



Chatham County - Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission

Arthur Mendonsa Hearing Room
January 18, 2022 ~ 1:30 PM
Minutes

January 18, 2022 Regular MPC Meeting, 1:30 P.M.

Members Present: Joseph Welch, Chairman
Karen Jarrett, Vice-Chair
Travis H. Coles, Secretary
Malik Watkins, Treasurer
Laureen Boles
Elizabeth Epstein
Joseph Ervin
Wayne Noha
Jeff Notrica
Dwayne Stephens
Tom Woiwode

Members Absent: Dwayne Stephens
Lee Smith

Staff Present: Melanie Wilson, Executive Director
Marcus Lotson, Director of Development Services
Melissa Paul-Leto, Planner
Sally Helm, Administrative Assistant
Julie Yawn, Systems Analyst

I. Call to Order and Welcome

II. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

III. Approval of Agenda

[1. Approval of Agenda](#)

Motion

Approval of Agenda

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Joseph Ervin

Second: Travis Coles

Joseph Ervin

- Aye

W. Lee Smith

- Not Present

Tom Woiwode

- Aye

Travis Coles	- Aye
Joseph Welch	- Aye
Karen Jarrett	- Aye
Dwayne Stephens	- Not Present
Wayne Noha	- Aye
Jeff Notrica	- Aye
Laureen Boles	- Aye
Elizabeth Epstein	- Aye
Malik Watkins	- Aye
Jay Melder	- Aye

IV. Notices, Proclamations and Acknowledgements

[2. January 18, 2022 Finance Committee Meeting, 11:00 A.M., GO-TO- WEBINAR \(VIRTUAL\) to access go to: www.thempc.org or Jerry Surrency Conference Room, 112 East State Street.](http://www.thempc.org)

[3. January 18, 2022 Swearing-in of MPC Commission by Judge John Morse, Jr. Chatham County Superior Court.](#)

[4. February 8, 2022 Regular MPC Meeting, 1:30 P.M., Planning Commission, GO-TO- WEBINAR \(VIRTUAL\) to access go to: www.thempc.org or Arthur Mendonsa Hearing Room, 112 East State Street.](#)

Proclamations and Acknowledgements

[5. Acknowledgement of Appreciation by Joseph Welch, Chair to Eula Parker](#)

V. Item(s) Requested to be Removed from the Final Agenda

[6. SPECIAL USE APPROVAL REQUEST | 2110 West Gwinnett Street | File no. 21-006747-ZA](#)

Motion

Postponed to the next regularly scheduled Planning Commission Meeting, Tuesday, February 8, 2022.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Travis Coles

Second: Wayne Noha

Joseph Ervin	- Aye
W. Lee Smith	- Not Present
Tom Woiwode	- Aye
Travis Coles	- Aye
Joseph Welch	- Aye
Karen Jarrett	- Aye
Dwayne Stephens	- Not Present
Wayne Noha	- Aye
Jeff Notrica	- Aye
Laureen Boles	- Aye
Elizabeth Epstein	- Aye

Malik Watkins	- Aye
Jay Melder	- Aye

VI. Items Requested to be Withdrawn

The Consent Agenda consists of items for which the applicant is in agreement with the staff recommendation and for which no known objections have been identified nor anticipated by staff. Any objections raised at the meeting will result in the item being moved to the Regular Agenda. At a 12:30 briefing, the staff will brief the Commission on Consent Agenda items and, time permitting, Regular Agenda items. No testimony will be taken from applicants, supporters or opponents, and no votes will be taken at the briefing.

VII. Consent Agenda

[7. Approval of the December 14, 2021 Briefing and Regular Meeting Minutes.](#)

📎 [12.14.2021 Meeting Minutes.pdf](#)

📎 [12-14-2021 MPC BRIEFING MINUTES.pdf](#)

Motion

Approval of the Briefing and Regular Meeting Minutes.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Joseph Ervin

Second: Travis Coles

Joseph Ervin	- Aye
W. Lee Smith	- Not Present
Tom Woiwode	- Aye
Travis Coles	- Aye
Joseph Welch	- Aye
Karen Jarrett	- Aye
Dwayne Stephens	- Not Present
Wayne Noha	- Aye
Jeff Notrica	- Aye
Laureen Boles	- Aye
Elizabeth Epstein	- Aye
Malik Watkins	- Aye
Jay Melder	- Aye

[8. Adoption of 2022 MPC Budget](#)

📎 [MPC 2022 Budget.pdf](#)

Motion

Adoption of the 2022 MPC Budget

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Joseph Ervin	
Second: Travis Coles	
Joseph Ervin	- Aye
W. Lee Smith	- Not Present
Tom Woiwode	- Aye
Travis Coles	- Aye
Joseph Welch	- Aye
Karen Jarrett	- Aye
Dwayne Stephens	- Not Present
Wayne Noha	- Aye
Jeff Notrica	- Aye
Laureen Boles	- Aye
Elizabeth Epstein	- Aye
Malik Watkins	- Aye
Jay Melder	- Aye

VIII. Old Business

[9. REZONING MAP AMENDMENT | 7810 Abercorn Street | Rezone from B-C to RMF-2-25 | File No. 21-005936](#)

- 📎 [Maps Combined.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Multifamily Within 1 Mile.pdf](#)
- 📎 [ApartmentData.pdf](#)
- 📎 [HAAF Response to Notification.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Application - File no. 21-005936-ZA.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Staff Report 5936.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Photos.pdf](#)

Mr. Marcus Lotson, Director of Development Services, stated the petitioner is requesting to rezone the subject property from B-C (Community – Business) to RMF-2-25 (Multifamily residential – 25 dwelling units per acre). The property is a portion of the Oglethorpe Mall. It consists of the former Sears department store, auto service center, a restaurant out parcel and associated parking. The Oglethorpe Mall opened as a regional shopping center in 1969 and has operated continuously since that time to include various expansions and renovations. The subject property is a separate parcel from the overall mall development.

