



Chatham County - Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission

Final Agenda

February 7, 2023 MPC Meeting

Members Present: Dwayne Stephens, Chairman
Tom Woiwode
Michael Kaigler
Wayne Noha
Karen Jarrett
Travis Coles
Jeff Notrica
Laureen Boles
Shedrick Coleman

Members Absent: Joseph Welch
Malik Watkins
Elizabeth Epstein
Joseph Ervin
Jay Melder

Staff Present: Melanie Wilson, Executive Director
Marcus Lotson, Director of Development Services
Melissa Paul-Leto, Senior 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

IV. Notices, Proclamations and Acknowledgements

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

[1. REZONING MAP AMENDMENT | 1800 E. 63rd Street | Rezone from RSF-6 to RMF-2-20 | 22-004421](#)

Motion

Item removed from the final agenda.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Travis Coles

Second: Wayne Noha

Joseph Ervin - Aye

Tom Woiwode - Aye

Travis Coles	- Aye
Joseph Welch	- Not Present
Shedrick Coleman	- Aye
Karen Jarrett	- Aye
Dwayne Stephens	- Aye
Wayne Noha	- Aye
Jeff Notrica	- Aye
Laureen Boles	- Aye
Elizabeth Epstein	- Not Present
Malik Watkins	- Not Present
Jay Melder	- Not Present
Michael Kaigler	- 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 Items Requested to be Withdrawn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

[2. Approval of the January 17, 2023 Meeting Minutes](#)

📎 [01.17. 2023 Meeting Minutes.pdf](#)

Motion

Approval of the January 17, 2023 meeting minutes.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Travis Coles

Second: Wayne Noha

Joseph Ervin	- Aye
Tom Woiwode	- Aye
Travis Coles	- Aye
Joseph Welch	- Not Present
Shedrick Coleman	- Aye
Karen Jarrett	- Aye
Dwayne Stephens	- Aye
Wayne Noha	- Aye
Jeff Notrica	- Aye
Laureen Boles	- Aye
Elizabeth Epstein	- Not Present
Malik Watkins	- Not Present

Jay Melder	- Not Present
Michael Kaigler	- Aye

VIII. Old Business

3. MAP AMENDMENT | Wild Heron Road | Rezone from A-1 to RMF-1 and RSF-4 | 22-002692-ZA

- 📎 [22-397 FAWCETT TRACT CONCEPT PLAN.pdf](#)
- 📎 [22-397 WILD HERON AND KING GEORGE ROUNDABOUT_1.24.23_color.pdf](#)
- 📎 [County DoE Comments.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Permitted Uses A-1.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Permitted Uses -RMF-1.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Permitted Uses RSF-4.pdf](#)
- 📎 [TIAS Fawcett Tract 90 TH 309 SF Aug 29 2022 \(6\).pdf](#)
- 📎 [Staff Report 020723.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Development Standards .pdf](#)
- 📎 [Maps Combined.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Typical Street Sections.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Context Aerial.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Written Neighborhood Correspondence.pdf](#)

Mr. Marcus Lotson, Director of Development Services, said the petitioner is requesting to rezone the subject property from A-1 (Agriculture) to RSF-4 (Single family residential – 4,000 square foot minimum lot size) and RMF-1 (Multifamily Residential).

The property is a part of the Georgetown subdivision, a single-family residential subdivision between King George Boulevard and Chevis Road. The petitioner is requesting rezoning for the purpose of developing the property with single family detached residential homes and attached townhomes. The subject property is a portion of an undeveloped tract of land on the south side of Wild Heron Road between King George Boulevard and Chevis Road. It was annexed into the City of Savannah in 2005 but all adjoining properties north, east, and west are in Unincorporated Chatham County. The overall tract, known as the Fawcett Tract, is a total of 227 acres in size. The portion proposed to be rezoned is 105 acres. The development pattern on the north side of Wild Heron Road includes primarily single-family residences on relatively large lots, generally +/-85-feet in width and +/-125-feet in depth. It also includes attached single family residential uses generally +/- 45-feet in width and +/- 120-feet in depth. These patterns are the norm within the Georgetown and Southern Woods neighborhoods. The area also includes townhome developments such as Wild Heron Villas and Trellis Way. West of the subject property residential lots are rural in nature and generally larger, 2+ acres in size.

After the initial submittal of the zoning request, it was determined that a Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) would be needed prior to the Planning Commission considering the rezoning. Because Chatham County Schools were not in session at the time. The study, which is attached to the agenda, was held over until school was back in session, thus the delay in the rehearing. One of the prevailing issues is the road network and the capacity, over time, to manage the increase in residential density. Wild Heron Road extends from Grove Point Road to Chevis Road and also intersects with King George Boulevard. These are the north / south access points for Georgetown, Southern Woods, and the other neighborhoods in the vicinity. Currently, traffic patterns include commuters using these roads to avoid slowdowns on Highway 17. In terms of current volume, the TIA indicates that at AM/PM peak hours, intersections function at acceptable levels. It further indicates that when considering a no build scenario, the only significant change in delay by 2025 would be at the Wild Heron & King George intersection. However, on a build out scenario, the delay at that intersection would be increased significantly and create a failure at that location and at Wild Heron and Cherryfield Lane.

In an effort to mitigate the intersection failure and improve traffic flow, the applicant has provided a concept roundabout for consideration by Chatham County. As proposed, the roundabout would be placed partially on the Fawcett Tract and the remainder would be within existing right of way at Wild Heron Road and King George Boulevard. While the roundabout has not been modeled to determine what impact it would have on delays, the County Engineers office has indicated that this type of improvement could be beneficial, but the current design may not be feasible and would likely need redesign. In addition, the issue of cost responsibility and impacts on nearby residences would need to be addressed between the developer and Chatham County.

Chatham County Engineering has also concluded that any development of the subject property would need to include the dedication of additional right of way to allow for future improvements. Along Wild Heron Road.

The subdivision is proposed to include single family detached and single family attached residences. The proposed development pattern is dissimilar in terms of lot sizes that are generally found in the surrounding neighborhoods. For the detached portion, the proposed RSF-4 zoning allows a minimum lot width of 40 feet. The applicant has indicated a mix of 40 and 50-foot-wide lots. While these development standards have become more prominent in the years since Georgetown was developed, this is not consistent with the residential character of the area. Under the current zoning (A-1) single family residential is a permitted use which requires a minimum lot area of 2 acres.

The subject property is the largest remaining tract within the Georgetown neighborhood. It is a mature single-family neighborhood with a development pattern that consists primarily of large lot residential uses. The pattern would be considerably different on the subject property with the development standards of the proposed RSF- 4 zoning district. Although there is likely to be a mix of lot sizes if the property is developed as proposed, the district permits a minimum lot width of 40 feet and a minimum lot area of 4,000 square feet.

The proposed RMF-1 zoning classification is also requested to accommodate townhomes. There are examples of semi-attached townhome developments in the vicinity, including Wild Heron Villas. The prevailing housing type and lots, however, are designed to be compatible with surrounding detached products. The City Ordinance allows semi-attached single family residential in the RTF (Residential Two Family) zoning district, while the proposed RMF-1 district would allow traditional apartments, which if developed, would be out of character for the area.

The impact of the proposed development would not be fully realized for years to come. We can make certain assumptions, however, about increases in traffic volumes and need for public services. Because it is likely that growth in West Chatham will outpace infrastructure and service improvements, it is necessary to consider how quality of life may be affected by zoning and development changes. While staff finds that the existing zoning is probably not the highest and best use for the property, a development pattern more suited for an exurban area could be accommodated with alternative zoning districts from those which have been proposed. As a practical matter, larger lot subdivisions may not be as marketable, however, in review of the development pattern, they are more compatible than lots permitted by the requested zoning.

