



C H A T H A M C O U N T Y - S A V A N N A H
METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION

"Planning the Future - Respecting the Past"

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: The Planning Commission

FROM: MPC Staff

DATE: July 26, 2022

SUBJECT: Proposed text amendment to the Savannah Zoning Ordinance

Re: Amendment to Section 7.13, Hotel Development Overlay District
Applicant: Harold Yellin, Agent for Christian Chamblee, Manger Building, LLC.

Melissa Paul-Leto, MPC Project Planner

MPC FILE NO: 22-002694-ZA

ISSUE:

A proposal to amend the Savannah Zoning Ordinance relative to re-establishment of historic hotels within the Hotel Development Overlay District to include existing contributing buildings located within the Hotel Development Overlay District, that were converted from hotels to another conforming use within the Period of Significance (1733-1960) as defined in Section 7.8.5 and may be re-established as a hotel use once again.

BACKGROUND:

In the Savannah Zoning Ordinance, new hotels are permitted only within designated areas as shown in Savannah Historic District, Hotel Development Overlay District.

The intent of this overlay district is to establish standards to guide the size and location of future hotel development within the Savannah Historic District.

The overlay district distinguishes hotel categories by large hotels (75 guest rooms or more) and small hotels (16-74 guest rooms) based on the Smith Travel Accommodations Report (STAR) program used by the global hotel industry. STAR benchmarks the performance of hotels in competitive markets. The local tourism industry uses STAR data to gauge market demand and plan accordingly.

The following are approvals leading to the creation of The Savannah Historic District, Hotel Development Overlay District which identifies areas where small and large hotels are appropriate:

- On November 21, 2017, City Council approved a text amendment based on the Mayor and Aldermen's concerns regarding an increase in hotel development in the Savannah Historic District, particularly with regards to impacts on residential areas and the possibility that hotel development may discourage new residential development. A study was undertaken

by MPC staff that identified regulations and policies that could make hotel development easier to pursue than residential development. The Savannah Development and Renewal Authority and City staff prepared a residential study that later led to the text amendment that was approved on November 21, 2017, to eliminate residential density requirements for the Savannah Historic District. As part of the study, MPC was also requested to provide text amendments to determine areas where large and small hotels would be most appropriate.

- On January 12, 2018, the Planning Commission voted to recommend approval of the Hotel Development Overlay District and Lodging Establishments text amendment.
- The following month, City Council approved the amendment on February 1, 2018, to the Zoning Ordinance regarding the Hotel Development Overlay District and Lodging Establishments.

FINDINGS:

1. The Savannah Historic District, Hotel Development Overlay District shows where hotels are permitted. Locations were regulated according to size. Areas that will permit small hotels (16-74 rooms) are shown in yellow. Areas that will permit small and large hotels (75 or more rooms) are shown in green. Red areas indicate that hotels are not permitted at all.

Locations are further restricted by street. Hotels must be located on one of the streets or lanes identified on the map. They include all or portions of: Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, Montgomery Street, Whitaker Street, Drayton Street, Abercorn Street (Bay to Oglethorpe), Fahm Street, Ann Street, River Street, Indian Street, Bay Street, Bryan Street (west of Lincoln), Broughton Street, Oglethorpe Avenue, Liberty Street, Zublely Street, Turner Boulevard, Louisville Road, and Jones Street (west of MLK).

2. On June 7, 2022, Harold Yellin, Agent for Christian Chamblee, Manger Building, LLC submitted a text amendment request to the City of Savannah to amend the Savannah Historic District, Hotel Development Overlay District Map 7.13-1 to include a portion of Bull Street and Congress Street as streets where hotels are permitted. The request is to allow the Manger Building, located at 7 East Congress Street, on the corner of Congress and Bull Street to be restored and re-established as its original hotel use (from 1912 through 1977).

MPC staff began researching through historical files as well as Sanborn Maps to find other existing buildings located within the Savannah Historic District, Hotel Development Overlay District that were once a hotel and may in the future want to be a hotel once again. Staff's research found that there are two existing historic buildings located within the Savannah Historic District, Hotel Development Overlay District that were once hotels.

1. The Manger Building, located at 7 East Congress Street was originally addressed as 32 Bull Street. This building was constructed circa 1912-1913 as The Savannah Hotel by architect, WL Stoddart. There were several additions, remodeling, and restorations that took place through the years.
 - In 1919 - A small section of the Congress Lane side was added.
 - In 1982 - Restoration of elevators, wrecking of existing metal partitions.
 - In 1983 – Upper level of building, removal of exterior balcony and stucco piers replacement of red and orange with three new piers.