As required by the City of Savannah Zoning Ordinance, all property owners within 300 feet of the subject property were sent notices of the proposed rezoning. Information describing the request including the application, maps and other exhibits were forwarded to Hunter Army Airfield for review and public notice was posted on site. Officials at Hunter reviewed the proposal and determined it was not likely to create impacts on their operations. They did request however, as this property goes through the site plan review process, notify them at that time of any changes that might be proposed. The nearest residences are in the Chippewa Terrace neighborhood, south of the mall property.

The subject property is currently developed with retail spaces which are vacant. The property is accessed via an internal road network, Mall Way, which intersects with White Bluff Road, Abercorn Street and Mall Boulevard at different locations. Nearby developed properties include the balance of the Oglethorpe Mall, shopping centers and neighborhood retail east and north of the property, as well as a residential subdivision south of the subject property. The proposed rezoning would change a portion of the subject property to multifamily but maintain the commercial zoning adjacent to White Bluff Road and Abercorn Street for future commercial uses.

Strictly as a zoning matter, the proposed zoning should not negatively impact adjacent property and the uses allowed in the district can be compatible with existing uses in the vicinity. The current zoning allows a wide array of commercial uses including upper story residential, hotels, office buildings, grocery stores and other retail and service-oriented business. The proposed zoning would allow an infusion of residential density in an area that is equipped to handle it and allow new multifamily development where current inventory is aging. With access to arterial roadways, the development of the property should not negatively impact traffic or congestion in the area and should complement the existing development.

Mr. Robert McCorkle, Petitioner, stated the subject property is a former Sears facility at the Oglethorpe Mall. The entire parcel is 14.5 acres. The portion we are seeking to rezone is 9.5 acres. Sears has been empty for approximately 4 years. This building consists of 140,000 sq feet of retail space on two separate levels. As you know, retail conditions both in Savannah, the state of Georgia, and the US as a whole, have changed drastically in the last 60yrs. A lot of these large retail buildings are requiring some type of adaptive reuse. The former Sears retail closed in 2018 and has gone unused since that time. These changing conditions support the grounds for rezoning the property to a more active and beneficial use. Often times, the reuse of these properties is used for self storage facilities. K-mart, around the corner on Montgomery Crossroads, sat empty for sometime after a bankruptcy and is now occupied by a self storage facility.

After continuing to study the market conditions of the area since acquiring the property, it has been noted the area is in desperate need of additional multi family housing. This is a good site for that. What is being proposed is a garden apartment complex with four story buildings, for a total of 240 units. There will be a pool, clubhouse, and similar amenities you will have in other new apartment complexes. The parcel has plenty of room for parking and is centrally located with direct access to two major thoroughfares. There are five access locations basically onsite to public transportation. The location is in walking distance to multiple food sites, including the food court at the mall, retail in the area, and the public library.

There are 19 apartment complexes within one mile of this site. Of the 19 complexes, 17 of them were build prior to 1993. The project will benefit the mall. The project will add a significant amount of greenspace compared to what is there now. There is nothing there now. The drive aisles will be straightened and corrected. Currently the drive aisles run in opposite directions at a point. You have to drive outside of the outparcels, then back inside the outparcels and go around the outside.

The proposed zoning should not negatively impact adjacent property and the uses allowed in the district are compatible with existing uses in the area. The proposed zoning would allow an infusion of residential density in an area that is equipped to handle it and allow new multi family development where current inventory is aging. With access to arterial roadways a development of the property should not negatively impact traffic or congestion in the area and should compliment the existing development.

Abercorn and White Bluff are busy roads but they are arterial roadways equipped to handle these additional 240 units. White Bluff is a four lane divided highway with built in turn lanes, accel and decel lanes. Abercorn is a six lane essentially divided highway with medians and turn lanes as well. The engineers at Thomas and Hutton looked at the traffic manual and looked at car counts for the existing use, as opposed to the proposed use. Mid rise multi family, four to ten stories, has a car count of 4.54 trips per unit, per day. Department stores run at a thousand, per thousand square feet, 25.4 trips per day. If you use the 140,000 sq. feet, that is 3500 trips per day potentially for the building as it currently exists. What we are proposing at 240 units is approximately 1090 trips per day. That is less than 1/3 by traffic count standards of what the traffic would be at the existing facility. In the BC zoning, we are allowed to do upper story residential as long as the bottom story is retail. As it is currently zoned, there could be retail along the bottom floor of all these buildings with residential above them. This would create even more traffic at roughly 25 trips per day per 1000 sq. feet of retail along the bottom of whatever buildings are constructed on site. There is a severe net reduction in parking in connection with this downzoning we are requesting to put these apartments at this location. The original design of the project was to be a multi use project with residential and office space. The original design included 1000 apartments and townhomes. The original intent when the mall was developed in the 60's, was to have a live there, eat there, shop there facility.

Staff recommendation has a condition that we come back to the MPC for site plan and design review. We ask that you recommend approval of the rezoning without this condition.

Mr. Tom Woiodo, Board member, asked if, in the absence of coming back, there was anything that would prevent the developers from putting up a sound barrier wall that is 30ft tall around it? There is no buffer requirement. This won't be an adult-only community. There will be children, traffic, and traffic volume. The traffic volume raises safety concerns with children.

Mr. McCorkle stated they are still subject to getting a site plan done and approved. This, like every other property, will go through that process at a staff level. We still have to come back to MPC staff, submit a general development plan, go through a specific development plan, show the layout, roads, and everything else. There is no design requirement in that, there is no requirement that we come back for a public hearing in order to get the site plan approved as long as we are not asking for variances. We are asking to be treated the same as the other projects. If we are not asking for variances, we meet traffic requirements, and everyone is satisfied, that would be enough.

Mr. Wayne Noha, Board member, asked why staff is asking for this to come back before the Board.

Mr. Lotson, stated, when this was initially submitted, the applicant, their representatives, and staff had several conversations about not just the zoning, but the layout as well. There are issues that need to be addressed in terms of the road network here, which will be addressed in that process. Staff felt that this is a prominent location, a significant redevelopment, and that it would be a good idea for staff to be able to review it again and bring it back to the Planning Commission.