Based upon the existing zoning pattern and character of the area, as well as the review criteria, Staff recommends denial of the request to rezone the subject property from A-1 to RSF-4 and RMF-1.

Ms. Karen Jarrett, Board Member, asked, do you know of any road improvements that are planned for this area that would alleviate some of the problems from the Richmond Hill people cutting through this neighborhood?

Mr. Lotson said, the only project I am aware of is some proposed improvements for Chevis Road. I do not know if that includes widening. To answer your question specifically, I do not know if that addresses the issue that exist here today in terms of the volume coming from Richmond Hill through Wild Heron Road.

Mr. Travis Coles, Vice Chair, asked, would staff's recommendation be different if it was an RSF-6 zoning?

Mr. Lotson said, we did not review this as a request for RSF-6. There are examples of RSF-6 in this neighborhood generally that are compatible with the overall pattern. I think there is some likelihood that we

would have a different recommendation with the zoning district that we thought was more compatible with the area.

Mr. William Faucet, Owner of the Property, said I am one of the current owners, together with my two sisters, of this property. This property has been in our family since 1935. I lived in this area my entire life, minus the last couple of years. I have seen a tremendous amount of growth over the years. I have thought long and hard about who to partner with. There is no way I could take on this project myself. The Wardlaws have been a very prominent developer in the area. My family has been very active in this community all these years. We have donated ROW's for roads such as King George Blvd to tie into Wild Heron to keep the double medium in the Rice Mill area and on down. At one-point Kings Grant was having flooding issues, they came to us needing help. They needed somewhere for the water to go. We let them construct a lagoon to alleviate the drainage. We were not paid for the property or anything for doing that. The community started running out of water at one time, we had an area in the corner of the property that we donated for the community well. As time went on, they started running out of water again, there wasn't enough water in the fire hydrants to put out a fire. They wanted to loop the system in around to Bradley Point. They came to us wanting to run a water main through the center of our property that tied in back through Vallenrosa over to US 17. In order to do that, they twisted our hand and wanted us to annex into the city. We did that. The property has been in the City for almost 20 years now. That raised our tax rate, and we received no benefit or service from the city during this time.

Mr. Jack Wardlaw, representing Landmark 24 Homes of Savannah, said we have met with the community on two separate occasions. During those meetings we had numerous questions regarding the development. Traffic being the most predominant issues, second was the density or zoning of the property, third was infrastructure relating to schools, fire safety, and property values. the Master Plan that has been shown, shows two different type of lot sizes. There are actually three different types of lot sizes. One, a townhome section that transitions, across the street there is a duplex development, to the west of that, there is a lot of manufactured housing along Chevis Road. We are trying to create a way to transition from that type and what lends itself across the street. We are proposing a townhome development, just like others we have built in the City of Savannah. It is not a cheap product; it is about \$275,000-\$300,000 home. It will be an 1800 square foot home. They will come with garages. They become a first-time buyer home. It is really hard today to find product that is for the first-time buyer, for the single mother, for retired person trying to downsize. They want a product that is lock and leave, where they do not have to maintain the outside of the house.

In the other area, we are proposing 50 x 120ft lots. That is a 6000ft lot. Across the street, a lot of those have the same size lots. They may be 60ft in the front, but they are only 100ft deep. We developed several of those across the street. We feel we are in line with what is going on in this area. It is compatible with the development across the street. It transitions with what is going on at Chevis Road. We developed a couple of neighborhoods that are in this vicinity, one being Sweetwater. Those are 50ft lots. Everything that we are developing now, is 50ft lots. It originally started as a larger lot development at 60 and 70 ft lots. Now they are all 50ft. That is the standard size that is happening, not just in Savannah, but nationwide. We programmed this development for the average citizen, one struggling to pay the bills but wants to buy a house. The only way people are going to be able to attain that dream is to have something affordable. Affordable today, is not \$275,000, that is the median price of homes in Georgetown today. We are talking \$375,000-\$450,000. We will have a townhome product that is \$275,000-\$300,000. In Pooler, everywhere you look, 50ft lots are the standard. We are selling homes in other areas over \$400,000. There will be several amenities with these homes.

We have looked at what is affected on the traffic. You already have one intersection that has failed. It is failing today because of the cut-thru traffic coming from Richmond Hill. We provided you with information on the schools. The number of kids attending schools in the district has been going down over the last 5 years. We do not believe we will have any effect on those schools. The development will take, we estimate, 16 years to build out. We average approximately 25 homes per year in a development. The first year we build, we will build 25 homes and hopefully sell 25. The effect on schools will be 3 kids per year. There are 4915 homes/families in Georgetown right now. 609 kids going to the schools. That is only 12% effect on schools. Property values, we will be well above what the current median property values are in Georgetown. What we are asking you to look at is what we are trying to deliver for middle America. We will work with the County to address the issue with the rotary. You can't stop the traffic coming from Richmond Hill.

Mr. Todd Selhagen, Traffic Engineer, said the findings are such with the traffic, yes, we have an impact on the intersection which we suggest making into a roundabout. The roundabout that is a dingle lane, goes around, has continuous flow, and allows the two critical moves. The two movements are eastbound to northbound and southbound right to westbound. Basically, going to and from the elementary school above and cutting through around to get to SR204. A continuous lane roundabout will operate from a service level F to a service level C. This would take care of the problem that exists today with this three-legged intersection. One

of the tasks at hand, is to make this meet the design criteria. We are going to create across the frontage of Wild Heron, on the main access to the single-family, a left turn lane. The left turn lane will allow transition for through traffic to not be impacted by left turn traffic. That would be a westbound left going into the subdivision by default. There will also be a left turn lane because of the taper and the design requirements and one that would go into Cherry Field. Traffic circulation will be improved, not necessarily the delay, the delay will still be in the magnitude of about 50 seconds delay with that improvement.

Mr. Robert Brannen, Attorney for the Petitioner, said our position is that this is a compatible neighborhood, and these are 50 x 100ft lots, 6000 sq ft which is what we see in the Georgetown area. We think the biggest concern is the traffic. We are willing to make the zoning condition on us reaching an agreement with the county to provide a roundabout or some other type of traffic facility to solve that problem. We feel we will leave the neighborhood in better condition than when we found it.

Aaron Whitley, Commissioner, said the builders did have two community meetings, I was able to attend one. I have received a lot of comments from my constituents in opposition of this. The two biggest challenges mentioned, safety and traffic. Looking at safety, when we look at the adjacent properties, we do see some of the smaller lot sized, but all of those are in incorporated areas. I serve as the only local representation my constituents have as unincorporated citizens. The absence of walkways on Wild Heron Road is going to be a challenge. To clarify, I know there were discussions/questions about there being any plans for the county to do anything with Chevis Road. We do have a SPLOST funded sidewalk project that is bringing a sidewalk from US 17 down to the Burroughs part. However, as far as expansion and things of that nature, that is not necessarily been a discussion that I am aware of. The incompatibility with the adjacent properties, this is a sad symptom of annexation without regard for the unincorporated citizens. Another issue is the drainage basin. There are wetlands in that area. As we continue to add more permeable locations, that will just put greater stress on an already stressed drainage basin. When we think about first responders trying to access some of these areas, it is one way in and one way out for not only the Townhomes, but also the home portion of this development. You pack in a lot of traffic, not only coming from Bryan County, but the existing traffic as well. At the end of the day, we understand growth is taking place, if we could have larger lots that match the neighboring subdivisions that would be great. I would have to wait a long time to get out of my subdivision.

