-1248049

Parcel ID(s): 18 206 01 003

Commission District 02 Super District 06

Applicant: **Andrew and Tiffany Hedrich**
2515 Echo Drive NE
Atlanta, GA 30345

Owner: **Andrew and Tiffany Hedrich**
2515 Echo Drive NE
Atlanta, GA 30345

Project Name: **2515 Echo Drive - Residential Additions / Garage Conversion**

Location: 2515 Echo Drive NE, Atlanta, GA 30345

Requests: Variances from Section 27-2.2.1 of the DeKalb County Zoning Ordinance to reduce the eastern side yard setback from 10 feet to 8 feet and the western side yard setback from 10 feet to 5 feet, to facilitate expansion of an existing single-family residence, including enclosure of an existing carport into a garage and related residential additions, in the R-100 (Residential Medium Lot) 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. Any permit drawings submitted for review shall be substantially consistent with the site layout and improvements presented with this application, including the enclosed garage addition, associated residential additions, front porch improvements, and related walkways shown on the submitted site plan.
3. Approval of this variance is limited to the specific improvements shown on the submitted site plan, including enclosure of the existing carport and related residential additions, and shall not be construed to permit additional expansion within the reduced side yard setbacks.

4. The reduced side yard setbacks approved herein shall apply only to the portions of the structure shown on the approved plans, and all other portions of the residence shall comply with the minimum required setbacks of the zoning ordinance.
5. The proposed improvements shall be constructed in a manner that does not adversely impact drainage onto adjacent properties.

STAFF FINDINGS:

The subject property is an existing single-family residential property located at 2515 Echo Drive NE in the R-100 zoning district. The application materials identify the parcel as Lot 3, Block C, Echo Lake Subdivision, containing approximately 0.417 acres (18,178 square feet). The packet includes a boundary/topographic survey and schematic site plan showing a one-story brick and siding residence, an existing carport area, and proposed additions including enclosure of the carport into a garage, other residential additions, a new front porch and steps, and a new walk. The applicant states the home was built in 1958 and that the proposal is intended to improve the long-term functionality of the residence. The primary scope is to enclose the existing carport into a garage, along with associated residential additions shown on the submitted site plan.

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.

Existing site topography, in combination with the established placement of the older residence and carport, presents the primary hardship. The applicant indicates the house was constructed in 1958, predating current zoning code, and sits on a slope descending toward the front of the property. The survey materials likewise show notable grade change across the lot. Based on the record, these existing site conditions constrain where additions can reasonably occur and make side-yard expansion the most practical area for the proposed improvement, rather than reflecting a purely elective preference for an alternative layout.

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 existing carport provides approximately 17 feet 9 inches of clear width, which is limited relative to modern vehicle dimensions, and that the proposed enclosure would increase the garage width to approximately 22 feet. The request would preserve side separation from adjoining properties, with one side remaining at 8 feet and the other at 5 feet, rather than eliminating setbacks altogether. The reduced western side yard setback is tied to the existing legal nonconforming placement of the primary structure. The requested relief is limited to accommodating improvements to the existing structure and does not create a broader building envelope within the reduced setbacks.

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 improvements are residential in nature and are generally compatible with the surrounding single-family neighborhood. The record indicates the project is intended to improve the home in a manner consistent with nearby residences and asserts that the plans is not expected to obstruct light, air, or access to neighboring properties. The record includes a support letter from the adjacent neighbor at 2523 Echo Drive, who states that the project will not negatively impact the character of the neighborhood and is not expected to create additional traffic, noise, drainage, or access concerns.

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 side yard setbacks would create practical difficulty in adapting the existing residence for the proposed improvements. An expansion in other directions would conflict with the existing structure layout or require removal of usable living area. The request is specifically tied to adapting the existing structure and accommodating improvements within the constraints of the established building footprint.

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

The requested variances are consistent with the spirit and purpose of the zoning ordinance. Relief would allow a reasonable reinvestment in an existing single-family property without changing the use or materially disrupting neighborhood character. Here, the proposal remains an accessory improvement to an existing detached house in the R-100 district. The application is consistent with the County's broader goal of protecting existing single-family neighborhoods while allowing owners to maintain and improve their homes.