Ms. Melanie Wilson, Executive Director, stated applicants have asked for different rezoning requests, and some are asked to come back to the MPC to review it again. The developer does have the right to develop the property, as it is, with first floor retail and second floor housing. You are asking for a change. The only thing we are saying, there have been a number of phone calls from people excited and concerned about the project. The request is more to keep the community involved. This is the intersection of three Alderman districts of which have had questions as to the layout and design.

Mr. Noha, stated he was more concerned about the flooding in the area than the appearance of the buildings. The corner adjacent to the property is a concern. Will that be worked in to the project so there is not an issue with flooding?

Mr. Lotson stated the Oglethorpe Mall is almost 100% impervious. The City Engineer and their review of the property would address existing issues. This will go through city offices for evaluation.

Mr. Woiwode, asked about any other projects like this, reclaiming property, involving a mall.

Mr. McCorkle, stated there is a lot of this going on around the country where malls are going away. Some of them are being redesigned as a whole for multi use projects where you have retail and residential all together where these malls are being scrapped and there is a large piece of property. The Savannah Mall has a similar issues that this mall has. Certain buildings in the mall are owned separately from the remainder of the mall. It makes an overall project very difficult to do. This is the same thing, the mall is owned by a different company completely unrelated.

Mr. Rick Jackson, General Manager, Oglethorpe Mall, stated there is another development by this same developer in Boise Idaho, same circumstance, involving the Sears building.

Mr. Welch, Board Chairman, asked if they were in support of the project.

Mr. Jackson said they are reserving comment at this time until they see the layout/plan.

Ms. Karen Jarrett, Board member, stated she is sure Mr. Jackson would appreciate the opportunity to come back and review the site plan when/if it is brought back to the MPC.

Mr. Jackson stated they are working with the developer. They will have the opportunity to see the developers plans.

Motion

Approval of the request to rezone the subject property from B-C to RMF-2-25 with the condition that the site plan be reviewed by the MPC.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Jay Melder

Second: Wayne Noha	
Joseph Ervin	- Aye
W. Lee Smith	- Not Present
Tom Woiwode	- Aye
Travis Coles	- Aye
Joseph Welch	- Aye
Karen Jarrett	- Aye
Dwayne Stephens	- Not Present
Wayne Noha	- Aye
Jeff Notrica	- Aye
Laureen Boles	- Aye
Elizabeth Epstein	- Aye
Malik Watkins	- Aye
Jay Melder	- Aye

10. SPECIAL USE | 2312 Abercorn Street | A special use request for a bar/tavern | File No. 21-006078-ZBA

- 📎 [Letter of Objection #1 Attachment with letter and photos.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Letter of Support #1.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Letter of Support #2.pdf](#)
- 📎 [AERIAL MAP 21-006078-ZA.pdf](#)
- 📎 [FLU MAP 21-006078-ZA.pdf](#)
- 📎 [LABEL MAP 21-006078-ZA.pdf](#)
- 📎 [LABEL_LIST_21-006078-ZA.dbf.pdf](#)
- 📎 [TAX MAP 21-006078-ZA.pdf](#)
- 📎 [VICINITY MAP 21-006078-ZA.pdf](#)
- 📎 [ZONING MAP 21-006078-ZA.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Site Visit.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Application_2312 Abercorn St_21-006078-ZA_Amend 12212021.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Letter of Support #3.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Letter of Support #4.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Letter of Support #5.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Parking Agreement.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Letter of Support #6.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Contract for Shared Commercial Dumpster.pdf](#)
- 📎 [2312.Abercorn.Support.Letter_TSNA.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Staff Report.pdf](#)

Ms. Melissa Leto, Planner, stated the subject property is located at 2312 Abercorn Street, on the northwest corner of the intersection of East 40th Street and Abercorn Street. The parcel is developed with a 2-story building, constructed prior to the 1955 Sanborn Maps. It has operated previously as a retail home goods establishment and is currently vacant. The property is within the TC-1 zoning district. Per Section 8.7.24 (b) (ii) the proposed use requires Special Use approval when located in the TC-1 zoning district.

This item was on last month's agenda with a request to have onsite consumption of alcohol for a restaurant use. The Commission requested the item be continued to the January meeting to work out site issues, such as parking and trash. Staff met with the petitioner, they have since revised their request from a restaurant with onsite alcohol consumption to a bar lounge use. Some of the improvements by the petitioner to mitigate any site issues. Hours of operation, they were proposing to be open until 1. Now their hours are from Tuesday through Friday from 4 pm to 12am and Saturdays from 11am to 12am. Trash pick up, the petitioner has signed a contract for shared dumpster use with Atwells Art and Frame, located at 2310 Drayton Street. The shared use of commercial trash receptacles is common in mixed use neighborhoods. Parking per section, 9.3.7 D for the first 3000 sq feet of any non residential use. There shall be no minimum off street parking space requirement per sq footage exceeding 3000 sq feet. The parking requirement shall be calculated using Table 9.3-5, Victorian and Streetcar parking reductions. City staff has reviewed the permit application submitted for interior renovations proposed for the establishment. The interior space is 1300 sq feet with 28 proposed seats.

The Thomas Square Neighborhood Association had a meeting last week and voted 8-1 in support of the proposed use. The subject property is very close to the railroad tracks. The company that owns the railroad was notified about possible encroachments to the railroads right of way around the subject parcel. They have concerns about the existing trash bins against the wooden fence, as well as the wooden fence itself possibly being in the right of way. This was one of the main reasons the petitioner went for a shared commercial dumpster, to not further encroach into the right of way. The petitioner is in discussion with Watco regarding the wooden fence and deck as to whether it is encroaching and if a removal is needed. The petitioner is planning on having outdoor consumption on the existing deck.

There is a shared parking agreement across the street, at Kemble Mobile Electronics, to utilize their existing parking. Kemble's hours of operation are Monday thru Friday 9am to 5:30 pm and Saturday 9am to 5pm. The proposed bar lounge will dedicate approximately six parking spaces to their customers and employees, and will use the shared parking during the hours Kemble's is not in operation.