Mr. John Taylor, member of the public, said I live in Southern Woods on Duckville Chase. I have been there for over 20 years. I think the traffic study is seriously flawed. It does not actually study the area where the greatest impact of these vehicles will be. Most American homes today, will have at least two cars per home. If you have 400 homes, that means 800 vehicles added to this neighborhood. While the area that they originally described as being difficult on Wild Heron and King George Blvd, where they are going to put the roundabout, and the area in front of the elementary school is of concern. The real concern from a traffic standpoint is getting out of the neighborhood. Most of those 800 cars in that neighborhood will be going into Savannah in the morning to go to work. There is a 100-yard-long entrance way right across from the Food Lion shopping center. There are two traffic lights in that 100 years space. Every single car that leaves the neighborhood has to get into the single lane to get into the entrance to Hwy 204 to go downtown or into Savannah. Adding 800 cars is not going to make this better, it will not improve the quality of life for the people here. It will make it miserable.

Ms. Catherine Lilly, member of the public, said I have lived in the Georgetown area for 16 years now. My question was about the water table. How is the area going to be impacted by the water usage?

Ms. Cheryl Odell, member of the public, said I am opposed to this. I am a brand-new transplant from California. I lived in Huntington Beach where we saw the growth over build the city. We are still seeing it, which is why I left. I came to Savannah and could have moved into any area. We settled on Wild Heron; I am the third house from where the traffic circle would be. This is my dream home. We moved here because of the woods, because it is beautiful. The traffic, we watch it every day. We watch possible accidents in that area. the people on the corner of King George and Wild Heron will all suffer with that traffic circle. We will suffer with all of these homes. These are very small lots. We all have large lots. We moved to this area for a feel.

Mr. David Whitley, member of the public, said I attended the meeting that was sponsored by Landmark on January 25th. In that meeting I asked specific questions about parking at the houses. They stated that there would be two parking places inside the garage of the homes and there would be two more parking places outside on the driveway leading up to the garage. I also asked if the streets would be wide enough so that people can park on both sides of the street and still have room in the middle for two lanes of traffic to pass each other. They said no. They said their covenant would have provision in there that would prohibit the homeowners from parking on the street. Yesterday I went through all the information on the Metropolitan Planning Commissions website, as far as the agenda and all the background information for this meeting. It says nothing about garages at every house. It says nothing about this covenant. It says in there, the building lot is going to be 4000 sq ft and 40ft wide, this gentleman just said it is going to be 50ft wide. I have a lot of experience designing buildings, all of this information needs to be spilled out in the paperwork before this thing is approved. The way it is written now, they could go back and build anything they want.

Mr. Rick Ellison, member of the public, said I have been in this area for 10 years. I am very concerned about the traffic. The roundabout that impacts the meridian that has beautiful oak trees. I do not want those torn down because we need two lanes of traffic. The high school cannot handle the growth in our area. This project is detrimental to our quality of life.

Ms. Margaret Kramer Ellison, member of the public, said I looked for two years to find the perfect house, I found it 10 years ago on Wild Heron Road. There is something about the area that made it feel like a home and not just moving into Savannah. I live between King George and Grove Point Road. Because of the use of the road for fire and police, they can't put speed bumps in, and the cars use this area like a racetrack. There may not be a lot of younger people here today, that is because they are at work. It appears on Wild Heron Road, there are more senior citizens. Right off of Wild Heron Road, the subdivisions, those are younger people with young children. The mailboxes really should be moved to the back entrances because of the speeding cars and the hazard of being hit. One man has already been hit on Grove Point Road. The City is the one that controls the property, they are the ones that will get all the taxes, the County gets nothing except the cost of doing improvements on the roads.

Ms. Lisa Lovitsch, member of the public, said I live on Wild Heron Road. I have seen a lot of speeding and traffic issues. Unfortunately adding 800 more vehicles will be an issue. I have worked for many builders, I understand the planning, however, I feel the amount of impact this will have and the number of lots that are there is sorely going to affect the look and feel of the community.

Ms. Kallie Michels, member of the public, said what is not being considered is the traffic circle. It makes the cut-thru more appealing. The traffic leaving Richmond Hill will think they can go even quicker through this. I live on Wild Heron directly across from where you will be building, there are a lot of dead animals. A lot of that is the traffic, if there are dead animals, there could be dead people.

Ms. Susana Lane, member of the public, said I live in the Village of Wild Heron. I am the spokesperson for the 80 houses that are there. I have lived there for 20 years and raised two children there. We moved there for the integrity of the neighborhood. The integrity is what everyone keeps talking about. There have been many concerns, there have been decreased property values, increased traffic, and overall safety concerns. We have not discussed the wildlife that will be displaced or the long-term effect of what this is going to look like in George Town as a whole. This might be historical land, I know it has been in Mr. Faucets family for a while, but there has been no cultural resource report done so we do not know much about that. I have been to all of the Landmark meetings as a representative of our neighborhood. The density of the homes is something that we really are concerned with as well as the decrease of our property values. Landmark has said that this will not affect our property values. The density of those homes, King George Blvd to Chevis Rd, combine all of the homes on that side of the road, those homes will equal what this small parcel of land will be. You are talking 400 houses and 90 Townhomes in a very small area. That is a huge concern.

Mr. Clark Namias, member of the public, said I live right across the street from where this project is going to be. Landmark says it is 400 homes. It is not 400 homes, and all those Townhomes. There is one entrance and exit to where these properties will be at. I called the board of education, they said they had room for 723 students, currently there are slightly over 500 students enrolled. When they build 800 homes, you will have kids in there. They will have to walk a mile and a half to where the school is at. They go down King George Blvd, turn right on Wild Heron Road, how will they safely get across the street to their homes with all that traffic?

Ms. Debbie Walker, member of the public, said I have been in Georgetown for 25 years. We all know it is going to be a serious traffic problem. There is not one person that is in favor of this in the neighborhood. In the meetings Landmark has done, they have made no concessions for what we as neighbors feel are problems. The neighbors are against this.

Ms. Vanessa Doby, member of the public, said I am very opposed to this. Georgetown will just get even more crowded. I will be stuck in traffic trying to get my child to school, she will be late getting to school. Education levels will go down by everyone having to hustle to go to work earlier. There will be accidents with this kind of traffic.

Mr. Tom Zecchin, member of the public, said it seems this situation is the perfect micro cause for what is going on in this country. The anger that you see here, and we see every day is due to the fact that the middle class is no longer heard. Instead, we are just being run over by special interests and corporate America. These gentlemen want you to believe this is progress, our definition of progress is different than theirs. Mine does not include more traffic, more litter, less water. This has nothing to do with progress. This is strictly about revenue.

We play by the rules, but the rules constantly get changed. The research and due diligence that many of us have done before purchasing property in Georgetown, are rendered useless by the act of rezoning. Most of us have accepted that we are never going to be in the top tier in this country, but I think most of us are happy with a modest home in a quiet neighborhood. You put 1000 cars in our neighborhood, it will destroy what we have.

Ms. Jenifer Hilburn, member of the public, said I would like to speak on the lack of archeological assessment that has been done on this property. Cemeteries frequently get overgrown, forgotten, and lost. Sometimes tombstones are intentionally and illegally removed by landowners over time or those wanting to develop property. Many cemeteries of enslaved, poor, or rural dead were not recorded on documents. They are usually left to the oral tradition. Often, even marked cemeteries have unmarked graves within their confines or outside the marked boundaries. Based on archeological research and decades of locating lost cemeteries, archeologists estimate that rural areas of Georgia's coastal plain contain at least one cemetery every 800 acres. At Hunter Army Airfield we have almost 400 African American burial sites which were discovered and two lost cemeteries in 2006.

