

**Historic District Revisions Committee  
Metropolitan Planning Commission  
110 State Street  
Arthur A. Mendonsa Room**

**Meeting 5 Summary  
Height and Lot Coverage  
March 24, 2008  
4:00 p.m.**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Michael Brown (via telephone), Earline Davis, Vaughnette Goode-Walker, Peter Kusek, Lawrence Lee, Jerry Lominack, Joe Marinelli, Donald Moore, Susan Myers, John Neely, Ken Sadler, Richard Shinhoster, Kenneth Sirlin, Swann Seiler, Malik Watkins, and Robin Williams.

**MEMBERS EXCUSED:** Gwendolyn Fortson-Waring, Andy Lynch, W. John Mitchell.

**STAFF PRESENT:** MPC: Tom Thomson (Facilitator), Charlotte Moore, Beth Reiter, Sarah Ward, Sabrina Thomas; City of Savannah: Chris Morrill; SDRA: Lise Sundrla; Consultant: Christian Sottile.

**PUBLIC PRESENT:** Bill Durrence, Mark McDonald, Elizabeth Sprague, Bill Stuebe.

**I. WELCOME**

Tom Thomson welcomed all and outlined the course of the meeting. He also encouraged all to take notes in order to assist in the draft language sessions, which will be additional meetings held April 8, 9, and 10, 2008 from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. He asked for all to try to make two of the three additional meetings.

**II. CONTINUATION OF HEIGHT AND LOT COVERAGE**

Sarah Ward and Christian Sottile presented a PowerPoint of height and lot coverage.

- A. Sarah Ward presented a map consisting of 9,000 square feet or greater parcels overlaid RIP-75% Zoning districts. There are 61 parcels on which a 9,000 square foot or greater footprint could be located.
- B. Step Downs (a), Floor Area Ratios (b), and Skyline Rhythms(c) were illustrated in a visual presentation. Each breakout group from March 17 presented a summary of their group comments. These are grouped below under each question.
  - a. **Step-down from adjacent contributing buildings**
    - 1. Should step-downs be required next to historic structures? How would this be quantified?
      - Yes, recommend different criteria for 4 different contexts
        - 100% lot coverage
        - 75% lot coverage

- East-West streets
  - North-South streets
  - Yes, “credit” lost step down area using FAR
  - Use in Commercial vs residential areas
  - Only when there is a difference of more than two stories
  - Columbia Square condo given as an example. All in agreement that step downs...
2. What should the measurement be for the width of a step-down?
    - Step-downs shall be a minimum of one third or 20 feet whichever is less.
    - Study heights that determines quantitative measurements
    - 30 feet from the property line
    - Height can be no more than two stories above adjacent building
    - Step down should be relative to the height of the building next to it.
  3. Define adjacency. Should adjacency be treated the same across a boulevard, East-West connecting street, lane?
    - Adjacency means immediately abutting, across a lane, or across a street of less than 40 feet.
    - Not @ boulevard
    - Not @ lane
    - Yes @ East/west
    - Across the lane, next door, not across the boulevard; language should be very specific

PROS: Maintains scale and proportion of the City; helps reduce show boxes; keep character

CONS: If you get too tight you lose civility; Subjectivity if we don't clearly define ordinance; superficial things happening in design elements; hard to state required ordinance.

#### **b. Floor Area Ratio**

1. In the area where 75% maximum lot coverage applies, do we want to see increased lot coverage?
  - No, unless there is a definable benefit to the community, such as in illustration 2 on the FAR, or other goals such as affordable housing.
  - Not in residential districts
  - Yes, in commercial districts
  - No, all in agreement with 75%, 25% left over quality is very important
2. If yes, where would this apply?
  - If it respects historic adjacency
3. What should be the criteria for approving increased lot coverage within large-scale development projects?
  - To achieve architectural compatibility
  - Use compatibility standards

- If the building steps down even where not required
- Compelling public purposes such as low income requirements
- Does not come into play if it comes into play

PROS: (assuming the No FAR vote) Maintains scale, improves environment, maintains property value by keeping historic fabric, keeps developers from taking unfair advantage of us.

**c. Maximum square footages or widths that reach up to allowed height.**

1. Should incentives (Trade-offs) be created to give(up) more height?
  - Yes, in appropriate circumstances to achieve community goals
  - Yes, if historic patterns recreated , tax abatement, lot coverage
  - Same amount of square footage, but different height variety
  - Tax incentives can be helpful
  - Probably a floor here and there
2. If, so, over what percentage of the footprint?
  - 25%
3. Should incentives only be given if they benefit the public good. Define public good.
  - Yes, affordability, quality design and materials, other objectives as stated in Downtown Master Plan.
  - No
  - Public good is significant restoration of historic structure, or restore lane.
  - Museums, public housing, environmental, green roofs

PROS: Parking; Presentation or orientation for builders who demonstrate how they comply.

CONS: Parking; What happens if a historic building burns down? What rules does another structure have to follow?

### **III. STAFF PRESENTATION**

Sarah Ward and Christian Sottile presented and discussed Design Principles 3, 6, and 7 ([www.thempc.org](http://www.thempc.org), Historic District Revision Committee, 03/24/08).

### **IV. REVIEW FOR WEEK SIX MEETING: Parking, Utilities and Refuse, Fences and Walls**

Members were asked to review Design Principles 8 and 9 and Chadbourne discussions regarding these issues.

### **V. CLOSING REMARKS**

Thomas Thomson thanked all for participation. He reminded all of the next meeting date, March 31, 2008.

### **VI. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were no public comments.