If the Commission approves the petitioner's request, staff asks that the petitioner have to resolve the right of way issues and submit a letter from Watco to MPC prior to this item moving forward to City Council. The special use permit shall be non transferable. Consumption shall be on premises only. Hours of operation shall be the following, Tuesday thru Friday from 4 pm to 12am and Saturdays from 11am to 12am. The petitioner shall provide the location of the recycling bin and compost bins on the site plan. The petitioner has mentioned their trash will be minimal. They are promoting a green recycling program and will be composting any food on the establishment as well as recycling wine bottles. City staff is requesting a condition be placed on this request: the special use permit be reviewed annually to ensure that all conditions are still in place.

This item has received one letter of opposition since the December meeting and has received six letters of support for this special use as well as the neighborhood association letter of support.

Patrick Connell, Law firm for Petitioner, stated what is proposed, the use falls under tavern and bar, is not a tavern or pub. It is going to be a wine bar with a light charcuterie lounge and some limited beer. The biggest issue that is outstanding at this point, is the question about the proximity to the railroad tracks. There is an existing fenced in area that may or may not be in the railroads right of way. The edge of that fence is 25ft from the center line of the right of way. If its a 50ft right of way, then it goes right to the edge of the fence. If it's a 100ft right of way, there is still substantial space that is unused right of way. We have been in contact with Watco's inhouse council. They are working on making a determination of the actual right of way and if in fact there is an encroachment. The most likely outcome, if the existing fence is in the right of way or impacts their right of way, they may ask us for a lease of that portion of that right of way in which there is encroachment. One of the solutions to not push any further into the right of way is the sharing of a dumpster with Atwell on Atwell's property. The agreement is for a four cubic ft dumpster with public services provider. The City waste disposal requirement is two cubic ft per commercial establishment in this area. The petitioners have gone the extra step to go green. There are contracts in place for removing the recyclable glass bottles. The food waste will be composted, so that will not be put in the dumpsters.

The other issue that came up in this process, is parking. Unfortunately, in Thomas Square, there is usually a question about parking. We underwent a very long highly informed study of this district as part of the NewZO process. A determination was made that the TC-1 zone, under a certain number of square feet does not require off street parking. This is designed to have the people walk over after work and relax, not try to bring more people in from cars.

Karen Jarrett, Board member, stated she has concerns about the dumpster and parking across Abercorn. Is there any provision being made to ensure the safety of pedestrians trying to cross the street?

Mr. Connell said they would be willing to petition for a crosswalk.

Mr. Wayne Noha, Board member, stated if a crosswalk is placed, it should be near 39th street and not 40th. That is a curve right there and you do not want a blind spot coming around the corner with a crosswalk.

Mr. Jay Melder, City Manager, said the City will be glad to look at any petition that is brought before the council for a crosswalk.

Mr. Joseph Welch, Chairman, asked if the owner of the building was residing in it?

Mr. Connell said no.

Mr. Welch asked if there was any thought put into the owners of the shared parking and shared dumpster, if they decided to sell the property one day and the new owners did not want to share parking or share the dumpster?

Mr. Connell said yes, there is such minimal trash since they are recycling and composting. Regarding the parking, the City and it's thorough study of this zoning district, determined that this would be a traditional neighborhood and traditional commercial development, with no parking requirement. There are no required number of spaces off site for this use, at this location.

Motion

Approval of the request for special use for bar/tavern with the added conditions that the Special Use receive an annual review by City staff and that the agreement between the railroad and this business be included in the presentation to the City Council.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Travis Coles

Second: Wayne Noha

Joseph Ervin	- Aye
W. Lee Smith	- Not Present
Tom Woiwode	- Aye
Travis Coles	- Aye
Joseph Welch	- Nay
Karen Jarrett	- Aye
Dwayne Stephens	- Not Present
Wayne Noha	- Aye
Jeff Notrica	- Aye
Laureen Boles	- Aye
Elizabeth Epstein	- Not Present
Malik Watkins	- Nay
Jay Melder	- Aye

IX. Regular Business

[11. TEXT AMENDMENT: HISTORIC BUILDINGS MAP | Streetcar Historic District | 21-005613-ZA](#)

📎 [Staff Report - 21-005613-ZA.pdf](#)

📎 [2021 Proposed Streetcar Expansion Map.pdf](#)

🔗 [2021 Proposed Streetcar Expansion Supplement.pdf](#)

🔗 [Resource Survey Cards.pdf](#)

🔗 [Proposed Ordinance Revision 21-005613-ZA.pdf](#)

Leah Michalak, Director of Historic Preservation, stated this is a petition to expand the Streetcar Historic District boundary and to amend the Contributing Resources Map to include nine (9) buildings of historic and architectural significance that were built in the Streetcar District prior to 1935 and not previously listed as “contributing/historic.” The district’s Period of Significance is 1799-1935. The boundary expansion includes two small areas south of West Victory Drive on either side of the SCAD One West Victory complex; the area consists of four (4) parcels and two (2) buildings.

The Streetcar Local Historic District (formerly named Mid-City) was created in 2005 as part of the Zoning Ordinance for the City of Savannah. The purpose of the district is to promote sensitive rehabilitation of existing historic buildings and ensure the visual compatibility of new construction within the area.

Within the Streetcar Historic District, all buildings are classified as either contributing (historic) or non-contributing (non-historic) on the Streetcar Contributing Resources Map. The map was adopted in 2005 by City Council and, with the exception of 315 West 38th Street, the status of resources has not been updated since that time; the map itself was transferred to ArcGIS in 2016.

The impetus for the Contributing Resources Map update is that there have been three (3) district boundary expansions since 2018 yet the Contributing Resources Map has not been updated and the three (3) expansion areas were never surveyed. These expansions included: a 2018 West Side Expansion, a 2018 Victory Village Expansion, and a 2019 NewZO East Side Expansion.

The impetus for the boundary expansion is to regularize the awkward Historic District boundary at the southern end of the Historic District and to protect the significant historic building at 2805 Bull Street.