Mr. Neil McKenzie, Project Engineer, said as part of a project like this, we typically have to treat stormwater on site, both quality and quantity. We are bound to meet those requirements on the site. As part of this, we did retention ponds and stormwater holding features that detain stormwater and treat it for both quality and quantity. As far as access, one of the concerns was pedestrians and as they are leaving the site and go towards the school. On our side of the road, we would construct a sidewalk. If the improvements are made at King George and Wild Heron Road, we would have to provide cross walks and safe access to get pedestrians around that roundabout. As far as access on the site, we do have an independent access for the Townhomes and another access for the main part of the project. There will be an access interconnected between the two as well. The site, as it is, for the most part, the area that is being zoned, is cut. It is coming back over time, but the property has been cut in the past. We do not see a lot of displacement of wildlife for this piece. What has not been mentioned, there is a large portion of this property that will remain undeveloped. There is a portion that backs up to the canal, in wetlands. There is 25% of this property in wetlands that will not be developed. That will be a refuge for any perceived wildlife that would be displaced. Speeding was mentioned, the installation of the roundabout would be a measure to decrease speed in the area.

Mr. Selhagen said there was a comment regarding the trips generated. The trip generator uses national average of what happens. Trips are what go in and out of the access point and impact the area. 3500 two-way trips, 1750 coming in, 1750 going out. That is what is based on the national average. Traffic calming, I do a lot in neighborhoods. There are different ways of trying to slow the traffic down, one of those is a roundabout. I am trying to improve the level of service here.

Ms. Karen Jarrett, Board member, asked, were sidewalks planned along Wild Heron?

Mr. Neil McKenzie said yes. We will build them along the frontage of the property. They would go along the front as the road was widened. This project will most likely have to get ROW, so the walkways would be in that ROW.

Ms. Jarrett asked if tract C or D envisioned?

Mr. McKenzie said most of tract D is wetlands.

Ms. Jarrett asked, would reducing the density, increasing it to RSF-6 or RSF-8, improve the traffic?

Mr. Todd Selhagen said, less units, less traffic.

Ms. Jarrett said, I have concerns that we have townhomes and residences with only one way in and one way out. We need more ways in and more ways out. So, if a firetruck is trying to get in, the drive won't be blocked.

Mr. Wayne Noha, Board member, said there is no connectivity on the plan shown today. There is a ROW that goes out to Chevis Road that could possibly alleviate some of the traffic coming onto Wild Heron Road. Would the sidewalks go all the way down to the townhomes or where would it end?

Mr. McKenzie said the sidewalk would continue down to the townhomes. As far as the connection between the townhomes and the main side, it is not on this plan but there will be a connection.

Mr. Tom Woiwode, Board member, asked, have you considered any alternative zoning or densities that may be agreeable to the developers?

Mr. McKenzie said these developers typically build on 50ft lots. I do think RSF-5 would fit the project. That is a typical lot size this company builds on.

Ms. Jarrett asked, have we looked at the overall area and what the density is of that? On SAGIS, there different sizes?

Mr. Lotson said there is a lot of variety when you look at Georgetown and Southern Woods more broadly. You have 8, 10, and 12,000 sq ft lots and then there some half that size. When we looked at this with the original submission, because it varies so much, it wasn't fair to characterize it as saying average lots are 7500 sq ft when you have a good number of lots that are plus 10,000 sq ft. When you look at the Southern Woods area, a lot of those are 6000 sq ft lots. Those are newer. Mr. McKenzie said the applicant typically builds on lots that are a different dimension than what we recognize in the zoning ordinance. They are not as wide, but deeper. The RSF-4 zoning district that they are requesting, as of today, is a 40ft minimum lot. From a zoning standpoint, that is the minimum. It is not necessarily feasible to build on that size of a lot but that is why we focus on that number.

Motion

The first motion made by Ms. Jarrett and seconded by Mr. Coles, to approve staff's recommendation of denial, failed. The second motion made, to continue the petition to the April 11th, MPC meeting, to allow the petitioner and staff to see if there can be some type of compromise between the developer and the citizens, passed.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Michael Kaigler

Second: Jeff Notrica

- Joseph Ervin - Aye
- Tom Woiwode - Aye
- Travis Coles - Aye
- Joseph Welch - Not Present
- Shedrick Coleman - Aye
- Karen Jarrett - Aye
- Dwayne Stephens - Aye
- Wayne Noha - Aye
- Jeff Notrica - Aye
- Laureen Boles - Aye
- Elizabeth Epstein - Not Present
- Malik Watkins - Not Present
- Jay Melder - Not Present
- Michael Kaigler - Aye

IX. Regular Business

[4. ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT | Accessory Dwelling Units| 22-005883](#)

- [ADU Council Workshop.pdf](#)
- [ADU Survey .pdf](#)
- [Application.pdf](#)
- [Staff Report - rev22-005883-ZA.pdf](#)

- ☉ [letter adu text amendment \(2\).pdf](#)
- ☉ [Correspondence from Georgia Planning Association.pdf](#)
- ☉ [Dear Chairman Stephens.pdf](#)
- ☉ [ADU's in RSF-6.pdf](#)
- ☉ [Letter of Support-Cindy Kelley.pdf](#)
- ☉ [Letter to Marcus Lotson re ADUs.pdf](#)

Mr. Marcus Lotson, Director of Development Services, said, proposed amendments to the Savannah Zoning Ordinance related to changes to the requirements associated with Accessory Dwelling Units, defined terms and development standards. Amendment to Section 8.7, 13.2 and 13.5. Accessory Structures and Uses; Defined Terms, General; Defined Terms, Historic. In November of 2022, City of Savannah staff made a presentation to the Mayor and Aldermen during the Council Workshop specific to information on Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU's). The purpose of the presentation was to give Council information on the benefits, history and current ordinances that govern ADU's. In addition, to discuss how revisions to the current standards could support the City's larger affordable housing efforts within the Housing Savannah Action Plan, and to share the results of a public input survey that had been conducted earlier that year.

Beginning in April 2022, City staff conducted a series of six neighborhood outreach meetings in order to get feedback from stakeholders regarding the current ADU regulations and what, if any, changes should be made. After the meetings concluded, staff deployed the aforementioned survey which had a range of questions dealing with development standards like height, parking, and architectural compatibility, to how they would relate to short term vacation rental and incentives for sustainable construction methods being used. The survey captured 690 respondents and the survey data along with other research done by City staff resulted in a series of proposed amendments to the current ADU regulations. The proposed revisions are in two categories, development standards and definitions. These proposed amendments are designed to make incremental changes to the rules which govern ADU's, to make them feasible housing options in more areas of the city, and to protect adjacent properties from the impacts of over-building. In addition to proposed changes in development standards, there are also proposed changes to definitions.

Accessory Dwelling Unit: A structure used as an individual residential unit located on the same lot as the principal dwelling, which contains permanent provisions for a living space with a bedroom, kitchen, and bathroom.

Accessory Structure: Any structure, including a building, that is subordinate to the permitted principal use or principal building on the same lot, and that serves a purpose clearly incidental to the lot, structure or building. The term accessory structure does not include Accessory Dwelling Unit or Caretaker's Residential Unit. Although subordinate, some accessory structures may not be permitted in certain zoning districts.

Caretaker's Residential Dwelling Unit: A structure constructed to residential occupancy standards in compliance with applicable building codes that is accessory to a nonresidential use. The structure serves as the residence of a caretaker, who is responsible for property management and/or security and may accommodate the caretaker's household.

National Register Historic Districts without a Local Historic Overlay: The National Register was established by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and is maintained by the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service. National Register Historic Districts that do not have a local historic overlay district include Pine Gardens, Gordonston, Bonaventure, Eastside/Meadows/Collinsville, Central of Georgia, Laurel Grove North, Laurel Grove South, Kensington Park-Groveland, and Fairway Oaks-Groveland.

Building Footprint: ~~The area within the exterior walls of a building that is under roof.~~ The building footprint shall be measured as the area at finished grade that is within the exterior faces of the exterior walls. Where buildings are attached, the measurement shall be from the centerline of the wall separating the attached buildings. In the absence of surrounding exterior walls, the building

footprint shall be the ground floor area of a building that is under a roof.