- In 1989 – Completion of remodeling of third and fourth floor offices.
2. Moon River Brewing Company, located at 21 West Bay Street. This building was constructed in 1821 as the City Hotel. It was used as a hotel for an unknown period. By 1884, it had been converted into office spaces with a printing shop in the back. Currently, it is used as a brewery and restaurant space.

MPC staff met with the applicant to discuss altering the text amendment request to add a portion of Congress and Bull Streets to the Savannah Historic District, Hotel Development Overlay District. As Bay Street is currently an identified street within the Savannah Historic District, Hotel Development Overlay District, the Moon River Brewing Company, located at 21 West Bay Street currently has the right to re-establish the existing building to a hotel use once again. Leaving, The Manger Building as the one remaining existing historic building that was once a hotel and is located within the Savannah Historic District, Hotel Development Overlay District.

The applicant and staff have agreed the best direction would be to include an additional condition in Section 7.13.5 Hotel Use Conditions to allow for a re-establishment of a historic hotel.

The following is the recommended text amendment request:

Section 7.13.5 Hotel Use Conditions states the use conditions that apply to new hotels. The following uses shall apply:

- a. **Location:** New hotels are permitted only within designated areas of the Historic District as shown Figure 7.13-1 Location is based on street designation and the “small” or “large” hotel classification.
- b. **Frontage:** New hotels must be located on a designated street as shown on Figure 7.13-1.
- c. **Conversion of Residential Structures Classified as Historic:** Any single-family residential structure identified on the Historic Buildings Map for the Historic District cannot be converted to a hotel use. Single-family residential includes the following: detached, attached, semi-attached, row, end-row, and accessory dwellings. This condition applies only to the areas designated as “Small Hotels Only” on Figure 7.13-1.
- d. **Re-establishment of a Historic Hotel**
Existing contributing buildings located within the Hotel Development Overlay District, that were converted from hotels to another conforming use within the Period of Significance, as defined in Sec. 7.8.5 may be re-established as a hotel use. Section 7.13.6 (c) criteria does not apply to the re-establishment of a historic hotel. In such case, the Historic Preservation Officer shall validate the historic use prior to the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy.

7.13.6 Effect on Existing Hotels and Applications

a. Effects on Existing Hotels with Lawfully-issued and Valid Tax Certificates

As of the Effective Date of this Ordinance:

- i. Any existing hotels that are non-conforming or become non-conforming by virtue of the adoption of this ordinance will be considered conforming with regards to use, use location, and use conditions.
- ii. Lawfully existing business tax certificates shall not be terminated, and applications for renewal or transfer of such certificates will not be denied.

b. Effect on Existing Applications

As of the Effective Date of this Ordinance, if a valid application has been received by the City for any permit, license, variance or other approval which is required by the City relative to the development of a hotel, compliance with the zoning requirements in effect at the time of receipt shall be required.

c. Time Period for Re-establishing a Hotel

- i. As of the Effective Date of this Ordinance, if a hotel has not been in operation and a business tax certificate has expired (not renewed or transferred), the time period for re-establishing the use or obtaining a new business tax certificate for the same physical location is 12 months.

If a tax certificate for a hotel is terminated, not renewed or transferred within 12 months from the date of termination, regardless of whether the use is intended to be abandoned, the use cannot be re-established unless it complies with the requirements of this Section.

POLICY ANALYSIS:

The proposed Ordinance allows an existing contributing building that is located within the Hotel Development Overlay District that historically was once a hotel and has since been converted into another conforming use within the Period of Significance to be re-established once again. It is important, however, that the Historic Preservation Officer shall validate the historic use prior to the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy. The proposed Ordinance does not apply to vacant lots and non-contributing buildings. It only applies to existing contributing buildings within the Hotel Development Overlay District.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Recommend approval of the request to amend the Zoning Ordinance as proposed.
2. Recommend an alternate amendment.
3. Recommend denial of the request.

RECOMMENDATION:

MPC staff recommends **denial** of the applicant's text amendment request to amend the Savannah Historic District, Hotel Development Overlay District Map 7.13-1 to include a portion of Bull Street and Congress Street as streets where hotels are permitted.

MPC staff recommends **approval** of the alternative amendment to allow existing contributing buildings located within the Hotel Development Overlay District, that were converted from hotels to another conforming use within the Period of Significance, as defined in Sec. 7.8.5 may be re-established as a hotel use.

Note: This recommendation could change subject to new information provided at the meeting. Final decisions will be made by the Commission at the public hearing based on information provided at the meeting, as well as information submitted for the staff recommendation.