1. Currently, all buildings within the local design review area for the Streetcar Historic District are reviewed for any exterior changes visible from a public right-of-way. However, only those buildings that are listed as contributing on the Contributing Resources Map require Historic Preservation Commission Review for demolition.
2. All buildings listed as non-contributing on the Historic Buildings Map that fit within the current Period of Significance (1867-1937) were analyzed by the MPC Historic Preservation Department following the survey of the expansion areas. Staff used criteria based on the “National Register Criteria for Evaluation” as follows:
 - a. Is the building associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad pattern of history?
 - b. Is the building associated with the lives of persons significant in the past?
 - c. Does the building embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction?
 - d. Does the building possess integrity of location?
 - e. Does the building possess integrity of design and materials?
 - f. Does the building possess integrity of setting?

Staff also consulted the following documents: the 1987 Historic District Information Form and the 1997 National Register of Historic Places Registration Form and Map.

3. Three (3) buildings proposed to be added are commercial, three (3) are two-family residential, one (1) is single-family residential, and two (2) are accessory dwelling units.
4. All buildings proposed to be added fall within the current Period of Significance. Buildings proposed

to be added which are within the National Register District boundary were likely overlooked when the National Register map was originally created. Staff located several attempts to survey this area within the MPC's records; however, the project (for reasons unknown) was never completed.

Taking no action leaves these nine (9) buildings unprotected especially with regard to demolition. This neighborhood contains valuable affordable housing opportunities that, if demolished, would be difficult to replicate. The buildings have smaller footprints on larger parcels with existing infrastructure that is expensive to build with new construction development.

The State enabling legislation provides for the preservation and protection of historic buildings, structures, appurtenances, and places that are of basic and vital importance for the development and maintenance of Savannah's tourism industry, its culture, and for the protection of property values because of their association with history, and their unique architectural details. An on-going update of the Streetcar Historic District Contributing Resources Map and periodic evaluation of the district's boundaries is vital to this mandate.

Creating a plan for on-going review, evaluation, and protection of these historic resources is consistent with the policy of protecting the City's historic buildings.

Mr. Wayne Noha, Board member, asked if the property owners have been notified of this, and if so, what were there responses?

Ms. Michalak said yes and the only phone call they received back was from the representative from SCAD calling asking us to explain what the letter meant. There were no positive or negative comments.

Mr. Noha asked if the brick building on Bull Street with the old Feed and Seed, is it the whole building or just the corner?

Ms. Michalak said it was just the corner portion, the rest of the building was built outside the period of significance.

Ms. Loreen Boles, Board member, said she is the SCAD representative. She does not understand why the building was non contributing before 2018, but now contributing.

Ms. Michalak said the areas were added through various text amendments throughout the years. Those areas were added based on the change with the adoption of the new zoning ordinance and closing the gap on the West side and various other reasons concerning. The Victory Village expansion, SCAD wanted a certain amount of density when they purchased that property so they were brought into the district. None of these precipitated a re-survey. Part of staffs role is to make sure these areas are resurveyed periodically. This is a very large district, and we started our resurvey with the expansion areas. Sometimes when you resurvey these areas you will find buildings that were potentially missed or that have been repaired and now you can tell historic material was there. The accessory dwelling unit/ lane dwelling, was not considered as important 20yrs ago.

Motion

Approval to Amend the Streetcar District Contributing Buildings Map to include nine (9) buildings constructed prior to 1937 and not previously listed as contributing and to expand the district boundary with an effective date of March 1, 2022.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Joseph Ervin

Second: Travis Coles

Joseph Ervin - Aye

W. Lee Smith - Not Present

Tom Woiwode - Aye

Travis Coles	- Aye
Joseph Welch	- Aye
Karen Jarrett	- Aye
Dwayne Stephens	- Not Present
Wayne Noha	- Aye
Jeff Notrica	- Aye
Laureen Boles	- Aye
Elizabeth Epstein	- Aye
Malik Watkins	- Aye
Jay Melder	- Aye

[12. ZONING MAP AMENDMENT | 7672 Johnny Mercer Blvd | Rezone request from R-1 / EO to R-3-12 / EO | File No. Z-1021-000179](#)

- 📎 [Maps Combined.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Vicinity.pdf](#)
- 📎 [R-1 Allowed Uses_Table_1.pdf](#)
- 📎 [R-1 Development Standards_Table_2.pdf](#)
- 📎 [R-3 Allowed Uses_Table_1.pdf](#)
- 📎 [R-3 Development Sandards_Table_2.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Site Visit.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Rezoning Opposition Petition.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Zoning Opposition Letter #1.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Letter of Objection #2.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Rezoning Opposition Petition Part 2.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Letter of Objection #3.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Letter of Objection #4.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Letter from County Fire Chief.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Letter from the Director of Water and Sewer Planning and Engineering Division - City of Savannah.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Trip Generation Letter.pdf](#)
- 📎 [GDPv6 24 Units GDP \(1\).pdf](#)
- 📎 [Staff Report.pdf](#)

Melissa Leto, Planner, stated the subject parcels are vacant lots of land within a heavily wooded forest, and adjacent to coastal marshland. The Bull River Bluff subdivision is also adjacent to the subject parcels and to the coastal marshland. The initial application request was for R-3-12, which would allow up to approximately forty-eight (48) units. The number of units is not feasible for the property based on the size. Based on the applicant's revised site plan, the best rezoning classification would be R-3-6, which will provide approximately twenty-four (24) units. The final unit count will be capped by the approved density.

The applicant organized a neighborhood meeting on October 28, 2021 at Talahi Island Community Center to discuss the rezoning request and to present a proposed conceptual site plan for a multi family 26 unit development to the adjacent property owners. This item was postponed by the applicant at the November 2, 2021, MPC meeting and was continued to the January 18th, 2022 MPC meeting to resolve outstanding issues. The items that led to the continuance were addressed by the applicant meeting with County Engineering.