When looking at the study results, it clearly shows that those who participated were generally in favor of accessory dwelling units, in favor of limiting the barriers to allowing additional accessory dwelling units, in terms of development standards, and lot size requirements. There was a general consensus of the need to protect existing residents from the impact of potentially overbuilding. MPC staff went through the proposed language for the amendment. There are a number of findings.

Proposed changes to ADU Development Standards

Development Standard-Lot Area-Current Regulation- in A-1; RSF; RTF; RMF and TR zoning districts 200% of the minimum lot area for the district is required for an ADU. Standard is not variable. **Proposed Change** - Reduce requirement from 200% to 150%. allow variances. Require HPC or HDBR recommendation when in those overlays. **MPC Findings**- Cap maximum variance to 125% of requirement. Where a principal dwelling is multifamily, ADU's should be prohibited but one dwelling unit above the maximum density should be permitted.

Development Standard- Building Size- Current Regulation-ADU shall not exceed 40% of habitable floor area of principal building. In A-1; RSF-E. RSF-20 and RSF-30. Same requirement of 1,000 sq feet whichever is less. Unit shall be minimum 400 sf habitable. Max of 1 bedroom. **Proposed Change**- Use principal building footprint not habitable floor area for calculation to address multistory residences. Unit shall meet building code requirement. **MPC Findings**- In A-1; RSF-E; RSF-20-and RSF-30 ADU max 1,000 sf and up to 2 bedrooms. All other districts where permitted, ADU's should not exceed 700 sf and 1 bedroom.

Development Standard- Height- Proposed change- All permitted districts, ADU's shall not exceed 25ft or the height of principal building, whichever is less. Any portion of an ADU over 15 ft in height shall be located at least 15 ft from a rear property line that does not abut a lane. Variance requests require recommendation by HPC for parcels located in a conservation overlay, or National Register Historic District without a Local Historic Overlay.

Development Standard- Parking- Proposed Change- ADU's within one-quarter mile of a transit facility shall not require off street parking. **MPC Findings**- When a principal dwelling has no off-street parking ADU parking should be required.

MPC Staff recommends approval of the proposed amendments to Sec. 8.7, 13.2 and 13. 5 of the Savannah Zoning Ordinance **with the following recommended revisions:**

Accessory Dwelling Units	
Current Proposal	MPC Recommendation
Sec. 8.7.4 allows ADU's in multifamily zoning districts.	Remove allowance from multifamily zoning districts; permit one additional unit over allowed density.
Sec. 8.7.4b allows variance to minimum lot area requirement for ADU's. Also states that when variances are requested in a Conservation Overlay or National Register District without an overlay, the HPC shall provide a recommendation to the ZBA.	Cap maximum variance amount to 125% of requirement. Require HPC recommendation for all variances requested in Conservation Overlay or National Register District without an overlay.
Sec. 8.7.4d states than an ADU shall be no larger than 40% of the principal building footprint.	Cap ADU's to 700 sq. feet where permitted excluding A-1; RSF-E; RSF-20 and RSF-30
Sec. 8.74 d (iii) states that one bedroom is permitted per ADU. In A-1; RSF-E; RSF-20 and RSF-30 districts ADU's shall not exceed 40% of the principal building footprint or 1,000 sq. feet	Because these are large lot subdivisions with ADU's up to 1,000 sq. feet, an increased maximum from 1 (currently allowed) to 2 bedrooms is appropriate.

whichever is less.	
Sec. 8.7.4f states that ADU's within one quarter mile of a transit stop shall not be required to provide off street parking.	Where principal residence parking has not been satisfied, ADU's shall be required to provide one off street parking space.
Sec. 13.2 includes Caretakers Dwelling Unit as an allowed use	Remove Caretakers Dwelling Unit.

Ms. Bridget Lidy, representing the Mayor for the City of Savannah, said, the City of Savannah has been working on making some changes on this particular section of the ordinance for quite some time. The way we looked at NewZO when we first tackled the ADU portion, was, we were putting out toe in the water. What we realized was that we need to go ahead and put our foot in the water based on our housing crisis. this is something specifically that was called out in the City of Savannah Housing Task Force report that was completed back in October 2021. Following that, we did a lot of outreach to different neighborhood groups, aldermanic districts, etc to educate everyone about what an ADU is. As well as ask for feedback and input as to how we can go head and move forward. We feel this needs to be an incremental process and we felt as though the recommendations that we put forth to you, was exactly that. I will say, two issues I do have with the alternative recommendations, I do not feel as though the 125% cap is something that would be palatable to us. We have done extensive outreach, as i mentioned with the community. During that process, we were always talking about the variances and the ability for an individual to get a variance if they didn't meet the reduction from 200% of the lot area to 150% of the lot area. That provided an opportunity for an individual to go ahead and move forward in exercising their ability to build an ADU through a defined process that would require an individual to go to the Zoning Board of Appeals. That would require a sign to be posted in the subjects' property, as well as notification to occur with the surrounding neighborhoods, as well as an ad in the paper. With this new development coming in someone's rear property, that would be a good way to notify surrounding residents.

The parking requirement, we originally said that there would be no parking requirement if it was within a quarter of a mile within a transit stop, (not transit facility). We are seeing a shift in transit mobility. There are several more modes of transportation, ridesharing is becoming very popular. We feel as though individuals that will be living in those smaller units, will be able to respond accordingly.

Mr. Travis Coles, Vicechairman, asked, would ADU's be allowed in RSF-6 zoning districts?

Ms. Lidy said yes. They are now providing it's on a double wide lot (double the size of what is permitted).

Mr. Jeff Notrica, Board member, asked, currently, are parking spaces required for ADU's?

Ms. Lidy said yes. The way the ordinance is written, currently, but what we are proposing is, if your parcel is located within a quarter of a mile within a transit stop, you would not have to provide parking.

Ms. Lauren Boles, Board member, asked, do you know what impact these changes might have? Is there an estimate for how many additional units will be added?

Ms. Lidy said, in the packet, there should be information that highlights a presentation to Mayor and Council back in November. In that presentation, what we did was spacial analysis to look at how the existing code allows for that 200% threshold and how at 150%, it would change the context of the allowable parcels that could have ADU's. It would increase the number a percentage but not a significant percentage. We are looking at doing this gradually, with the cavoite of having a variance.

Mr. Coles, asked, when you said you would introduce it incrementally, what kind of timeline are you looking at?

Ms. Lidy said, if we were to move forward with getting this in front of Council, I think we would want to go ahead and implement it immediately. One thing is, we feel strongly that within the next 12-18 months, we want to come back and report out as to how many people have had interest in this. Currently, we do not have a mechanism to count the number of ADU's other than actually driving around and counting them. We don't have any water meter records and when we look at maps, you can see an additional structure on that lot but you cannot tell if it is an accessory structure, or accessory dwelling unit. From our perspective, what we are going to do as of January of this year, we have already changed our building permit application to have a checkmark for accessory dwelling units. We will be better able to track what

is coming in from January 1, until the evaluation period is over.

Mr. Coles asked, if someone wanted to build an accessory dwelling unit this year, would that be permitted after Council has voted on it?

Ms. Lidy said yes.

