



Chatham County - Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission

June 11, 2024
Minutes

June 11, 2024 MPC MEETING

Members Present: Karen Jarrett - In person
Travis Cole - In person
Laureen Boles - In person
Wayne Noha - In person
Dwayne Stephens - In Person
Tom Woiwode - In person
Jeff Notrica - In person
Traci Amick - In person
Joseph Welch - In person
Michael Kaigler - In person
Stephen Plunk - In person
Joseph Ervin - In person

Members Absent: Coren Ross
Jay Melder

Staff Present: Melanie Wilson, Executive Director
Edward Morrow, Director of Development Services/Current Planning
Brad Clement, Senior Planner, Development Services
Sally Helm, Administrative Assistant II, Development Services/Current Planning

I. Call to Order and Welcome

II. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

III. Approval of Agenda

IV. Notices, Proclamations and Acknowledgements

[1. June 11, 2024 Finance Committee Meeting, 11:00 am, Jerry Surrency Conference Room, 112 East State Street.](#)

[📎 June 2024 Finance Committee Agenda_.pdf](#)

[2. June 11, 2024 Personnel Committee Meeting, 11:30am, Jerry Surrency Conference Room, 112 East State Street](#)

[📎 June 2024 Personnel Committee Agenda.pdf](#)

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

[3. Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map Amendment | 1950 Benton Blvd, 76 Highlands Blvd | 24-002877-ZA](#)

Motion

Item was continued to the August 13, 2024 agenda.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Travis Coles

Second: Wayne Noha

Joseph Ervin	- Aye
Tom Woiwode	- Aye
Travis Coles	- Aye
Joseph Welch	- Aye
Coren Ross	- Not Present
Karen Jarrett	- Aye
Dwayne Stephens	- Aye
Wayne Noha	- Aye
Jeff Notrica	- Aye
Laureen Boles	- Aye
Stephen Plunk	- Aye
Jay Melder	- Not Present
Michael Kaigler	- Aye
Traci Amick	- Aye

[4. Map Amendment request to rezone from PD-C to I-L, B-C | 1950 Benton Blvd, 76 Highlands Blvd | 24-002501-ZA](#)

Motion

Item was continued to the August 13, 2024 agenda.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Travis Coles

Second: Wayne Noha

Joseph Ervin	- Aye
Tom Woiwode	- Aye
Travis Coles	- Aye
Joseph Welch	- Aye
Coren Ross	- Not Present
Karen Jarrett	- Aye
Dwayne Stephens	- Aye
Wayne Noha	- Aye
Jeff Notrica	- Aye
Laureen Boles	- Aye
Stephen Plunk	- Aye
Jay Melder	- Not Present
Michael Kaigler	- Aye
Traci Amick	- Aye

[5. Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map Amendment| 1421 West Gwinnett Street | 24-001813-ZA](#)

Motion

Item removed from the final agenda, continued to the August 13, 2024 agenda.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Travis Coles

Second: Wayne Noha

Joseph Ervin	- Aye
Tom Woiwode	- Aye
Travis Coles	- Aye
Joseph Welch	- Aye
Coren Ross	- Not Present
Karen Jarrett	- Aye
Dwayne Stephens	- Aye
Wayne Noha	- Aye
Jeff Notrica	- Aye
Laureen Boles	- Aye
Stephen Plunk	- Aye
Jay Melder	- Not Present
Michael Kaigler	- Aye
Traci Amick	- Aye

[6. Map Amendment request to rezone from TR-2 to TC-1 | 1421 West Gwinnett Street | 24-001759-ZA](#)

Motion

Item removed from the final agenda, continued to the August 13, 2024 agenda.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Travis Coles

Second: Wayne Noha

Joseph Ervin	- Aye
Tom Woiwode	- Aye
Travis Coles	- Aye
Joseph Welch	- Aye
Coren Ross	- Not Present
Karen Jarrett	- Aye
Dwayne Stephens	- Aye
Wayne Noha	- Aye
Jeff Notrica	- Aye
Laureen Boles	- Aye
Stephen Plunk	- Aye

Jay Melder	- Not Present
Michael Kaigler	- Aye
Traci Amick	- 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 May 21, 2024 Meeting Minutes

📎 [05-21-2024-mpc-meeting-minutes.pdf](#)

Motion

Approval of the May 21, 2024 Meeting Minutes.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Travis Coles

Second: Wayne Noha

Joseph Ervin	- Aye
Tom Woiwode	- Aye
Travis Coles	- Aye
Joseph Welch	- Aye
Coren Ross	- Not Present
Karen Jarrett	- Aye
Dwayne Stephens	- Aye
Wayne Noha	- Aye
Jeff Notrica	- Aye
Laureen Boles	- Aye
Stephen Plunk	- Aye
Jay Melder	- Not Present
Michael Kaigler	- Aye
Traci Amick	- Aye

8. Major Subdivision | Brookline Phase 4 | 109 Fenway St | File No. 24-003102-SUBP

📎 [APPLICATION.pdf](#)

📎 [SUBMIALL_1_24-003102-SUBP_ BROOKLINE PHASE 4.pdf](#)

📎 [24-003102-subp-Brookline-phase-4-staff-report-nr.pdf](#)

Motion

Approval of the proposed Major Subdivision subject to the following conditions:

Show the signature of a Georgia Registered Land Surveyor and the owner of each page of the Final Plat.
Approval by the Chatham County Health Department and the City review departments including the City Engineer.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Travis Coles

Second: Wayne Noha

Joseph Ervin	- Aye
Tom Woiwode	- Aye
Travis Coles	- Aye
Joseph Welch	- Aye
Coren Ross	- Not Present
Karen Jarrett	- Aye
Dwayne Stephens	- Aye
Wayne Noha	- Aye
Jeff Notrica	- Aye
Laureen Boles	- Aye
Stephen Plunk	- Aye
Jay Melder	- Not Present
Michael Kaigler	- Aye
Traci Amick	- Aye

VIII. Old Business

IX. Regular Business

[9. Text Amendment | Zoning Ordinance -Article 7, Section 7.13-1 Hotel Development Overlay District | 24-000558-ZA](#)