The petitioner has reduced the proposed unit count from 26 to 24 which means the development meets the sufficient right of way width to construct the bike path and roadway pavement on 9th street. They have received preliminary approval from the County Fire Chief, the Water and Sewer Division confirmed that the development has capacity, and they can provide services. The petitioner provided conforming setbacks to the 35' Environmental Overlay buffer, 25' State Waters buffer. The item has received three letters of objection and a petition with 227 signatures against the proposed rezoning prior to the November MPC meeting. There have been no new letters of objection or support.

Patrick Connell, Attorney for the petitioner, asked the Commission to consider the extensive buffer that will be undisturbed 35ft plus 25ft. In addition to that, there is existing buffering on the Bull River condo side of the property.

Jay Maupin, Engineer, said behind the units, based upon the revised layout there is 240ft between the closest unit and the Bull River building. There is only one building at Bull River that is close to the unit. On SAGIS it shows two building pads. There is no actual building on one of those pads.

Mr. Connell said there is 240 ft from the back of one Bull River building and our proposed development. The woods will have to be left, this is a state water buffer and an additional 35ft buffer that will be woods.

Karen Jarrett, Vice Chair, asked what is the future land use for this property?

Ms. Leto said the Future Land Use Map designates the subject property as Residential Suburban single family. This designation is defined as areas identified for single family detached residential dwellings at gross area densities of five units per acre and less.

Ms. Jarrett asked if there was any way to identify how many of the signatures that were collected, are in the Bluff development.

Ms. Leto said they were all from the subdivision.

Tom Woiwode, Board member, asked if the petitions that were signed against this, were they against the original proposed density or was it just any development whatsoever?

Ms. Leto said it was the specific development which at the time presented 26 units at the neighborhood meeting (it has since reduced).

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Vivian Gharakhani, asked, about the table comparison of principle uses for R1-EO and R3-12, there is no comparison for R3-6.

Mr. Lotson said the R3 is the base zoning and the R6 or the 12 is just the density that would be permitted on the zoning but the uses are the same.

Ms. Gharakhani asked for R1 and R3, do they both require a 35 ft buffer? Who requires the 35ft buffer, the State or the County?

Mr. Lotson said the Marsh buffer requirement, which is what the question is regarding, there is a county buffer that is 35ft. Within that 35ft, there is a 25ft state waters buffer. Its not a 35ft plus a 25ft. The overall depth of the buffer is 35ft. There is an additional buffer within that 35ft.

Ms. Gharakhani said the over 200 individuals that signed the petition do live in the area of the Bull River Plantation as well as on Johnny Mercer. The petition was to keep the zoning the same, whether its 12 units per acre or 6 or anything less. We want to keep the zoning as R1 single family. If this property is changed to R3, it would be contradictory to the Comprehensive Plan that was approved in October 2021. Included in that Comprehensive Plan, there were multiple plans and studies that suggested Chatham County look at keeping the natural areas as much as possible and plant trees in areas where there are none.

Mr. Wayne Noha, Board member, asked what would be allowed today on this property if it remains R1, how many single family homes would potentially be there?

Mr. Lotson said it would be dependent upon water and sewer availability.

Mr. Maupin, said there are existing 10 lots of record that the County recognizes on these three parcels.

Janet Cameron Spencer stated she lives at the Bull River Plantation, right across from the proposed petition. Please explain the 240ft that was mentioned earlier.

Mr. Lotson said the 240ft was the distance from their closest building to the closest building within the Bull River Bluff Plantation development. The 35ft is the buffer that is required along that property line.

Ms. Spencer said most of her neighbors and herself are concerned about the wildlife that is there. This is like a nature preserve. We watch marsh hawks, heron, egrets, the marsh birds use this area as a breeding ground. There are endangered species of birds for those of us who are bird watchers. We are concerned that just the disruption that such a construction would require, would affect the viability of all that wildlife. There is nothing on Wilmington Island that has been preserved. Whitemarsh Island has a protected area but we don't. This is about the last piece of land that has not been developed.

Karen Mandel said she lives at Bull River Bluff, in the building directly across from the proposed rezoned development. I collected a lot of those 200 signatures and had the opportunity to speak to hundreds of people. They are all opposed to this. Nobody wants to see the natural beauty of the greenspace taken away. No one wants to see the increased traffic. There are traffic studies that say it won't be that bad but numbers on paper are a lot different than reality. If you have to leave the Bull River Plantation to turn onto Johnny Mercer, in the mornings or afternoons, it is rough. A lot of elderly people said when they are wanting to make a left turn, they actually have to make a right and then turn around at Chu's to get where they want to go. This is especially dangerous in the summertime with the Tybee traffic. Sometimes that traffic backs up past the Bull River Plantation entryway.

I bought my condo 2 1/2 years ago for the beauty, the quiet, the serenity, and the wildlife. Single family would have a lot less impact on the environment than these multi family monstrosities they want to put up. They say it won't effect our property values, but how couldn't it? I have been told by realtors, with the upgrades I have made, my condo could go for upwards of \$275,000. Do they want to buy it from me now? Make no mistake, if they build these places, even with lesser density than they are now proposing, it is going to affect the property values of all of us. Once they destroy the environment, take away the view, the open green space, they will not be worth that much. I do not feel that we should take the loss for the developers gain. They say that they are providing homes for people, but that is a joke. They are just trying to stuff as many multi family homes into as small an area as they can get away with. This is all for profit. Why should we let the developer take this last green space for an apartment? Why not a preserve, or a community center, that would benefit everyone. We urge you to deny the petition in its entirety.

Lauren Boles, Board member, asked how tall are the multi family units that you are proposing?

Mr. Connell, said these are not multi family, these are townhomes. They will be sold on the lots by a lot basis. They are not condos, they are simple townhomes. It is not multi family. The anticipated sale price of these are \$400,000 to \$450,000. The height is going to be two stories over garage. It will be within the 35ft height restriction as allowed by the Ordinance.

Penny Rafferty, said she is part of Building One. I am speaking against this. I do not feel like the builder has demonstrated specifically how these townhomes will sit on the lot, specific to my view. Right now, we back up to greenspace, we have a tide that comes in two times a day. I realize we have single family homes over there, we would like to keep them as single family homes. They are less invasive than a three story townhouse or two stories with a garage. It will impact our property values, regardless of whether the townhomes are \$450,000. If I have to look at a blue town home versus greenspace, that is going to impact my property value. I encourage you to say no to this proposal and keep it zoned the way it is.

