

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

**Meeting 6 Summary
Height and Lot Coverage
March 31, 2008
4:00 p.m.**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Michael Brown, Gwendolyn Fortson-Waring, Vaughnette Goode-Walker, Peter Kusek, Lawrence Lee, Jerry Lominack, Andy Lynch, Joe Marinelli, Mark McDonald, W. John Mitchell, Donald Moore, Susan Myers, John Neely, Ken Sadler, Kenneth Sirlin, Malik Watkins, and Robin Williams.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Earline Davis, Swann Seiler, Richard Shinhoster.

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, Mary Zipser and Fred Johnson.

I. WELCOME

Tom Thomson outlined the agenda for the meeting. He said a draft would be presented next Monday based on the information/feedback from the committee members. On Tuesday, April 8, the committee will begin finalizing the wording of the revisions.

II. STAFF REVIEW OF DIRECTION TO DATE

Sarah Ward presented language based on Committee comments for streets and lanes, large scale development threshold, maximum building footprint and options for reducing mass.

III. HEIGHT AND LOT COVERAGE

Ms. Ward pointed out that the height map has a built-in height bonus in that the existing height in the majority of the wards is below the height zone indicated on the map, therefore staff is suggesting that height exceeding the height map not be permitted except in rare cases to achieve some identified public good.

She described two character areas – the 100% lot coverage zone which is mainly commercial and the 75% lot coverage zone which is mainly residential. A Height Compatibility Table was introduced as an idea to define adjacency and step downs. Two case studies on lots downtown

were presented by Ms. Ward and Mr. Sottile to illustrate the use of the Height Compatibility Table in each of the Character areas.

The formula for deriving Development Capacity (FAR) was presented again and the idea of a “Savannah” FAR was introduced and defined. This was also further explained and illustrated using the two case studies. It was demonstrated that Development Capacity gives you the maximum square foot volume allowed on the site and the Height Capacity Table helps arrange the volume on the site in context with any adjacent historic structures.

The following is a summary of questions asked by the Committee during the presentations.

- a. Should there be specific rules for transitional zones where 75% and 100% lot coverage zones abut?
 - b. What is the definition of a character area? Can it be interchanged with lot coverage zone or density zone?
 - c. Should there be step down rules that acknowledge new residential construction?
 - d. Should new buildings with 9,000 square foot or greater footprints be banned altogether in the 75% zone?
 - e. Should resident property owners have expectations too?
 - f. What should be the requirements for subdividing buildings with 13,500 square foot footprints ; what constitutes a separate building?–(ie firewalls)
 - g. Should one story roof gardens be allowed as a substitute for ground level open space?
 - h. If the height compatibility table is adopted and the rules for breaking up mass are adopted does FAR need to be adopted?
 - i. When a building is subdivided and goes under 9,000 square feet and is four stories do lane step downs still apply in the 100% zone?
 - j. Under the preceding scenario should a single generation development be considered as LSD even if one portion of the development falls below the threshold?
 - k. Is the FAR formula a rational calculation that can be put in an ordinance? Is FAR too complicated to understand?
- B. Staff was also asked to provide the following information.
- a. The number of buildings in the 75% zone with footprints of 9,000 square feet or greater.
 - b. Illustrate what multiple volumes, distinctive bays etc look like on same page with the language.
 - c. Prepare ward height study for hand out.
 - d. Show LSD transition areas between 75% and 100%.

IV. REVIEW FOR WEEK SEVEN MEETING AND CLOSING REMARKS

Tom Thomson thanked the committee for their participation and reminded them to review their handout materials on parking, paving, utilities and refuse, fences, lighting, demolition, gut rehabilitation, excavation and archaeology. The next meeting will take place on Monday, April 7, 2008. He reminded them that meetings to review ordinance text would be held on April 8, 9, and 10 at 4:00 p.m.

V. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Bill Stuebe stated the FAR concept has been used successfully in New York, therefore it should be successful here. He showed a picture of Columbia Place on State Street showing the 25% open space used along the lane which Mr. Stuebe said overpowered the neighboring buildings. He stated it was not successful economically because there was no outdoor space.

Mark McDonald expressed concerns regarding FAR including the applicant's ability to understand and staff's ability to explain. He stated that in his opinion if FAR is not used, other limiting language must be used. Visual compatibility standards are the backbone of every historic district regulation and should be required.