- 🔗 [TEXT AMENDMENT_ FIGURE 7.13-1_ 24-000558-ZA_ APPLICATION_.pdf](#)
- 🔗 [Cohen Historical Information_ Jones.pdf](#)
- 🔗 [Cohen Historical Information_ McCorkle.pdf](#)
- 🔗 [Traffic Comment.pdf](#)
- 🔗 [Zoning Certification Letter.pdf](#)
- 🔗 [GPR Scans.pdf](#)
- 🔗 [McCorkle Correspondence and Concept.pdf](#)
- 🔗 [24-000558-ZA Staff Report 11 June 24.pdf](#)
- 🔗 [A Jones Correspondence 10 Jun 24.pdf](#)
- 🔗 [Certified Ordinance - Select Provisions.pdf](#)

🔗 [Jones Presentation Cohen St. Hotel Overlay.pdf](#)

🔗 [Combined public comments.pdf](#)

🔗 [Robert McCorkle 1.pdf](#)

Mr. Edward Morrow, Director of Development Services/Current Planning, presented the staff report. Mr. Morrow stated this is a petition to amend Article 7, Section 7.13, Figure 7.13-1, Hotel Development Overlay District, to permit hotel development on parcels adjoining Cohen Street. The map shown is the map and hotel placement within the downtown historic district that's guided by this map. There is a combination of street frontages as well as these areas that are designated by certain colors that regulate whether or not a hotel can be placed within a given area, and not necessarily its zoning district at the location. The areas on the map indicated by red are places where hotels are not presently allowed. Any place that is indicated as yellow is permissible for a small hotel as long as it has the red frontage. A small hotel, being 16 -74 rooms and then a large hotel indicated by the green area with a minimum of 75 rooms. This is regulated by a combination of both colored areas and having a street frontage that is identified in red. This request would add Cohen St. to this list making it appropriate for large hotel development.

The Petitioner proposes to construct the hotel on the parcels that are adjacent to Savannah Station, which was originally constructed in 1912. The Board of Assessors currently identifies this as a cocktail lounge. This is a historic resource; resource #1732. The current zoning of this property is DX (Downtown Expansion) and a zoning certification letter indicating the Zoning Administrator's determination that this is appropriate for all uses within the DX zoning district has been appended to the agenda. The subject parcels are within the Landmark. Historic District and they would require a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) for recombination under recently adopted amendments to the City subdivision relations. Even if the hotel overlay were approved, if a recombination of the parcels was proposed for development, a COA for the recombination of those parcels would be required.

Historic Jewish cemeteries are located on both the North and South sides of Cohen Street. The first identified as resource #1731 and the second identified as #1730. These are believed to date to the mid-1700s. The present petition is submitted with an associated petition to amend the historic district height map. That is relevant because there are applicable development standards. The future hotel development is proposed as a connection.

There is a provision within the zoning ordinance that requires that burial plots be placed a minimum of 100 feet from a residential use for residentially zoned parcel. This is not a request to establish the cemetery and so these requirements would normally apply in a context where you would be siting a new cemetery. None of the structures, particularly Garrison School when it was constructed are within 100 feet. The Garrison School seems to have been strategically placed at least 100 feet from the exterior wall of that existing cemetery.

A representative for the owners of one of the historic cemeteries submitted research showing that the historical boundaries of the cemeteries were larger than is presently indicated by their existing walls, and their research suggested areas within the proposed development site are speculated to contain burials. However, the Petitioner has provided ground penetrating radar data from the site, indicating that no graves were identified within the area proposed for hotel development. Finally, City of Savannah Traffic Engineering submitted documentation that queuing the vehicles on Cohen Street in relation to regular operations of Esther F. Garrison School, makes the proposed addition of hotel uses in this area inadvisable. Staff does believe that Cohen St. was likely excluded from the original Hotel development overlay because of its proximity to sites of historic significance. The historic Jewish cemeteries are located on either side of Cohen.

MPC staff recommends denial of this request. If, however, the Planning Commission is inclined to support the request, Staff recommends approval for only the portion of Cohen Street that is requested and association with the development to be added to the hotel development overlay map and not the entirety of Cohen St.

Mr. Robert McCorkle, Agent for the Petitioner, stated there are good reasons why this area on Cohen Street would make a good hotel site. The first, it is immediately adjacent to an existing hospitality use, the Savannah Station, constructed in 1902. It has over 8000 square feet of event space. It hosts weddings,

parties, and fundraisers on a regular basis. It's also located in close proximity to the EnMarket arena and the Canal District that is wanting to be developed nearby. This hotel will provide a great location to supply rooms for people coming and staying for concerts at the EnMarket arena. It is outside of the National Landmark Historic District. This site has virtually no neighbors.

It is adjacent to a large scale, 250,000 square foot student housing facility, Garrison Elementary School, and a County Municipal building that now may be the Department of Transportation. I-16 is immediately adjacent to the site. The property is zoned downtown expansion. This is important to note because of both the uses and the development standards that apply in Downtown Expansion. The development characteristics of Downtown Expansion are supposed to be consistent with downtown and connected to the Central Business District. The DX District was adopted and intended to accommodate larger buildings and uses for the development of the West part of town, particularly, west of MLK. The use schedule allows virtually every use in the zoning ordinance other than what's allowed in heavy industrial areas. Some examples of uses that you can have includes apartments, continuing care, retirement homes, upper story residential, dorms and student housing, adult care facilities, nursing homes, assisted Living Facilities, Office, medical office, interior sports complexes, all forms of retail, event venues, distilleries, bars, restaurants, hotels, including hotels of 75 rooms and more. Hotels are a permitted use in the district. The DX District has 100% lot coverage and zero setbacks on all sides of all projects built in the DX zone. Without the height map the allowed height in the DX zone is 8 stories. Here it's allowed to be four stories under the current version of the height map. So even though hotels are permitted use in the district and even though the road is inside of the large-scale area for hotels, it's confusing when you look at this map because unless there's a red line on the road, you can't actually put a hotel on a particular street. And that's the issue that's before you today, which is whether or not this would be a good location for a hotel. The question is not can or should this property be developed for anything? It can be developed again by right for a zero-lot line four story, apartment building, dormitory, office building or multiple other uses.