Brenda Reamy said she is a brand new owner in Bull River Bluff. I bought the property two weeks ago with the anticipation of living out my golden years in someplace nice and quiet and serene where I can take photos of the birds and enjoy my life here on Wilmington Island. I did not hear anything about this before I closed on my property. I was going into this blind and it hit me like a ton of bricks. I just don't want any decisions made here, as much as it would affect me, I do not want to regret moving to Wilmington Island. I am an amateur photographer. I take photos of the wildlife in my backyard. I am afraid this will just go away and I will have to resign to the fact that I made a major mistake in moving here.

Mr. Noha, asked if the pad of unbuilt homes before Building One, are those buildable pads? Could homes be built there?

Mr. Lotson said yes.

Mr. Noha, asked how close would your development be to that pad?

Mr. Connell said he did not have the exact number, but it would have to be the 35ft buffer from the property line. There is a bit of natural draw that is State property. At bare minimum, 70 to 100ft.

Elaine Ardeneaux, said she is in the building next to Building One that is being talked about. My biggest question is about the buffer zone. On our side right now, there is not a tree line. What are the requirements for a tree line? You can have 35ft that is cleared, but you can also have 35ft where the trees remain.

Mr. Lotson stated there is 35ft undisturbed buffer between the subject property and the State waters. That would be required by Chatham County during the site review process if this is approved.

Mr. Noha asked if the 35ft undisturbed buffer does allow for view corridors?

Mr. Lotson said yes.

Mr. Jeff Kirkland, Chatham County Environmental Program Coordinator, stated the County riparian buffer does allow certain clearing and that is up to the Zoning Administrator to determine. The State waters buffer during construction allows no disturbance at all, period. During construction there should not be any work in the 25ft State waters buffer. That would be a buffer violation, and it would lead to stop work orders and potentially, fines from EPD.

Ms. Jarett asked if the 35ft buffer included the 25ft buffer. It's not 25ft and then another 35ft.

Mr. Maupin said that is correct. The County governs the first 10ft of this buffer as you are moving from the interior of a property towards the marsh. The first 10ft is regulated by Chatham County. The next 25ft is regulated by the State during land disturbing activities. Once the land disturbing activities are complete, then only the Chatham County buffer remains.

Sybil Parsons said she lives within a four minute walk of the properties that are being discussed. Are all the buildings being proposed going to be on one property?

Mr. Lotson, said the three parcels would have to be recombined prior to going through the development process.

Sybil Parsons asked about the lot size for each proposed townhome.

Mr. Maupin said, in general, the lots will be approximately 24ft wide by 46 - 48ft deep.

Sybil Parsons said her main concern is traffic. That particular area, Highway 80 going to Tybee, gets very congested, Johnny Mercer is the same, very congested. There are times when that traffic is backed up for miles. There are several restaurants in that area. I live in a complex that has 156 units, Bull River Bluff has approximately 142 units. That is around 300 cars, if there is only one car per unit. To be more realistic, you would double that, two cars per unit. That is a lot of traffic already there. There is River Walk, River Trace, and River Pointe to add to the traffic congestion as well. There is a new marina at Bull River which is drawing in a lot more traffic. There is a high-rise at Bull River Yacht Club. Traffic is a major concern.

Mr. Maupin said this is an R1 single family area. There is the Bull River PUD development with a density of about 12 units per acre existing. We are asking for a 6 unit per acre density. We do not want to do the single family residential development. With Bull River beside us and the R2 zoning in front of us, the duplexes and quad plexes in front of us, what is remaining is this little island of single family. One of the reasons we don't want to do a true single family development, is because of Charles Street, our only access, and it has a bike path on it. There will be 10 driveways traveling with one controlled access in and out roadway. The R1 allows 5 units per acre density, we are asking for a 6 unit per acre density. This makes a much cleaner project than 10 single houses facing Charles Street.

Mr. Connell said there is a 35ft buffer plus another 35ft buffer. There will be a significant buffer that cannot be disturbed.

Mr. Joseph Ervin, Board member, said, in essence, suitability. This would be feasible to put single family homes, this is what is economically feasible for this particular property based on Charles Street.

Mr. Connell said that is accurate. The product this would bring to the market is sorely needed in Chatham County. The developer is going to have to share the burdens for the public utility enhancements of this project. To get to the point where it is feasible to come in, put the road, and sewer modifications, there needs to be economies of scale. This is a way to do that, to minimize the development to the best extent possible. There is a huge buffer between here and the Bull River development.

Ms. Jarrett said she heard there were 10 lots approved by the County, there were 5 units per acre that was residential density approved and the developer is asking for 6 units per acre. If 10 houses are approved by the County now, why are there 24 townhomes being proposed at 6 units per acre?

Mr. Maupin said there are 10 lots of record, its not that the County approved it at that. It is what is historically in place. Some of the lots are long, that go from Charles Street back to the marsh. Some of the lots are larger than one acre.

Ms. Jarrett said the 10 lots of record could be split into 20 lots then.

Mr. Maupin said, theoretically, you would have 10 single family homes sandwiched between duplexes and quadplexes along Johnny Mercer and then condos behind them. You would have 10 individual driveways, all accessing Charles Street and utility patterns as well.

Ms. Jarrett said clarify why 10 lots at 5 units per acre is not the same thing as 24 lots at 6 units per acre or 26 lots at 6 units per acre. What you are saying, is there 10 lots that are approved. But if there are 10 lots that were approved, couldn't there be 5 lots per acre single family?

Mr. Maupin said there are 10 lots, 4 acres total. The existing zoning allows up to 5 units per acre in that zoning district.

Ms. Jarrett originally made motion to deny the zoning request application with Mr. Watkins seconding the motion. The original vote 3 yes - 7 no- 1 abstained. A new motion was then made and passed.