FINAL STAFF ANALYSIS:

The record reflects an older single-family residence on a sloping lot with an established site layout that predates the current zoning framework. The requested relief is tied to a specific proposal to enclose the existing carport into a garage and complete related residential additions shown on the submitted site plan. The packet includes a neighbor support letter and does not reflect evidence of material adverse impact to adjoining property or neighborhood character. Staff finds that the application presents sufficient grounds for approval of the requested variance relief, subject to conditions ensuring consistency with the approved plans and limiting the scope of the variance. The requested relief is limited to the existing structure and does not establish a precedent for similar reductions on unconstrained properties.

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. Any permit drawings submitted for review shall be substantially consistent with the site layout and improvements presented with this application, including the enclosed garage addition, associated residential additions, front porch improvements, and related walkways shown on the submitted site plan.
3. Approval of this variance is limited to the specific improvements shown on the submitted site plan, including enclosure of the existing carport and related residential additions, and shall not be construed to permit additional expansion within the reduced side yard setbacks.
4. The reduced side yard setbacks approved herein shall apply only to the portions of the structure shown on the approved plans, and all other portions of the residence shall comply with the minimum required setbacks of the zoning ordinance.
5. The proposed improvements shall be constructed in a manner that does not adversely impact drainage onto adjacent properties.

ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS (ZBA) APPLICATION
to Amend the Official Zoning Map of DeKalb County, Georgia

Subject Property Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Parcel ID Number(s): _____ Acreage: _____

District: _____ Land Lot: _____ Block: _____ Parcel: _____

Commission District(s): _____ Super District: _____

Type of Hearing Requested (check one):

VARIANCE (from Development Standards causing undue hardship upon owners of property.)

SPECIAL EXCEPTIONS (to Reduce or Waive off-street parking or loading space requirements.)

OFFICIAL APPEAL OF ADMINISTRATIVE DECISIONS.

***PLEASE REVIEW THE FILING GUIDELINES ON PAGE 4.**

FAILURE TO FOLLOW GUIDELINES MAY RESULT IN SCHEDULING DELAYS.*

I hereby authorize the staff of the Planning and Sustainable Department to inspect the property that is the subject of this application.

Owner Agent

John T. Smyth _____
Signature Date

ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS (ZBA) APPLICATION FEE:
\$300.00

DeKalb County does not require payment by wire transfer.
Be aware of scammers and fraudulent emails.

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.

DATE: 03/12/2026

Applicant Signature: 

DATE: 03/12/2026

Applicant Signature: 

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 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 and that I authorize the applicant/agent to apply for a hearing to the Zoning Board of Appeals for the requests as shown in this application.

DATE: 03/12/2026 Applicant/Agent Signature: John T. Smyth

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

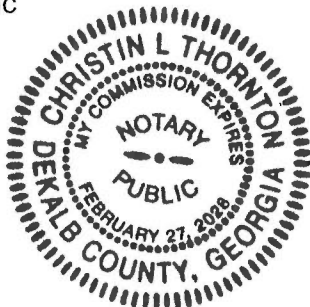
(I)/ (WE): Andrew and Tiffany Hedrich
(Name of Owners)

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

Christin Thornton 3/12/2026 John T. Smyth
Notary Public Owner Signature

Notary Public John T. Smyth
Owner Signature

Notary Public _____
Owner Signature



Subject: Variance request for side yard setback reduction – Section 27-2.2.1 –
Accessory Structure Construction

Dear Members of the Zoning Board of Appeals,

Our names are Andrew and Tiffany Hedrich, and we are writing to formally request a variance from Section 27-2.2.1 of the DeKalb County Zoning Ordinance. Our request pertains to the reduction of the side yard setback requirement from 10'-0" feet to 8'-0" feet on the east side of the property and from 10'-0" feet to 5'-0" feet on the west side of the property located at 2515 Echo Dr NE Atlanta, GA 30345. The purpose of the variance is to expand our existing home's footprint, including the expansion of our current carport to an enclosed garage. Having lived in our current home for over five years, we intend to make this our long-term permanent residence and wish to renovate our space to allow for a future family, support for our extended family as needed, and additional protection from environmental factors by having an enclosed spot for our vehicles and belongings.