We are asking you to add one use to a list of between 50 and 75 uses to allow it to be a hotel. There are two reasons presented in the Staff Report as to why we had a recommendation for denial. One is that Cohen Street is not an arterial or collector street. We supplied a zoning confirmation letter from the City of Savannah, that hotels are not required to be on a collector or arterial street. In fact, most of the other streets west of MLK that you see on this map that have red lines on them, including Jones St., Zubly, St., Ann, and Brian streets, are not arterial or collector.

There was also a comment from Traffic and Engineering that because the City of Savannah has not been able to control parents queuing to pick up their kids from Garrison Elementary, that hotel uses as opposed to any other use on the site would not be appropriate. Traffic Engineering has not seen a site plan. There's been no site plan review of this project because we have not submitted one. But we did look at it and I think it's worth noting that if a hotel use isn't appropriate on the site, does that also mean that no use is appropriate on the site, an apartment building, or an office building, or a restaurant or other uses that are permitted by right where which would have significantly more traffic potentially would also not be allowed because there is a school on the site and parents are lining up to pick up their children? The queueing at Garrison Elementary occurs 180 days out of the year at one particular time of the day in the afternoon, in the middle of the day. It is not entering rush hour or during dinner time, and it's in between check in and checkout times of a typical hotel. Looking into the traffic that will be generated, there is not a significant difference. Traffic generation per bedroom for an apartment in the morning is .37 trips per bedroom and in the afternoons .39. The hotel is .46 and .59. There are two tenths more of a trip. An office building, which is permitted by right, will generate three times the amount of traffic as an apartment building or hotel.

It says in the Staff Report that it is likely the reason that the street was excluded from the hotel overlay was the proximity of two historic Jewish cemeteries. I am unaware of there being any evidence of that being the case. It is confusing that the Staff Report shows 100-foot buffers, but the 100-foot buffer does not apply. The original Staff Report stated that nothing could be built on the site within 100 feet. We obtained a Zoning Letter that section 8.3.1 of the zoning ordinance does not apply to this site in any way. There are several examples of historic cemeteries around Savannah with buildings, schools, roads, walls, etc., built on, over, or around them. We believe cemeteries should be honored and protected. There should be things done to prevent the walls from being affected by any construction that goes next to it.

You are going to hear today, as mentioned by Staff, that this was all part of a larger parcel and that there are potentially bodies that are buried in the ground outside of the walls of the cemetery. We want to make

two points on that. One, we did perform subsurface penetrating radar testing for the whole site. We used a company called GPRS, which is the largest private sub service contract in the United States. They tested the entire site outside of the fence line and determined there were no bodies on the grounds.

Based on the historical documents we read in 1893, it appears that the trustees of the cemetery sold the remainder of the site as it was originally left in the 1700s from King George and put into a trust. It was intended that there would be potentially a synagogue on the site. At some point they determined that wasn't going to happen due to the neighborhood around them. The trustees of the cemetery elected to sell it so that it could be developed. And they sued in court to get permission from the court to allow them to sell the property, and in doing so, they sold off the property that surrounds the walls and buffered this cemetery from other properties. This led to the development of the railroad, the Savannah Station, which was a trucking company built 10-feet from the wall of the cemetery. This property has been located in a very busy industrial site for a long period of time. The cemetery was essentially located in the railyard immediately adjacent to it after they sold the property. My client does not want to put this kind of pressure on the cemetery. We do not intend to build anything on the cemetery grounds or do anything that would harm the cemetery. We have redesigned this project twice at the request of the trustees. We have made significant changes above and beyond, to accommodate requests. Of Friday we learned that the trustees were requesting some additional things from us which included only having a hotel with less than 75 rooms, maximum height of three stories, and that we construct a commemorative Civil War plaza adjacent to the cemetery. We could not agree to that. We have no intention of harming this cemetery. This site will be developed for something. We believe the text is consistent with the remainder of the zoning ordinance. The DX Zoning Ordinance is intended to be an extension of the Commercial Business District. City Council designated this area both on the FLUM and the zoning in NewZo as DX for Commercial Business District. It allows larger scale taller buildings in almost every use in the ordinance. We also believe the text amendment represents revision to necessitate changes over time. We ask for your approval of our request to amend the hotel map to allow this one singular use to be added to the use schedule for this property.

Ms. Lauren Boles, Board Member, asked what the anticipated number of vehicles going in and out of the site will be.

Mr. McCorkle said we would like to have approximately 100 rooms if we build 5 stories. We will have to park the site; we are looking at some underground parking. Based on the manual, in the evenings 5:00 traffic, with .57 trips per room, so that's about 57 trips. In the mornings, it's more like .49. In the mornings you would expect somewhere around 49 trips, which is not a huge number of trips. Again, if you the Blake as an example, which is built on the same street, has 248 bedrooms., That will generate significantly more traffic based on the room count. There are other uses that are permitted on the site that would generate more trips than a hotel. We do not believe this singular change will be enough to make a significant difference.

Ms. Karen Jarrett, Chairwoman, stated, a big concern is safety. There is a playground right across Cohen Street that your hotel guests will be driving on to get in and out of the hotel and the children will be crossing on the other side of Cohen Street to get to the playground.

Mr. McCorkle said we would be 100% supportive of the City putting in a crosswalk with flashing lights for the times of the day when kids are crossing there. It's a concern for anything that gets developed on Cohen Street. That playground and crosswalk will be there, whether this is an apartment or a hotel or an office building or a restaurant. That issue will need to be addressed; we just don't think that the hotel use is exacerbating that problem.

Mr. Dwayne Stephens, Board Member, asked staff if the 100-foot buffer applied to new cemeteries only.

Mr. Morrow said yes.

Mr. Stephens asked for clarification on the size of the buffer the petitioner is proposing.

Mr. McCorkle said what we originally showed the trustees was 10 feet. We were trying to be consistent with the historic location of the Savannah Station Building. They asked us to back it up, we then changed it. Due to the shape of the property, one corner is approximately 15 feet and another approximately 35

feet. What we are proposing is an area be paved and greenspace remaining open at ground level in order to create a buffer. They also asked us to give them a permanent easement to allow for maintenance of the walls of the cemetery. We offered to put in a permanent easement so the trustees would have a right to go around and do whatever repairs were needed.

Mr. Stephens asked if this would be a physical attachment to the Savannah Station.