Motion

Denial of the Petitioner's request to rezone three parcels on Johnny Mercer Boulevard from the R-1/EO (Once-Family Residential & Environmental Overlay) Zoning District to R-3-12.

Approval of a R-3-6/EO (Multi-Family Residential - 6 units per gross acre & Environmental Overlay) Zoning District.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Joseph Ervin

Second: Jeff Notrica

Joseph Ervin	- Aye
W. Lee Smith	- Not Present
Tom Woiwode	- Aye
Travis Coles	- Aye
Joseph Welch	- Aye
Karen Jarrett	- Nay
Dwayne Stephens	- Not Present
Wayne Noha	- Aye
Jeff Notrica	- Aye
Laureen Boles	- Aye
Elizabeth Epstein	- Nay
Malik Watkins	- Nay

Jay Melder

- Abstain

[13. ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT | Section 8.7.11 | File No. 20-001996](#)

[Staff Report - 21-006547-ZA.pdf](#)

Mr. Marcus Lotson, Director of Development Services, stated the City of Savannah is proposing to amend the Home Occupation section of the Zoning Ordinance, specific to adding conditions to the Child/Adult Daycare Home use within certain zoning districts.

The Child/Adult Daycare use is defined as “A facility that provides care and supervision for more than six (6) but no more than 12 children or adults as an accessory use of an operator-occupied residence and which is licensed by the State of Georgia. This number shall not include children or adults who reside in the home.”

The use is allowed as a home occupation providing care to up to six children within Residential zoning districts provided certain conditions are met. One of these requirements is that in any Residential zoning district and any TN- zoning district, the use shall be located on a street classified as a collector or arterial.

In any Residential zoning district, if the use is located on a street classified as Residential or greater as identified in Appendix A-1, the applicant must provide a site plan for approval and include:

1. A minimum of 60 foot of off-street stacking shall be required per Table 9.3-9 Vehicle Staking Requirements. Adequate vehicle queuing shall be provided on site to prevent the obstruction of travel lanes that are adjacent City streets. The site shall be evaluated for feasibility to incorporate a circular driveway with two curb cuts if permitted by the City’s Traffic Engineering Manual: and The City of Savannah Traffic Engineer shall review the site for adequate traffic circulation and traffic safety. Such use shall not be permitted within 500 feet, as measured in any direction from property line to property line, of the same use.

The applicant shall provide a letter from the homeowner's association, where applicable, stating that the use is not prohibited by a Declaration of Covenants.

The Home Occupation section of the zoning ordinance allows certain uses that can be compatible with residential areas and provide neighborhood scale services to the residents. The proposed revisions would allow for each Child/Adult Daycare Home to be vetted for compatibility and the diminution of any potential impacts on nearby properties. Based on the number of requests received by City staff, there appears to be a need for additional neighborhood childcare services. The proposed revisions will allow a full review of the site to occur before such use can be established within a neighborhood.

Motion

Approval of the proposed Text Amendment to Section 8.7.11 Home Occupation.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Jay Melder

Second: Travis Coles

Joseph Ervin - Aye

W. Lee Smith - Not Present

Tom Woiwode - Aye

Travis Coles - Aye

Joseph Welch - Aye

Karen Jarrett - Aye

Dwayne Stephens	- Not Present
Wayne Noha	- Aye
Jeff Notrica	- Aye
Laureen Boles	- Aye
Elizabeth Epstein	- Aye
Malik Watkins	- Aye
Jay Melder	- Aye

X. Presentations

14. Coastal Empire Fairgrounds Redevelopment Plan

📎 [MPC Overview.pdf](#)

Mr. Dave Jones, Senior Partner at P3 Joint Venture Group, stated the proposed usage for the acres are:
20.5 Acres will be retained as a Nature Preserve as a conserved wetlands area with low impact trails.
2.4 acres will be developed as a Central Park with landscaping, walkways, a fountain and off-street parking for citizens of all ages.
18.3 acres will be developed for active recreational purposes including multi-purpose playing fields, courts and an indoor recreation facility.
14.5 acres will be developed as residential/ mixed use with about half of the dwellings designed for elderly residents and including a sustainable amount of neighborhood retail and office uses, and ample off-street parking.
6.2 acres will be developed as a Production Sound and Video studio and Creative Exchange Network to provide employment and career development opportunities for area residents.
The remaining 11.4 acres will be developed as public streets and Right of Way with sidewalks, tree lawns, and on-street parking.

Phase 1, the intention is to be multi family. The current projection is roughly 80 units. There is a critical community outreach component to get feedback. Last Wednesday we launched that effort. There were roughly 67 people virtually as well as a well attended live event at the Civic Center. We are working on additional meetings with the community leaders. There will be community presentations. There are multiple ways for the community to respond and give feedback. The website for this project is www.newfairgrounds.com

Mr. Wayne Noha, Board member, asked if this project will have access to the existing community center and lake. Will the community be able to access that as well or is there a fence separating this?

Mr. Jones said the community will be able to access the community center and lake.

Mr. Jay Melder, City Manager, asked for unit counts and affordability breakdowns on the multi family area.

Mr. Jones said there is approximately 14.5 acres allocated. The current projection is approximately 400 dwelling units in single and multi family homes, including elderly housing. Gentrification is important, we do not have that breakdown at this time.

Mr. Melder said it is important for this information to be brought back to the Commission next time. It is important for the Commission to know the timeline that the development team is working under which the City is trying to navigate alongside with you, as well so you can put in for tax credit application this year.

Mr. Jones said they have put together a master timeline. Included in that timeline is a May 20th application date for some tax credits for the multi family. That helps with the overall funding of the project, as well as it's performance, which lowers the entry points and provides even better pricing for the people who want to rent these units.

XI. Other Business

XII. Adjournment

15. Adjourn

There being no further business to present before the Board, the January 18, 2022 Regular Metropolitan Planning Commission Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Melanie Wilson
Executive Director

MW/sh

The Chatham county-Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission provides meeting minutes which are adopted by the respective Board. Verbatim transcripts of minutes are the responsibility of the interested party.

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