1. Physical Conditions of the Site:

Our existing parcel is in a legal nonconforming state as the home was built in 1958 as a ranch style single floor property. As such, the side setback lines are not in conformance with the Zoning code update in 2015. As the home resides on a slope starting from the backyard setback line down to the front setback of the property, it is easiest to expand the house into the side yards since it is there that the lot is level and already graded for expansion.

2. Minimum Variance Necessary:

Our request is solely for the minimum variance necessary to make our garage usable. As the original carport was built in the 1950s, there is only 17'-9" of clear width which makes the space for two personal mid-size vehicles tight by today's modern car design standards. The planned buildout would enclose the Carport as a Garage, would increase the garage inside width to 22'-0", and would therefore allow for two mid-size vehicles to be parked without strain for the driver or passenger to enter or exit each vehicle. Our request is solely to expand for the functional needs of our property while remaining slightly more than 5'-0" from each side property line, thus not requiring additional fire-rated construction per Fire Marshall codes / requirements.

3. Public Welfare:

Our proposed addition will provide a betterment for our neighborhood and a positive impact on the appearance of our home consistent with nearby homes in the neighborhood. Many homes in the Echo Lake neighborhood have garages, so the improvement of our property would be coming into fashion with existing designs within our neighborhood. Furthermore, we have attached a letter of support from our immediate neighbor expressly providing support for our improvement plans and no concern of infringed privacy as a result of the project and setback line variances. The

proposed plans should not obstruct light, air, or access to neighboring properties, and we believe it will enhance the overall value of the surrounding area.

4. Ordinance Hardship:

A strict adherence to and interpretation of the current zoning laws would cause undue hardship for us in any meaningful improvement to our home. Strictly adhering to the 10'-0" setback is already at odds given our current home's design, and the expansion of the carport in any direction other than that proposed would take away from existing livable square footage if we did not expand under a zoning variance. The variance is essential to the construction of our project and is essential to allow for the reasonable use of our land.

5. Alignment with the Spirit of the Law:

In conjunction with the Dekalb County's Comprehensive plan, the 2050 Unified Plan summary spotlight on housing states a goal of the County is to continue protecting existing single-family neighborhoods and meet the demands and housing preferences of existing owners and prospective buyers. We seek to improve our home in accordance with existing homes in the neighborhood and maintain the neighborhood's character. Additionally, our designs consider the protections surrounding the light, air, and access between properties of our immediate neighbors and the overall visual language of our neighborhood.

We appreciate your time and consideration of our variance request. We are excited for the opportunity to enter the next phase of our home ownership and are willing to work with the appropriate authorities and guidelines to ensure our proposed variance request adheres to the broader goals and objectives of Dekalb County. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Andrew and Tiffany Hedrich

The image shows two handwritten signatures in blue ink. The top signature is for Andrew Hedrich, and the bottom signature is for Tiffany Hedrich. Both signatures are written in a cursive, flowing style.

March 5th, 2026

Zoning Board of Appeals

Letter of Support for Zoning Variance – Andrew Hedrich 2515 Echo Drive NE, Atlanta, GA 30345

Dear Members of the Zoning Board of Appeals,

I am writing in support of the zoning variance application submitted by my neighbor, Andrew Hedrich, regarding the property located at 2515 Echo Drive NE, Atlanta, GA 30345.

My residence, 2523 Echo Drive NE, Atlanta, GA 30345, is located immediately next door to the Hedrichs' property, on their left when viewing their house from the street. I have reviewed the proposed plans and understand that the applicant is seeking a variance to allow for a side-yard setback reduction.

Based on my familiarity with the property and the surrounding neighborhood, I believe the requested variance is reasonable and appropriate. The proposed project will not negatively impact my property or the character of our neighborhood. In my view:

- The improvement is consistent with the scale and appearance of nearby homes.
- It will not obstruct light, air, or access to neighboring properties.
- It will not create additional traffic, noise, or drainage concerns.
- I expect it may enhance the overall appearance and value of the area.

I have spoken directly with Andrew Hedrich about the project and appreciate his willingness to communicate openly with neighbors. I have no objection to the variance request and respectfully encourage the Board to approve the application.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Benjamin R. McCormack". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Benjamin McCormack