Mr. McCorkle said this will not be attached in the sense that it will be added on, but it will be up against it being a part of the location.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Andrew Jones, Thomerson, Jones, and Edwards, counsel to the congregation Mitzvah Israel and the trustees of the Mordecai Sheftall Cemetery, stated our clients are the owners of the Levi Sheftall Cemetery and the Mordecai Sheftall cemeteries. We object to the text amendments and support the recommendations of MPC staff. We would like to note the Applicant's proposed structure and what he is asking for is a large hotel, 4 - 5 stories. As mentioned prior, this is an addition to Savannah Station. They are not showing the actual addition itself. The Savannah Station and the cemeteries are contributing structures in the Downtown Savannah Historic District which is subject to the Historic District overlay in section 7-8 of the ordinance. On one side of Cohen Street is the Levi Sheftall Cemetery from 1765, built in Levi Sheftall's Garden lot. Each of the original settlers got a house lot, a garden lot, and a farm lot. The Savannah Station is in between the two. On the official MPC building map, you can see the Garrison School and the cemetery. Around the cemetery there is a buffer because ground penetrating radar was performed. Evidence of burials were found and there was a negotiation to create a buffer around that cemetery. The Mordecai Sheftall cemetery sits in a garden lot. Mordecai Sheftall is buried in that cemetery. Burials may extend beyond the walls. In 1856 you can see the Hebrew congregation had a much larger parcel of land. We have documentary evidence from the 1840's in the temples records that the burial area was extended at some point, 75 feet north and 75 feet to the south. The seller has denied us access to the property to have radar testing performed by a contractor of our choosing. The contractor chosen by the seller admitted that the study was not conclusive. We have a contractor we would like to use. We would like to detect if there are any remains of the ancestors of the members of this congregation. Our contractor, the Lamar Institute, a highly respected contractor that has done a significant amount of archaeological work in this vicinity, they do not feel the sellers' contractors' methods to be adequate to find burial or human remains. Mordecai Sheffel was the highest-ranking Jewish officer in the Continental Army in the American Revolution. His tomb is on the lower right, which is the closest point to the hotel. This was a very significant site in the siege of Savannah. It was the rendezvous point in the battles and appears in contemporary maps. The Haitians also made their stand against the British at this location, using the walls as protection. The walls may be the only surviving masonry structures from the siege of Savannah, an event important not just to Americans but to all the other nations who supported us, such as the French, the Polish and, the Haitians.

I don't think that you should be overturning a law effectively because a developer finds it in their financial interest. Is the amendment consistent with the remainder of the ordinance, including any purpose or intent statements. The application fails because it's inconsistent with the ordinance as to the Historic Districts overlays intent to protect contributing structures, the overlays rules for additions, the overlays visual compatibility criteria, and the overlay subdivision and recombination rules. If you look at the height map in addition to that and the hotel prohibition, this proposal is contrary to six different parts of the ordinance. This is a building that the ordinance is designed to prevent from being constructed.

The intent of the standards is to protect and complement existing contributing resources and to protect the historic integrity of the contributing resources. But we're talking about a four or five story building plus a two or three level underground parking. So as many as eight stories. It's a massive edifice. Construction causes damage. The construction of I-16 caused damage to the South wall. Mr. McCorkle showed you photographs of that. Excavations 3 floors down next to the cemetery, possibly going through burials certainly causes risk to the north wall and potentially could undermine the ground underneath the cemetery, as we've seen with Ellis Square. There are other hotels that have damaged contributing resources. The Perry Lane forced the residents on McDonough St. out of their home across the street. The excavation of 220 E. Bryan caused damage throughout homes across Warren Street. The developer is not willing to make any assurances to us that they will not be using pile driving equipment or vibrational equipment. The historic overlay says the addition must be subordinate in mass and height to the

resource. In order to be subordinate, this has to be a two-story building. A four or five story hotel cannot meet this requirement and is therefore inconsistent with the standards. If it is inconsistent with the rest of the ordinance, a Text Amendment should not be granted. The seller commented on tall buildings in the Colonial Cemetery, those tall buildings were there before the Historic Overlay was enacted. In order to obtain a COA, the seller/developer will need to prove the large hotel is visually compatible in height and proportion with the nearby contributing structures. A building of the size proposed simply will not meet that standard. The subdivision and recombination rules, a single building on three parcels requires a COA. One purpose of that law is to prevent the aggregation of lots for overscale hotels. This is a law designed to prevent what is before you today. As an exception, the Applicant must show that the proposed recombination results in the same parcel configuration that existed when one of the contributing resources was constructed. This does not meet that exception. The application for a large hotel fails the criterion for a Text Amendment and that is what you are here today to decide. A large hotel would not meet the visual compatibility rules or the subdivision and recombination rules. Because this Text Amendment fails the criterion, you must decline it.

Mr. Dwayne Stephens, Board Member, asked if anyone has mentioned what a suitable development would look like. This can be developed, are they sharing any thoughts of what they thought it would be?

Mr. Jones said he represents the congregation and the trustees. They have submitted to the developer a list of what they think is appropriate. They would be willing to discuss some of those options.

Mr. Wayne Noha, Board Member, asked MPC Staff to briefly speak about the subdivision and recombination rules.

Mr. Morrow stated there recently has been an adoption of a new provision regarding recombination and subdivision lots in the Historic District. These recently adopted amendments have now added an additional step within the downtown Historic District, the Landmark District, where any subdivision or recombination of lots within those boundaries requires a Certificate of Appropriateness. There are specific guidelines that the board has to permit a recombination of lots that is not in essence restoring a previous configuration of those lots. Any changes now require an additional historic overview before they come before the Planning Commission.

Mr. BH Levy Jr. stated he and his wife do not have an issue with a hotel provided it is located in appropriate locations. They do not feel the location on Cohen Street is appropriate for a hotel. No circumstances have changed on Cohen Street that would justify revisiting the decision made 5 years ago to prohibit hotels on Cohen Street. Mr. Levy presented an in-depth history of the cemetery and the concern of the preservation of the historic cemetery.

Ms. Ellie Issacson, Director of Historic Savannah Foundation, stated they adamantly oppose the hotel overlay and the subsequent application altering the height map.

Mr. Steve Edwards, Representing the Downtown Neighborhood Association, stated they strongly opposed the text amendment to the hotel overlay.

Mr. Josh Yellin, representing the owner of the property, stated he was in support of the project. The owner has been a great benefactor of the site and a member of the community.