Mr. Robin Williams, member of the public, said I am a resident of Parkside, where most properties are just over 6000 sq ft. Historically ADU's were erected in this neighborhood and continue to offer affordable housing options. Yet, with the standard 6000 sq ft base lot size, the proposed reduction of the eligibility standard, to 150% of the minimum advocated by the City staff, will still prevent properties in Parkside and other neighborhoods from adding an ADU. The City's proposal allows for variances which may resolve the issue, but variances are not assured. What criteria will be used to guide those variances? MPC staff recommending setting the standard at 125% of the minimum, with no variances, is actually more restrictive, and essentially anti-urban in spirit. I am concerned that historic neighborhoods like Parkside, Ardsley Park, Chatham Crescent, Thomas Square, Gordonston, and several others with similar average lot sizes, will be permanently prohibited from adding more ADU's if you adopt the MPC staff's recommendation of 125%. Even the City's proposal of 150% with variances, offers no guarantees. I respect that Ms. Lidy's point is to do this incrementally but how long will this incremental process take? We need housing now. The Housing Savannah Task Force and Chatham County Housing Coalition's housing policy committee recommends setting the standard at 100% allowing any property of 6000 sq ft to qualify. If we are serious about addressing the need for affordable housing, establishing a realistic standard is essential. Neighborhoods like Parkside, have the urban infrastructure, especially the lanes to support ADU's. Keeping the current standard of waiving a parking requirement for ADU's located within a quarter mile of a transit stop is essential. In fact, it is likely too restrictive. It would leave parts of neighborhoods in Ardsley Park and Parkside, ineligible for this parking waiver where it is a little more than a quarter mile to a transit stop. I would recommend, raising that standard to at least a half mile, or three eighths of a mile, which would allow a larger proportion of the neighborhood to enjoy this waiver.

Mr. Cody Jones, member of the public, said, I serve as a governmental affairs director for the Savannah area. I am here to advocate on behalf of our 300 members both residential and commercial. Our association believes that ADU's are a vital component in addressing the housing affordability issue through Savannah and indeed throughout the nation. I would like to commend the planning department and the director for meeting with me and working on this matter. We support the text as written, while we would be more supportive of a less restrictive ordinance, the association can support the text as written, but we ask for the planning department to monitor ADU proliferation and be amenable to a less restriction in the future.

Mr. Ryan Jarles, Director of Preservation for Historic Savannah Foundation, said much like Mr. Jones just said, we are also in support of the text as written. We do hold concerns with MPC staffs 125% cap as well as the parking minimums and the removal of the caretaker's unit which would result in limited ability for multi-generational housing.

Mr. Andrew Savage, member of the public, said I do some infill housing in Savannah. I live in the TR districts. I am grateful to hear what the city has done. They have done a great job in making this a clear and open process. I have concern with the minimum lot area. Going from 200% to 150% is a step in the right direction, but it is leaving a lot on the table. There are several lots that you could meet the standard developments, but an ADU would not be allowed because of the minimum lot area. For example, an ADU is typically built behind a principal dwelling, there are several lots in Live Oak, for example, that are long and well suited for that type of construction but do not meet the 150% minimum lot area. Therefore, they would be disallowed. On the survey that the city sent out, only 19% of participants disagreed with changing this percentage to 100%. I fear that if we leave it at 150% now, who knows how long it will be here. The main issue I have today is the 125% variance cap, going back to the survey results and how so few people disagreed with 100% requirement. There are a lot of nuances, locations, boundaries, dimensions, districts, and so forth that are not going to allow 100% by right. I think we need to let the neighborhood weigh in through a variance. I think we can all agree that we need to expand housing options in Savannah and ADU's prevent a lot of problems with the neighborhoods dealing with issues related to the multi-family housing, large multi-family housing, and they allow homeowners to reap the benefit of that income produces on their own ADU's.

Mr. Jason Combs, President of the Thomas Square Neighborhood Association, said I have master's degrees from Georgia Tech in City Planning and Urban Design. Like previous speakers, I support this,

and especially support this without the edits. I support the work the City and Bridget have done. They put a lot of effort into it, and they have looked at the impacts. I think the MPC means well, they say they offered their edits to address impacts. But you have to weigh the impacts you are causing against the impacts you are trying to alleviate and that is our housing crisis. At night many times I am woken up by sirens, that is an impact on me, but when I wake up and hear those sirens, I know those are professionals going to address an emergency. Anytime there is an emergency being addressed by professional, you should get out of their way. I think this is professional work done by the city, lets accept this text amendment without the edits.

Mr. Brad Baugh, member of the public, said, I am in favor of this without the additional restrictions. I echo what everyone else has said, especially the limiting the lot size to 125% without variance. Some neighborhoods that might be appropriate, but the variance process exists so that there will be flexibility and there is not a one size fits all approach to doing this. Also, adding parking when there is transit available, I am sure a lot of these people wouldn't have a car or could work that out. At the same time, you can build an addition to your house and not be required to add a parking space. This just seems to add additional restrictions on something that we want to see done. This is the best tool we have to add additional units to help address the housing crisis. It won't do everything, but it is definitely the right direction. I hope you can pass this without the restrictions.

Mr. Lotson said just to clarify one of the things that I heard said a couple of times, if there was any lack of clarity regarding the proposal of the variance process. What the city is proposing, currently the rules around some of these zoning districts are that you need to have 200% of the minimum lot area requirement in order to have an ADU. They are recommending that go to 150%. We agree with that. What we are proposing is, if a variance is considered beyond 150%, that is go only to 125% at the most. That is the recommendation MPC staff has come up with after analyzing internally what the city has proposed on that particular issue. There will be, based on the data that Ms. Lidy's team collected and shared with the council, an increase in numbers of parcels that will be permitted by right, to have an ADU. Based on some of the public comment, the step that is being proposed now is a small step and I think the city agrees with that. They are moving this in an incremental way, it is a process. The currently leadership is moving the ball forward on allowing ADU's more broadly. When you look at the overall impact of the proposed changes, it is not what I would consider a significant, or major impact, in terms of the number of parcels that would be vested. Future changes could raise that number.

Ms. Melanie Wilson, Executive Director, said there is something that is being overlooked. Marcus are you reflecting the recommendation that was made by the city or by the MPC staff, I want everyone to be clear on that.

Mr. Lotson said staff's recommendation includes what the city has proposed, in addition, the comments that we have added to the staff report in terms of the changes that are identified there.

Ms. Wilson said, we made recommendations in areas that have really large lots, for people to be allowed to have two bedrooms. If you truly are trying to address affordable housing, you are trying to make sure you are able to house families. The other thing we recommended was, there be a reduction in some of the infill for size that are one bedroom. Again, if you look at what the average size on market, most one-bedrooms are developing things at 600-650 sq ft. When you have a minimum, even of 700+ ft, that is still a very large one bedroom. What was proposed was 1000 sq ft. Staff knows that has been a lot of concern in regard to the parking issue. The recommendation the MPC had, was in addition to, if there is a transit stop facility and if the house does not have off street parking. The concern from staff, looking at it objectively, we did look at, what do you do in areas where you already have a parking problem. There was nothing in there that addressed that. Maybe there should be some language in there that addresses some type of assessment in a situation where a single-family resident does not have an off-street parking space before they are allowed to get a permit. There are several 1000 sq ft three-bedroom homes in the Savannah area. We are happy that the city is moving forward and doing something that is important to help with affordable housing. I would like to get some feedback from the public regarding more than one dwelling unit in situations where they are on larger lots, and you are advocating 1000 sq ft max.

Mr. Tom Woiwode, Board member, asked, this focuses on lot coverage and percentage of square footage. Have we considered a floor area ratio rather than a square footage of a lot? For instance, you get a 5000 sq ft lot with a 1000 sq ft house, you only have 20% of the coverage of the lot. Theoretically you could have another 1000 sq ft house with only 40% coverage of that lot. I understand how far we

have come with the 200% and now 150% and up to 125% cap, but perhaps, at some point we look at floor ration.

Mr. Lotson said what we are looking at here today, is a result of what occurred with the initial writing of NewZO. When NewZO was initially written, the language you are looking at today is essentially what was written and approved in 2019. The effort by the city in terms of amending the language, was tweaking it from what already existed, instead of going to a new way of calculating in terms of floor area ratio. Had we done floor area ratio in the beginning, we would probably be tweaking that today. I think it is a great point you raised about floor area ratio as a way to calculate.

