

CHATHAM COUNTY-SAVANNAH METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION

MPC COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING MEETING MINUTES

MPC HEARING ROOM  
110 EAST STATE STREET

October 14, 2008

1:00 P.M.

**Members Present:** Jon Todd, Chairman  
Robert Ray, Vice-Chairman  
Susan R. Myers, Treasurer  
Russ Abolt  
D. Douglas Bean  
Shedrick Coleman  
Ben Farmer  
Lacy A. Manigault

**Members Not Present:** Adam Ragsdale  
Michael Brown  
Freddie Gilyard  
J. David Hoover  
Stephen Lufburrow  
Timothy Mackey

**MPC Staff Present:** Thomas L. Thomson, P.E., AICP, Executive Director  
Dennis Hutton, AICP, Director of Comprehensive Planning  
Melony West, Finance & Systems  
Charlotte Moore, AICP, Director of Special Projects  
Jim Hansen, AICP, Director, Development Services  
Gary Plumbley, Development Services Planner  
Courtland Hyser, AICP, Land Use Planner  
Amanda Bunce, Development Services Planner  
Shanale Booker, Administrative Assistant  
Mary E. Mitchell, Administrative Assistant

**I. Call to Order**

Chairman Todd called the meeting to order at 1:05 PM and asked that everyone stand for the Pledge of Allegiance and Invocation. He explained the agenda for the benefit of those who were attending the meeting for the first time. All who wanted to speak on a petition before the Board were encouraged to fill out the blue speaker card provided.

**II. Notices, Proclamations and Acknowledgements**

There were no Notices, Proclamations, or Acknowledgements to present to the Board.

**III. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting**

Mr. Coleman **moved** to approve the August 12, 2008 Planning Meeting Minutes and Briefing Minutes as presented. Mr. Manigault seconded the motion.

**MPC Action: The motion carried with none opposed. The motion was to approve the August 12, 2008 Planning Meeting Minutes and Briefing Minutes as presented.** Voting were: Mr. Todd, Mr. Ray, Mr. Bean, Mr. Farmer, Mr. Abolt, Mr. Coleman, Ms. Myers, and Mr. Manigault.

#### **IV. Old Business**

There was no Old Business to discuss.

#### **V. Regular Business**

##### **A. Southern Environmental Law Center**

Mr. Thomson introduced Mr. David Pope, Director of the Georgia/Alabama Office of the Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC).

Mr. Pope came forward and thanked the Board and Mr. Thomson for the opportunity to present his organization and thanked Ms. Myers for initiating the invitation. He gave an overview on the activities of his organization. The SELC is the only organization using law and policy expertise exclusively to protect the south's natural resources and to preserve our rural countryside and community character. In addition, SELC is a donor supported nonprofit environmental law firm. The agency works throughout the southern states. Mr. Pope stated since they are a donor organization, their services are provided without charge. Much of their work is in the policy arena working with local and state organizations and in all branches of government. SELC has a comprehensive document entitled "At the Tipping Point" for the Georgia coast that examines the resources of the Georgia Coast and the threats that face the coast in the next 10, 15 and 20 years. Those who would like a copy of this document were asked to contact Mr. Pope.

Mr. Thomson is hopeful of bringing Mr. Pope back in early 2009 for a more detailed session on stormwater issues. The Commission thanked Mr. Pope for his presentation.

##### **B. Strathmore Estates/Savannah Gardens (Informational Update Only)**

Mr. Israel Small came forward and thanked the Board for the opportunity to present the conceptual plan for Strathmore Estates. Mr. Small was present on behalf of Mr. Jim Stevenson, chairman of CHSA, who was unable to attend today's meeting. He introduced Mr. Darrell Daise, Director of CHSA, who made the presentation.

Mr. Daise outlined some of their major goals: 1) create 600 new mixed-income housing units ( 400 to 500 family and senior rental units, 100 to 200 single-family ownership units); 2) create neighborhood friendly retail and mixed-use areas (onsite in "Town Center" area and off-site on the former Gwinnett Street grocery store site); 3) create major and minor public and private green space; 4) create a community that recognizes its history (retain Crescent Drive as a major site feature, retain tree canopy as a major site feature, retain one representative duplex and historic marker(s) and other elements that tell the history of the neighborhood); 5) create a traffic calming, pedestrian and bicycle-friendly community; 6) create meaningful connectivity with adjoining neighborhoods (do not want Savannah Gardens to become a shortcut to Twickenham or East Savannah by encouraging fast-moving traffic).

Mr. Martin Fretty, City of Savannah Housing Director, identified the six major focus areas for this project: 1) preservation elements; 2) design principles; 3) neighborhood connectivity; 4) safety; 5) housing; and, 6) retail. Feedback from City Council and other interested groups has been incorporated into the plan where

possible. Their goal is to come back formally before the Commission in November and seek to get master plan approval to allow them to go ahead and hire an engineering firm to come in and start subdividing the land. A question and answer period was held by Mr. Fetty, Mr. Daise and Mr. Bill Dempsey.