Mr. Wayne Noha, Board Member, asked about comments made regarding the I-16 flyover ramp and the possible removal.

Ms. Bridget Lidy, Director of Planning and Urban Design with the City of Savannah, stated the City did receive a grant from DOT for the study of possibly removing the flyover. It will be a three-year process that will include equity planning, community engagement, and environmental studies.

Ms. Laureen Boles, Board Member, asked Mr. Yellin to present the results from the 2011 study completed by Lamar.

Mr. Yellin stated the study did not include parts of the area that were then retested. The study from Lamar in 2011 did not find any evidence of bodies or burials in a limited portion of the site. After a request to test more of the area, testing was done by the purchasers, GPR consultant. The report affirmed there

were no burials on site.

Mr. Ruel Joyner stated he was in favor of the project. He stated Mr. Patel has been a member of the community for years. He stated Mr. Patel has always been there for the community.

Mr. Andrew Lynch, Lynch Architect and Associates, stated the renderings shown earlier was not accurate. He stated they were not proposing a 5-story building on top of the existing Savannah Station. He stated they will not be driving piles on the site; they will be auger cast piles that will limit vibration to be cautious in regard to any impact on the cemetery.

Ms. Joan Levy stated her opposition to the project.

Mr. Bruce Cohen stated he is not opposed to development but very concerned about preserving the Jewish heritage. He stated their ancestors should be honored and respected.

Mr. McCorkle stated they agree that the cemetery is a sacred place. We also believe that development of the site adjacent to the cemetery will bring much needed attention to it. Unfortunately, the state in which it is in now, the walls are falling, it is covered in graffiti down the entire eastern wall. It is an incredible state of disrepair. There are homeless individuals living along the side of the wall. Portions of the wall have been repaired by rubber cement that has been smeared all over the exterior of the walls, as opposed to any type of historic material or anything that would preserve the wall in their proper fashion. What we've been offering throughout this process is more than what anybody in the history of this cemetery over the course of 250 years has ever offered to protect it. There was a cotton mill constructed directly across the street immediately adjacent. Railroad buildings were attached to the walls. The trustees of the cemetery, Mr. Jones mentioned that we shouldn't be able to change the law in order to find financial gain. The trustees themselves in 1895, filed a suit in court to change things so that they could sell the property surrounding the cemetery. We wouldn't be here today having this discussion had they not done that, because they would still own everything around it, and we wouldn't be able to build anything there today. But instead, they sold it specifically so an industrial development could be built 10 feet from the walls. Now, what the owner is being asked to do, build a Revolutionary War Commemorative Plaza, which does not exist now, and limit everything to three stories. The setback they are asking is for us to put back the garden lot that they sold. That is out of bounds to ask. My client is offering more than anyone has ever offered. The ordinances that Mr. Jones cited have nothing to do with the use schedule, the Hotel Overlay District, or what we are talking about today. They are all provisions for certificates of appropriateness through the Historic Review Board. Mr. Jones is making an assumption the project won't be approved through the process and that it is not compatible. Rather than focusing on the position that nothing can be built here because it has to get a COA. Focus on the simple question; Is adding this one use of a hotel to the list of the other 80 uses that are permitted on this site. We ask that you approve our request.

Mr. Noha said it was stated that the seller is denying access to his property to have their own ground penetrating study done. Is that true or untrue?

Mr. McCorkle stated as mentioned by Mr. Yellin, the Lamar Institute study was done in 2011. They asked us to have a study done, we hired the largest company in the nation to do this, they tested the entire site. They were unable to get to certain areas of the site because of the overgrowth around the cemetery. There was also a fence in area that was locked the day they were there. They asked us to mow down the material and to get to where the sonar could be tested on every single inch of the property. The dispute arose because they wanted to use their contractor to do that testing to follow up on our contractor to test the areas that are just there. My client has a contract with Lamar Institute with insurance and indemnifications in place. We went back and forth about how to do that, but never reached a final agreement because they wanted to retest the whole site. We asked GPRS to come back out and test those areas. We hired someone to go out there, clear the landscaping and we retested every inch of it down to 8 feet using low and high frequency and they came back with absolutely no evidence of anything. It is correct that we did not allow Lamar to go on the site and test the areas that we weren't able to get in the beginning. We sent the same crew that had done the work before.

Mr. Noha asked for clarification regarding the pile driving comments made earlier.

Mr. McCorkle stated they will not be pile driving. We hired a structural engineer and had them go on site

to come up with best practices for this.

Mr. Stephen Plunk, Board Member, asked about a letter from Traffic Engineering that mentioned opposition. Is there any rebuttal regarding that letter?

Mr. McCorkle stated he has reached out but is unable to speak to them at this point. We do not have a site plan for anyone to review for anyone to offer any commentary on. My main comments, a hotel use does not add significantly more car traffic than the other uses. It is significantly less than a lot of the uses that are permitted. The stopping and standing of the cueing of the school, that is 180 days a year, 2 times a day, at certain times. When we go through Site Plan, we will have to address that as best we can. If we come back and build an office building on the site or a dorm, we are likely to have more traffic, not less.

Mr. Stephens asked if a room count was provided to Traffic Engineering. How did they determine anything?

Mr. McCorkle said they did not have a traffic count, there was no discussion with traffic. There has been no site plan review, no discussion of units, they would not have any information that would give them a number of units to go by or anything that I am aware of. This could have come from just looking at the application.