Mr. Woiwode said you can get a monstrous house with 5000 sq ft floor level on a 9000 sq ft lot in Ardsley Park. You are eligible for an accessory dwelling unit by right. It may not make sense because there is only 4000 sq ft left of that lot.

Mr. Lotson said that is the kind of take-a-way from a meeting like this, that we can continue to vet as this process goes forward. As Ms. Lidy said, there will likely be additional amendments to this ordinance going forward.

Mr. Shedrick Coleman, Board member, said, where you are talking about potentially having a situation where a resident does not have a parking space, usually there is not a lot area to do that. Say you were then required to provide a parking space for an ADU but you have a height limit that says a one-story building that now needs to provide a parking space potentially under the ADU and you can't build it two stories because you can't be taller than the one-story building because the principal dwelling becomes the height determinate. That statement needs to be considered that you could end up in something where the ADU simply can't be done because you can't provide a parking space and ADU on the property because of the height limitation.

Mr. Lotson said the issue of height in particular was something that sparked a lot of discussion both in the initial process to right this ordinance, and in the recent conversation with people in a real-world circumstance of people building ADU's that some people felt were too tall. We were sensitive to that, in terms of what is being recommended here now, in terms of the maximum height for buildings. I agree to your point that one of the ways to provide off street parking is to park underneath your unit. Especially in places that have lane access. That may be something that, as this process continues, needs to be worked out.

Mr. Coleman said, as an architect, I have run into these issues. I know it is something you are going to run into. You may as well put it out there now because it will come up.

Mr. Jeff Notrica, Board member, asked, under the current proposal, is the ADU tied to the percentage of square footage of the primary structure?

Mr. Lotson said yes. The maximum is 40% in terms of ADU to principal structure.

Mr. Notrica said, I ran in to a problem in another municipality, on a 10,000 sq ft lot with a 2500 sq ft building and wanted to put a 900 sq ft carriage house and was prohibited because of the percentage of the primary structure. However, the primary structure could have been 6000 sq ft. There is a challenge in that as well. Sometimes the primary structures are not built to a maximum standard and would limit out the ADU's.

Mr. Lotson said, the thinking from our point of view, regarding that section, regardless of the lot size, the ADU still needs to be accessory to the principal building. If you have a principal building with a 2000 sq ft footprint, our intent at least, was for the accessory building to still be accessory in nature as it relates to the principal building. To your point though, yes, you could have a much larger house, because you have the property to do it, that would grant you up to a point, a larger accessory building. We were focused on the two buildings having that principal/accessory relationship relevant to size.

Ms. Karen Jarrett, Board member, asked, is it was possible to continue this item to a later time to allow more discussion.

Ms. Lidy said, this was submitted back in December of last year. It was continued from the last meeting based on comment from MPC staff. The City of Savannah is asking to move this item forward. We request a vote, today.

Motion

Petition continued to the February 28th MPC Meeting to allow the MPC staff and the City of Savannah more time to discuss the percentage of the lot, the size of the unit, and the parking concerns.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Karen Jarrett

Second: Jeff Notrica

Joseph Ervin	- Not Present
Tom Woiwode	- Aye
Travis Coles	- Aye
Joseph Welch	- Not Present
Shedrick Coleman	- Aye
Karen Jarrett	- Aye
Dwayne Stephens	- Aye
Wayne Noha	- Aye
Jeff Notrica	- Aye
Laureen Boles	- Aye
Elizabeth Epstein	- Not Present
Malik Watkins	- Not Present
Jay Melder	- Not Present
Michael Kaigler	- Not Present

[5. ZONING MAP AMENDMENT | Whitfield Oaks | Z-1222 - 000343](#)

📎 [Maps Combined.pdf](#)

📎 [18-503 GDP 2022.12.21_Revised-GDP1.1.pdf](#)

📎 [Staff Report 0343.pdf](#)

Mr. Marcus Lotson, Director of Development Services, said this petition is a request to rezone the subject parcels from the existing R-1 / EO (One Family Residential / Environmental Overlay) and R-2 / EO (One and Two Family Residential / Environmental Overlay) zoning classification to a PUD-M-EO (Planned Unit Development – Multifamily - Environmental Overlay) zoning classification applying the planned district provisions of Section 4-6.54 of the Chatham County Ordinance which requires the submission of a General Development Plan which, if approved, becomes the only approved use for the site. The subject properties are located on the east side of Whitefield Avenue between East Montgomery Crossroad and Hendry Avenue. This portion of Whitefield Avenue is generally parallel to Hayner’s Creek. Six of the subject properties carry an R-1 base zoning and the seventh property carries an R-2 base zoning. All properties are, in addition, subject to the requirements of the Environmental Overlay as outlined in Section 4-12 of the Chatham County Zoning Ordinance. Each of the properties historically have been single family residential from a land use standpoint. A previous proposal of 48 multistory townhomes on a portion of the site was filed in 2020 but withdrawn prior to action being taken on it due to concerns by staff and others about the scale of the project. Since that time, the applicant has worked with adjacent property owners and MPC staff to develop the current concept.

The applicant is proposing to rezone the subject properties in accordance with the Planned District provisions of the Chatham County Zoning Ordinance. The Planned District provisions are found in Section 4-6.5 and the intent of the provision is " to promote an environment of stable and desirable character in harmony with the established or proposed land use pattern." The petitioner’s proposal includes the construction of 37 single story residential dwellings and private amenities with cottage style units targeted to seniors. The development would essentially be a detached multifamily community as all units would be on a single parcel which is owned and maintained by the developer, this includes the

common areas, amenities, and internal infrastructure. The proposal includes two controlled access points and private roads that would also be maintained by the developer. The land uses in the vicinity of the subject property include single family residential and institutional uses. Nonresidential uses along this portion of Whitefield Avenue include a landscape nursery, religious institutions, and a congregate care facility. The residential development consists of single family detached homes on lots generally over an acre in size. The residential development east of the subject property is a more suburban scale single family residential subdivision where lots range in size between 6,000 and 8,000 square feet. : The subject properties are within the Environmental Overlay District. The purpose of the Environmental Overlay is to "establish supplemental standards to bolster those currently in the Chatham County Zoning Ordinance in order to: 1. protect and enhance community character; and 2). protect environmental quality, especially the estuarine system that surrounds the community..."In addition to being within the Environmental Overlay, the portion of Whitefield Avenue that the subject properties abut is a Designated Road and is governed by the Corridor Development Standards found in Section 4-12(e) of the Zoning Ordinance. The purpose of this section is to provide effective buffering and tree protection for parcels abutting these roadways.

The intent of the R-1 District: "To create an environment in which one-family dwellings, and certain non-dwelling uses, are permitted to promote stability and character of low-density residential development with adequate open space. A maximum density of five dwelling units per acre of net residential land area shall be permitted in this district." the intent of the R-2 District: "The purpose of this district shall be to create an environment in which one-family dwellings, two-family dwellings, and certain non-dwelling uses are permitted in order to promote the stability and character of medium density residential development with functional open space. A maximum density of 12 dwelling units per acre of net residential land area shall be permitted in this district." The intent of the PUD-M District: "A planned multi-family zoning district of three acres or more, consisting of townhouses, apartments, condominiums, single-family detached, single-family semi-detached, duplexes, and senior citizen congregate housing." The development pattern in the vicinity of the subject property includes primarily single family detached residences and religious facilities. This is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan which identifies the properties as Residential Suburban Single Family. This designation recommends low density residential development and open space. The portion of Whitefield Avenue that abuts the subject properties, is a Designated Corridor within the Chatham County Environmental Overlay. It has been identified as a corridor requiring additional protections relative to tree canopy. The purpose of the Environmental Overlay is, in part, to "1) protect and enhance community character; and 2) protect environmental quality, especially the estuarine system that surrounds the community..." The proposed zoning and development plan is consistent with these goals, and the land use pattern, overall density and building scale in the area. The inclusion of a development plan in conjunction with the rezoning requests assures that the outcome will be as described and that any notable change would require reconsideration by the Planning Commission. Staff recommends approval of the request to rezone the subject properties from the R -1 / EO and R-2 / EO classifications to the PUD-M classification in conjunction with the Planned Development provisions and attached General Development Plan.