### **C. Unified Zoning Ordinance Status Report**

Ms. Charlotte Moore, Director of Special Projects, provided an update of the overall status of the Unified Zoning Ordinance. Ms. Moore also presented an overview of the 35 base zoning districts proposed by staff. Special districts and overlay districts were not discussed. Although the ordinance format for the zoning districts was previously discussed, Ms. Moore briefly explained the format to reiterate the structure, the work necessary to complete this component (Component 3), and to point out the location of the district intent statements in the format. A PowerPoint presentation provided the intent statements for each zoning district to assist the planning commissioners in their understanding of the 35 proposed districts.

Each of the 35 zoning districts fits into a zoning category. The categories, followed by the number of zoning districts within each category, include: Conservation (2); Agriculture (1); Residential Single-Family (6); Traditional Residential (1, but more likely); Residential Multi-Family (5); Residential Manufactured Home (1); Traditional Neighborhood (2); Traditional Commercial (3); Downtown (4); Office and Institutional (2); Business (5); and, Industrial (3).

Ms. Amanda Bunce, Development Services Planner, explained the Conservation Districts. The Conservation District is intended to preserve and protect land in its natural state. It also is intended to protect historic resources, such as Fort Jackson. The Conservation-Marsh district is intended for marsh areas, including back barrier islands. She also provided an overview of the Agricultural and Office and Institutional districts. She noted that the Office-Transition district was intended for areas where circumstances such as road widening and commercial encroachment has led to conversion of residential uses into commercial uses.

Ms. Moore presented the Residential Single-family and Residential Multi-family districts. Three new single family districts are proposed based on lot sizes that include one acre, eight thousand square feet, and five thousand square feet. The density for residential units per acre in the Residential Multi-family districts is proposed to vary from 5 units to 25 units.

Mr. Courtland Hyser, Land Use Planner, explained the Traditional Neighborhood Districts, the Traditional Commercial districts, Downtown districts, and Business districts. The Traditional Neighborhood districts are mixed use with focus on residential while the Traditional Residential districts are intended mainly for residential. Mr. Hyser indicated that four districts are proposed for downtown. The Downtown-Commercial district acknowledges areas that are predominately commercial (e.g., Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard) away from the waterfront, the downtown core, and predominantly residential areas.

Ms. Moore presented the final category of district, Industrial. She explained that there are approximately 12 existing Industrial districts. The differences between districts are mostly based on permitted uses rather than development standards.

Ms. Moore also noted that staff was in the process of completing a zoning district conversion chart that should be ready for distribution at the next planning session. The chart shows the proposed zoning district for each existing district. Not all zoning districts will have an exact equivalent and may require rezoning to another district, which is an indication that the existing zoning may not be appropriate for a given property.

Members of the Planning Commission asked questions after the presentation. Ms. Myers asked whether "grandfathering" would be eliminated in the new ordinance. Ms. Moore replied that grandfathering does not go away; if the use was legal under the previous ordinance, it would remain legal but would be considered

nonconforming if it did not meet the standards of the new ordinance. Mr. Todd asked if a grandfathered use would become a nonconforming use. Ms. Moore replied that existing grandfathered uses may remain nonconforming but some could become conforming. Because mapping (creating a new zoning map based on the proposed districts) is not yet underway, it is unknown how many properties or uses will remain or become nonconforming. Mr. Thomson provided an example that if a use on a property that is rezoned requires special use approval under the new zoning district, such approval would not need to be obtained because the use is "grandfathered." An extension of the grandfathered use, however, may require approval. Ms. Myers was concerned that if the property is sold, would it still be able to keep that use. Ms. Moore explained that the use would remain with the land. Mr. Thomson stated that the staff is working on a nonconforming section and there will be rules therein about what can be done. Ms. Myers wanted to know what happens if a use is dormant for a year, but was historic. Ms. Moore replied that there is a time limit and after that time period has expired the use cannot be reestablished.

Ms. Moore concluded by reiterating that there are 35 proposed zoning districts. As the mapping process begins, it may reveal that more zoning districts may be necessary. There will be some overlay districts and special districts. For each of the 35 proposed districts, staff is working on identifying all the uses that are appropriate for each district. Staff has identified 145 uses and will determine if each use is appropriate for the proposed districts. The use will be identified as a "matter of right," "limited use," or a "special use." Limited uses and special uses will have use standards. Staff is also drafting development standards, such as building setbacks, height and ground floor area. Staff expects to have this work completed by the end of the month. Once completed, the draft will go to the Technical Committee and then be presented to the Planning Commission at a planning session. Mr. Todd said this is quite a bit of work, but it appears that it is progressing well.

After the presentation Ms. Moore informed the Commission that Mr. Hyser had accepted a job in Denver, Colorado. His last day of employment is October 24, 2008. She wanted to publicly thank him for his work on the ordinance. He has been a great asset and that we have been lucky to have had him at MPC for the past five years. The Commission extended best wishes to Mr. Hyser and thanked him for his years of service.

**VI. Other Business**

There was no Other Business to discuss.

**VII. Adjournment**

There being no further business to come before the Commission, the October 14, 2008 Comprehensive Planning Meeting was adjourned at 3:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas L. Thomson, P.E., AICP  
Executive Director

**Note: Minutes not official until signed**