Motion

Denial of the request to amend Section 7.13, Figure 7.13-1, Hotel Development Overlay District, to permit hotel development adjoining Cohen Street.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Travis Coles

Second: Laureen Boles

Joseph Ervin	- Aye
Tom Woiwode	- Nay
Travis Coles	- Aye
Joseph Welch	- Nay
Coren Ross	- Not Present
Karen Jarrett	- Aye
Dwayne Stephens	- Aye
Wayne Noha	- Aye
Jeff Notrica	- Nay
Laureen Boles	- Aye
Stephen Plunk	- Aye
Jay Melder	- Not Present
Michael Kaigler	- Aye
Traci Amick	- Aye

[10. Text Amendment | Zoning Ordinance -Article 7, Section 7.8.10\(b\) Historic District Height Map | 24-000559-ZA](#)

🔗 [TEXT AMENDMENT_SEC. 7.8.10\(B\)_FIGURE 7.8-4_24-000559-ZA_APPLICATION_.pdf](#)

🔗 [Choctaw Ward Contributing Resources.pdf](#)

🔗 [H-20140409-000634-2 \(The Blake COA 1-9\).pdf](#)

🔗 [24-000559-ZA Staff Report.pdf](#)

☞ [Jones Presentation Cohen St. Height Map.pdf](#)

☞ [Combined public comments.pdf](#)

☞ [certified-ordinance-select-provisions.pdf](#)

☞ [Robert McCorkle 2.pdf](#)

☞ [2328.00_24.06.05_Savannah Station Hotel_LA2 concept.pdf](#)

Mr. Edward Morrow, Director of Development Services/ Current Planning, presented the Staff report. **Mr. Morrow** stated this is a petition to amend Article 7, Section 7.8, Figure 7.8-4, Savannah Downtown Historic District Height Map, to permit 5-story development on parcels adjoining Cohen and Selma Streets. The purpose of the Savannah Downtown Historic Overlay District, referred to herein as "Savannah Downtown Historic District," is to promote the educational, cultural, economic, and general welfare of Savannah pursuant to the provisions of the amendment to the Georgia Constitution Article XI, ratified November 5, 1968 (1968 GA Laws, page 1591) and continued as part of the Constitution of the State of Georgia (GA. L. 1986, p. 5077). These provisions provide 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 the community's vacation-travel industry, its tourism, its culture, and for the protection of property values because of their association with history; their unique architectural details; or their being a part of or related to a square, park, or area, the design or general arrangement of which should be preserved and/or developed according to a fixed plan based on economic, cultural, historical or architectural motives or purposes.

Among other aspects of development, Section 7.8 regulates the height of buildings in the Historic District utilizing a height map overlay that indicates the maximum permissible height for a structure within the identified geography. Current heights permitted range from a low of 1-story to a high of 14-stories depending upon urban context. Variances to height are not permitted and require amendment of the height map to exceed current established maximums.

The Petitioner proposes to construct a hotel on parcels adjacent to Savannah Station, a contributing historic resource (#1732) in Choctaw Ward originally constructed in 1912, and currently identified by the Board of Assessors as a 'Cocktail Lounge.' The facility consists of approximately 15,784 square feet of area on an 18,700-square foot lot. The parcels proposed for development adjoin the historic structure and are also within the Landmark Historic District. They would require a COA from the Historic District Board of Review (HDBR) for recombination under recently adopted amendments to the City's Subdivision Regulations (Sec.8-2030, 23-005697-ZA). The parcels, however, are not within the original Oglethorpe Plan area. Approval of the requested amendment would authorize future development within the identified polygon to be 5-stories in height by-right. The Blake, previously identified as *Selma Street Housing*, is a student housing development located at 540 Selma Street. This 2016 development achieved a partial 5th story through grant of a COA and variances to development standards from the HDBR (14-000634-COA) and Board of Zoning Appeals in 2014 (14-001000-ZBA). The development predates New ZO and its development standards which were adopted in 2019; however, it does not predate the height map. Historic Jewish cemeteries are located on both the north (Levi Sheftall Family Cemetery - #1730) and south (Mordecai Sheftall Cemetery - #1731) sides of Cohen Street, both believed to date to the mid-1700s. Both are listed as contributing resources within Choctaw Ward. *Section 8.3.1* of New ZO requires that (new) burial plots be a minimum of 100' from a residential use or residentially zoned parcel. Whether by intent or coincidence, the only structure within 100' of either cemetery is a historic structure, the Savannah Station. The Historic District design standards were explicitly adopted for preservation and protection of historic resources, thus, appropriateness for context is the principal determinate in reviewing any proposed development. Based on the record preserved, The Blake, being the closest new development to the specific parcel proposed for hotel construction, was partially reduced in height through conversations with MPC Historic Staff to make it more visually compatible with the nearby historic structure of lesser height. Savannah Station is a partial 2-story building adjoining Selma Street with only 1-story adjoining the Mordecai Sheftall Cemetery and Cohen Street. The end result of work with MPC Staff on The Blake was a 4-story structure on the side closest to Savannah Station. If this is any indication of appropriateness within this particular context, a 5th story immediately adjoining Savannah Station is likely inappropriate. MPC Staff recommend denial of the request to amend Section 7.8, Figure 7.8-4, Savannah Downtown Historic District Height Map, to permit 5-story development adjoining the identified portions of Cohen and Selma Streets.

Mr. Robert McCorkle, Representing the Petitioner, stated we are requesting a maximum height map revised to five stories, which would be consistent with the adjacent structure known as the Blake, as was mentioned by staff. There is some historic context for large scale buildings being in this immediate area and along this corridor. The Sandborn map from the early 1900's shows the large train shed and the Union Station passenger facility. The historic Union Station building unfortunately was torn down. It was a very large, beautiful structure.

The Blake is a five-story building. The flat roof line is 58 feet tall. The top of the accents are actually 6 stories tall, 70 feet in height. If you look at the building from the back where it is exposed, it is actually six full stories in the back exposed with accents up to seven stories in the rear. This building has a 43,000 square footprint and 235,000 square feet with 250 rooms/ dorms in the building. As you pull onto Selma Street, the Frogtown Condos, a four-story building with five story accents is directly in your face as you pull onto Selma. We are projecting our building to be 52 feet tall. As I mentioned, the Blake is 58 feet tall with a flat roof, and over 70 feet tall at the peaks.

Mr. Andrew Lynch, Architect, stated our hotel site is sitting behind the existing Savannah Station building. What is most important to discuss is the historic building. We will be setting our building back for a distance of 30 feet to the hotel portion that will be five stories. We intend on following the HRB guidelines. We are showing all the ground floor, retail, and active uses. This is a change from the previous submission which showed rooms on the first floor. We shifted the vehicular entrance to Cohen Street to not impact the cemetery. We moved the vehicular entrance for lobby drop off, to Selma Street to try to mitigate some of the traffic concerns on Cohen Street.

