WARD 2 CONSTITUENT BRIEF

Fence Variance Appeal - RLH OA 26-3
737 Watson Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55102 | Permit DSIBLDFH-052772-2026
Legislative Hearing: September 15, 2026 at 3:00 p.m.

Requested resolution: Permit the proposed six-foot cedar/steel-post replacement enclosure along the portions of the property that do not interfere with required intersection visibility, while allowing DSI to require a setback, step-down, open treatment, taper, or other compliant transition specifically within the safety-sensitive corner area.

Why this merits consideration

Existing condition and replacement scope. The property already has an approximately six-foot enclosure. The proposed project replaces deteriorating and uneven fencing and damaged gate conditions with approximately 102 linear feet of six-foot batten-board cedar privacy fence, steel posts, and a matching lockable gate.

Corner-lot site condition. 737 Watson is a corner lot with an unusually long public-facing boundary along Watson Avenue and Bay Street. The appeal photographs document the direct relationship between the yard, sidewalk, street, and intersection.

Disability-related safety. Annie Thomas has been accepted into Can Do Canines for a Diabetes Assist Dog. Can Do Canines' client safety guidance specifically identifies damaged fences, gates, and openings as escape and injury hazards. The appeal does not claim that Can Do Canines has issued a universal six-foot-fence mandate.

Narrowly tailored request. The request is not based on privacy alone and does not seek relief from legitimate intersection-safety requirements. The applicant is willing to modify only the portion necessary to protect sightlines.

Recent site-condition context

On September 13 at approximately 4:30 a.m., while letting her dog outside, the applicant discovered an individual sleeping in a makeshift shelter erected against a boulevard tree along the Bay Street side of the property. The individual did not threaten the applicant. The incident is included only because it illustrates the unusually direct interface between this private yard and public space at all hours.

What is being asked of Ward 2

This brief is provided so the Ward 2 office is aware of the facts, proposed compromise, and relevant Saint Paul precedent before the Legislative Hearing Officer's recommendation ultimately comes before City Council. **The applicant is not asking the Ward office to intervene in today's administrative hearing.**

RELEVANT SAINT PAUL FENCE APPEAL PRECEDENTS

The cases below are included as examples of Saint Paul using targeted conditions to resolve fence-height and visibility conflicts rather than treating the issue as an all-or-nothing choice.

Case	Outcome / relevance
706 Canton Street Ward 2	Privacy-fence appeal granted subject to a targeted corner setback and visibility restriction. **Closest procedural comparison:** approve the fence while conditioning the corner.
247 Finn Street S.	Following an administrative denial, the appeal resulted in conditioned height relief using open fencing and vegetation restrictions to address the actual intersection concern.
1845 Graham Avenue	The City approved segment-specific additional height while imposing an openness requirement on the affected portion. This illustrates a design-based compromise rather than blanket denial.
1672 McAfee Street 2024	City Council ultimately approved a six-foot enclosure after considering disability-related safety concerns. The case demonstrates that Saint Paul has treated secure containment as a significant safety interest and has tailored relief accordingly.

Requested approach for 737 Watson

Apply the same problem-solving principle: protect the sightline through a defined, objective condition while allowing six-foot replacement fencing along the remainder of the enclosure.

If DSI identifies a specific segment that creates a visibility concern, the applicant is prepared to accept a setback, step-down, open treatment, taper, or other compliant transition at that location. The remaining six-foot replacement enclosure should be evaluated separately from the safety-sensitive corner.

Case identifiers

Legislative Hearing case	RLH OA 26-3
Permit	DSIBLDFH-052772-2026
Property	737 Watson Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55102
Applicant	Annie Thomas
Hearing	September 15, 2026 - 3:00 p.m.

Source note: Supporting facts and project details are drawn from the applicant's submitted appeal packet. Precedent summaries are based on Saint Paul Legislative Hearing / City Council records for the cited properties. This brief is intended as a concise Ward 2 constituent summary, not as a substitute for the complete administrative record.