Mr. Robert McCorkle, representing the petitioner, Whitefield Oaks, LLC, said there was a previous project for this site, we spent a couple of years meeting with staff, meeting with and talking to neighbors. Through that process we have reached a completely different project than what was originally done. the three main things that came out of all those discussions, potential harmful uses in the zone, desire to control the building size and style, and protection of the trees. the original application was withdrawn because there was so much objection in the public and staff. To my knowledge, there is no one here today in objection to this project. We have worked hard to make that happen. We have used this particular site plan specific zoning to address those three specific concerns. Another thing that happened with the site, we acquired additional lots that were not a part of the original application. Now, we have no neighbors to the west, north, or south, that are residential. We are assuring that what we have told everyone we are going to build, is what we are going build. The site plan is adopted as of adoption by County Commission, it becomes the zoning. If we want to change what are doing, even if we want to build a two-story building, we have to rezone the property, come back through the process of going to the MPC as well as going to the County Commission. We are limited to single lot, one family dwellings, limited to one story in height, senior citizen congregant services programs, and we have a couple of incidental uses. All other uses are prohibited. We put that language in there specifically to address the neighbor's concern. We are able to create our own development standards, we have specific architectural guidelines which are either equivalent to, or greater than the surrounding houses in our neighborhood. We agreed to reduce building height from the allowed 36ft in the EO District, down to 24ft. There was a question about

buffers, we have a 25ft undisturbed buffer that wraps around the entire property. The 50ft on the front has allowed us to save an enormous amount of live oak trees on the site. This kind of cluster cottage community has private roads and allowed us to be more sensitive to the trees and to the environment. We are able to put everything where we want to put it without the constraints of a subdivision ordinance that has things that would require this to be more uniform in nature. We have tried to place the buildings in areas that are already cleared. We have saved almost every single live oak tree. Our tree survey is complete, and we have 79,200 tree quality points and we only required to have 16,158. The roads are strangely shaped, that is all because they wrap around live oak trees. Our plan has 62% greenspace. We are developing less than 40% of the property in total.

Ms. Karen Jarrett, Board member, said gravel doesn't sound like a gentle senior citizen pathway. I notice the drives are gravel.

Mr. Greg Coleman, Coleman and Company, said the main loop road coming through for fire and emergency vehicle access will be asphalt. The rear access drives and garages, we were trying to include pervious surface to limit the amount of impervious and the amount of coastal supplement and water treatment areas that would impact tree roots etc. That was the reason for that. Once we get into final design, as far as walkways and everything else, they will be concrete, they will not be gravel walkways.

Motion

Approval of the request to rezone the subject properties from the R -1 / EO and R-2 / EO classifications to the PUD-M classification in conjunction with the Planned Development provisions and attached General Development Plan.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Travis Coles

Second: Karen Jarrett

Joseph Ervin	- Not Present
Tom Woiwode	- Aye
Travis Coles	- Aye
Joseph Welch	- Not Present
Shedrick Coleman	- Aye
Karen Jarrett	- Aye
Dwayne Stephens	- Aye
Wayne Noha	- Aye
Jeff Notrica	- Aye
Laureen Boles	- Aye
Elizabeth Epstein	- Not Present
Malik Watkins	- Not Present
Jay Melder	- Not Present
Michael Kaigler	- Aye

X. Presentations

[6. City of Savannah, Capital Improvements Element](#)

📎 [Savannah CIE draft_8.25.22.pdf](#)

📎 [Savannah METHODOLOGY_8.25.22.pdf](#)

Ms. Bridget Lidy, City of Savannah, said I am here to talk to you about a project we brought before you in September of last year that had to do with the impact fee program. An impact is looking at having the developer pay their fair share of their proportional impact they will be having on the community to the City of Savannah. With that, the process is very much established with Georgia Department of Community Affairs with their administration of the Development Impact Fee Act that was passed by Georgia Legislatures in 1990. The process is convoluted in a way, you have to start off with a methodology report that looks at forecasting, population projections, housing projections, employment projections, and then looks at what types of projects are needed for the community. From there, a calculation is done looking at credits and many other options that creates a maximum impact fee for various uses that will be constructed in the community. For example, single family homes would have a specific maximum fee in addition to that, an industrial warehouse would have a maximum fee. While the methodology report is being developed, the information that comes out of it goes into what is called a Capital Improvement Element Plan which is part of the Comprehensive Plan if adopted. That qualifies what is in the methodology report, lays out an extensive work program for the next 20 years for the capital projects that will be coming. In addition to that, how those projects will be funded. There has been a favorable recommendation from the Department of Community Affairs. We are ready to move forward with presenting the impacts fee ordinance with City Council. We are asking you today is accepting the final document of the Capital Improvement Element in order for it to go on to Mayor and Council who will ultimately adopt the document. We have had over 13 meetings in the community and with Council to have this document vetted. There is some concern from the Homebuilder's Association, they have expressed those concerns to City Council in reference to the increase in development fees they will be facing due to the possibility of this passing.

Mr. Michael Kaiglar, County Manager, asked, when do you anticipate council taking up this action to get final approval?

Ms. Lidy said this afternoon we presented the first reading for the impact fee ordinance. As part of that process, there are two public hearings that are required. The first public was held today, we anticipate having that next public meeting February 23rd. In addition to that, we hope to have CIE go in front of Council for the resolution of adoption as well as a list of affordable housing options that could be exercised if a developer came through and was producing affordable housing. Once Council moves on those items, whether it is a yes or no, we anticipate it going in effect on May 1st. Our thought process is, by the end of February through May 1st we would handle the administrative back end in reference to marketing it and getting it set up internally. If this does come into fruition, there is recommendation that the City Manager has, to go ahead and do an incremental approach to this. Year one, it would be a 50% charge for the impact fee, year two would be a 75% charge, and then year three would be a full impact fee charged to the developer. The reason is, we see a lot of things that are currently in the que that might not have been taken into account. The most important thing to realize is that we are trying to look at alternative funding sources to support some of this development that we are hearing about that is coming down the pipeline. The formal CIE does not require any kind of recognition from this Commission. This is a courtesy from the City of Savannah to you. Council will be the ones who adopt is through to resolution.

XI. Other Business

XII. Executive Session

7. Executive Session

There was a motion made by Mr. Travis Coles to amend the agenda and go into Executive Session, to address personnel matters, earlier than listed on the agenda; seconded by Mr. Shedric Coleman. The motion carried.

Mr. Coles made motion to return from Executive Session; seconded by Mr. Noha. The motion carried. Mr. Dwayne Stephens, Chairman, said, we went into Executive Session to address personnel matters. No other business, other than those personnel matters, was discussed. Mr. Noha motioned to approve the conditions of the personnel matters that were discussed in Executive Session; Mr. Coles seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Motion

Mr. Wayne Noha motioned to approve the Personnel matters that were discussed in Executive Session; seconded by Mr. Travis Coles. The motion carried unanimously.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Wayne Noha

Second: Travis Coles

Joseph Ervin	- Aye
Tom Woiwode	- Aye
Travis Coles	- Aye
Joseph Welch	- Not Present
Shedrick Coleman	- Aye
Karen Jarrett	- Aye
Dwayne Stephens	- Aye
Wayne Noha	- Aye
Jeff Notrica	- Aye
Laureen Boles	- Aye
Elizabeth Epstein	- Not Present
Malik Watkins	- Not Present
Jay Melder	- Not Present
Michael Kaigler	- Aye

XIII. Adjournment

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.