Mr. McCorkle stated we believe the height is not only appropriate in general, as a maximum height. When I reviewed the Staff reports and minutes from the COA applications for the Blake, other than mentioning the fact that there were only three contributing structures in the Choctaw Ward, there was no reference to the cemeteries and no specific request that the building be reduced down because of the Savannah Station building or because of the cemeteries nearest to the site. Our belief through discussions with the Historic Preservation Staff, was the height that we were suggesting at five feet, given the context of the street and that it is already out there between 58 and 73 feet moving down the street, the maximum height of the fifth story we are suggesting, is not out of bounds with the area. That is part of the reason we moved forward with requesting the amendment.

Mr. Michael Kaigler, County Manager, asked if this was not connected to the Savannah Station, would the five-story limit be an issue? What is the difference between this and the one on Selma? They were allowed to get five stories.

Mr. Morrow stated that currently four stories is permitted by right. It is my understanding that the present parcel could achieve five stories as well with street level activation. Proximity to Savannah Station played a part in the development at that time.

Mr. Stephens asked does the active ground floor use allow for a bonus story?

Mr. Morrow said based on the discussions with the Historic Preservation Officer, yes.

Mr. Stephens asked if the intent is the actual use from a conceptual standpoint?

Mr. McCorkle said they do not know at this time. We have shown it both ways, rooms at the bottom or activating the floor.

Mr. Stephens asked what the height was on the 703 Louisville Rd dorms?

Mr. Morrow stated 6-7 stories.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Andrew Jones said there has been a lot of discussion regarding the context. I want to make sure we remember there is in fact a very specific criteria that should be applied. We are opposed to this amendment. The contributing structure 7.8.10 still applies. The Applicant is trying to say you shouldn't look at these other provisions of the ordinance. The criteria states that you must look at these other

criteria, if it is inconsistent, then it's inconsistent. The ordinances are very clear. We are supposed to focus on protecting the contributing structures. If a fourth story building with a three-story parking garage poses risks, an even bigger building with a fifth story would propose a greater risk. The building is an addition and must be subordinate in mass and height to the resource. Why are we giving the developer a fifth story when based on the reading of the statute, he is not entitled to a third or fourth floor. False comparisons have been used. The Blake is not relevant to the discussion. It is a free-standing building; it was not an addition to a structure. There are subdivision rules in place and here is a request to build a building that cannot be built because of subdivision rules.

Mr. McCorkle said Mr. Jones position was that we are not entitled by the ordinance to a third or fourth floor based on the fact that it cannot possibly be compatible with the adjacent building. That implies that you cannot build a building taller than a historic building that is adjacent to you. I can list several examples all over the City where that is the case but also in the ordinance it specifically states the maximum height shall not exceed one story greater than a principal contributing structure building adjacent, on the same site, or abutting a lot per minimum distance of thirty feet. Mr. Lynch showed the design of the project is going to be one story in height for a distance of thirty feet from the building, which is exactly what the ordinance requires. We believe the context as it currently sits on the site, and coming down the road, which ranges from fifty-eight feet all the way up to seventy-three feet, is consistent with the five stories and does recognize is area the existing condition on the road as it currently sits.

Ms. Jarrett said the goal of this text amendment is to change the height designation in this area so it would not be just for this project.

Mr. Morrow said yes.

Mr. Coles asked, by right, the property owner could go up four stories, correct?

Mr. Morrow said yes.

Motion

Approval of the request to amend Section 7.8, figure 7.8-4, Savannah Downtown Historic District Height Map, to permit 5-story development adjoining the identified portions of Cohen and Selma Streets.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Stephen Plunk

Second: Jeff Notrica

Joseph Ervin	- Not Present
Tom Woiwode	- Aye
Travis Coles	- Nay
Joseph Welch	- Aye
Coren Ross	- Not Present
Karen Jarrett	- Nay
Dwayne Stephens	- Aye
Wayne Noha	- Aye
Jeff Notrica	- Aye
Laureen Boles	- Nay
Stephen Plunk	- Aye
Jay Melder	- Not Present
Michael Kaigler	- Aye
Traci Amick	- Nay

11. Map Amendment request to rezone portion of B-C property to RMF-2-18 | 0 Fort Argyle Rd | 24-002471-ZA

- 🔗 [0 FORT ARGYLE RD_PIN 21034 01008_24-002471-ZA_APPLICATION original submission.pdf](#)
- 🔗 [Master Plan 2-27-2023 Exhibit 1.pdf](#)
- 🔗 [Master Plan Amendment Proposal Exhibit 2.pdf](#)
- 🔗 [Staff Report \(EM\).pdf](#)
- 🔗 [K Bieber - WCCCW Neighborhood Meeting Comments.pdf](#)
- 🔗 [Cowan - 0 Fort Argyle.pdf](#)

Mr. Brad Clement, Senior Planner, Development Services, presented the staff report. Mr. Clement stated the Petitioner seeks to establish multi-family residential use (RMF-2) within a 33.8 ac portion of a previously approved master planned development where Community Business use was originally intended. The request also includes minor amendments to portions of the previously adopted Master plan designated for Light Industrial use. With the proposed update, the existing B-C portion of the development will be revised to reflect 1) a north commercial pod consisting of approximately 23.2 upland acres with 360 apartments and future commercial/retail uses, and 2) a south commercial pod consisting of approximately 14.3 upland acres. The Hill-Durrence Tract development was initially rezoned June 23, 2022, with a condition that a Master Plan would be brought back to the Metropolitan Planning Commission prior to the approval of a Site Development Plan. The original plan contained a mix of warehouse developments (I-L-T 393,000-sqft and I-L 2,093,410-sqft) and Community Business dedicated for development as an Indoor/Outdoor Sports Complex (Indoor Ice Hockey 100,000-sqft, Indoor Soccer 62,000-sqft, and 6 Adult/Youth Outdoor Soccer Fields). Ultimately, development plans for the Indoor Hockey Arena changed with the intended tenant thus changing the developer's plans for the whole sports complex. In the interim, development on the rear industrial parcels has continued largely as planned with only minor changes in the size and orientation of the warehouses resulting in an overall increase of approximately 37,864-square feet in proposed warehouse storage.

Based upon findings and evaluation MPC Staff recommends **approval** of the request to amend the Master Plan to include RMF-2 use contingent upon the following conditions:

1. The GDP submitted and reviewed in association with this petition shall supersede all previous submissions as the current approved Master Plan for the totality of the Hill-Durrence Tract. Buffer encroachment remediation shall be installed as indicated on the revised Master Plan for Lots 1, 2 and 3. Where land is disturbed, a Type D Buffer shall be installed along the portion of the property line of the northern commercial pod that adjoins I-L zoning.

Mr. Harold Yellin, Attorney for the Petitioner, said back in 2022 the property was rezoned to three zoning classifications. The back parcel was rezoned to Light Industrial. The district was bounded by a mixed-use development and other I-L and I-H districts including the waste management landfill. The middle portion was zoned to (I-L-T) Light Industrial Transitional. We used at that time, 150-foot Georgia Power easement and the 50-foot Southern Natural Gas easement as the defining boundaries. The portion up front was rezoned to B-C (Community Business) zoning classification. It was our intention to build an ice hockey facility on the front piece of this property. Mr. Cowen was and still is, a part owner of the Ghost Pirates. Sometime after that rezoning, the City of Port Wentworth entered the picture and offered a number of incentives to move the ice hockey facility off the site. They offered \$6.5 million in a low interest loan. They offered a \$1,000,000 donation to the project. They offered to spend \$1 million on marketing and they donated the land. They made it pad ready and offered all the permits. The offer was accepted and there's going to be a \$42 million Hockey Rink and Amphitheatre called Anchor Park in Port Wentworth.

The B-C tract is 58.84 acres. We only attempted to rezone this with that use in mind. The ice hockey rink and the facility needed a B-C zoning. But for that facility we would not have asked for the zoning classification. Today's request is to rezone only a portion of the property to RMF-2, which is the multifamily classification. The current proposal is for 360 units on this acreage, that's roughly 13.5 units per acre. Our petition says 18, but we wanted to be conservative, we will be well under that. The City's zoning ordinance goes up to 40 units an acre at 13.5, 15 or 18, we're at the low end of the density scale. In contrast, if this property were to remain B-C, it would accommodate a shopping center of approximately 250,000 square feet. Without our hockey facility, we recognize the need to reduce our

acreage and commit it to some other use. We believe that multifamily is an appropriate use at this location.

We met with our immediate neighbors. We realized in building our spine road, we disturbed what was going to be a buffer for our neighbors. We went to them, showed them our site plan and they signed off, all neighbors on the site. Lot 1, we agreed to put up a fence with our buffer being 60-68 feet wide. Lot 2, we will have 68-83 feet of natural vegetation with an 8-foot chain-link fence with an opaque screen. Lot 3, this will have an 83-93-foot buffer. They also asked for an 8-foot chain link fence with an opaque screen. In addition to meeting with our immediate neighbors, we also met with our surrounding neighbors at a meeting organized last week by the Petitioner, MPC Staff, and the West Chatham County Community Watch. We did learn at that meeting there is a dirt road called Pinkney Road that cuts a corner of our property. It does not affect our zoning petition any more than it affected our previous petition for commercial. When we come back with a Site Plan, we will need to find a way to accommodate Pinkney Road. We also learned at the meeting, they were surprised that we had already spoken to our neighbors and got their approval. The neighbors asked for better communication on topics such as a start date and any modifications we may make to this plan. We have agreed to do that. We appointed Commissioner Whitely as the contact person since he was there. We also agreed we would contact MPC Staff on any relevant dates or modifications. MPC Staff has recommended approval with three conditions of which we agree to with the additional comment that once we figure out Pinkney Road, we will be back with a new Site Plan. What is before you today is just a zoning petition for the northern corner of the property only. One other thing the neighbors had mentioned was they generally want the balance of the front property to remain B-C. We are going to keep it that but as a general stance, the neighbors agreed with that position.

Mr. Wayne Noha, Board Member, said he has concern about Pinkney Road.

Mr. Yellin said we will have to deal with that road. When we come back for a Site Plan review, we will have a plan.

Mr. Clement said the County wants to look at the ROW when the Petitioner comes back with a site plan.

Mr. Yellin said that is not the only access to the property, it is access, and we do recognize it.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Tara Williams, Owner of property at 362 Ft. Argyle Rd. stated Pickney Road does cut through our property to give access to the portion of our property that is on the other side of Pinckney Road. I am not opposed to anything going on, I want to make sure that Pinckney Road was going to be acknowledged and there was some sort of plan to give us access to our property. We do have a major access to the Pet Resort that we have. That area is very wet, for us to be able to cross over to get to our property back there, it would be way too wet and take way too much to build that up to be able to have access to that. We purchased the property five years ago and that is our main access to get to that property.

Mr. Yellin said we fully support the staff's recommendation. We will come back with a Site Plan; we will accommodate Pinckney somehow/someway. We know we must do that.

Motion

Approval of the request to amend the master plan to include RMF-2 use contingent upon the following conditions.

1. The GDP submitted and reviewed in association with this petition shall supersede all previous submissions as the current approved master plan for the totality of the Hill-Durrence Tract.
2. Buffer encroachment remediation shall be installed as indicated on the revised master plan for Lots 1, 2, and 3.
3. Where land is disturbed, a Type D Buffer shall be installed along the portion of the property line of the

norther commercial pod that adjoins I-L zoning.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Travis Coles

Second: Joseph Ervin

Joseph Ervin	- Aye
Tom Woiwode	- Aye
Travis Coles	- Aye
Joseph Welch	- Aye
Coren Ross	- Not Present
Karen Jarrett	- Aye
Dwayne Stephens	- Aye
Wayne Noha	- Aye
Jeff Notrica	- Aye
Laureen Boles	- Aye
Stephen Plunk	- Aye
Jay Melder	- Not Present
Michael Kaigler	- Aye
Traci Amick	- Aye

12. Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map Amendment | 2180 East Victory Dr | 24-002848-ZA

🔗 [2180 E VICTORY DR_24-002848-ZA_FLUM APPLICATION.pdf](#)

🔗 [2180 Victory FLUM Staff Report.pdf](#)

Mr. Edward Morrow, Director of Development Services/Current Planning, presented the Staff Report. He stated that the Petitioner requests amendment of the Future Land Use Map from the designation of 'Residential-General' to 'Commercial-Suburban' for the purpose of rezoning the property to Office and Institutional-Expanded (OIE). The proposed use is a mini-warehouse storage development. The subject property, which is a 1.77 acre parcel on the north side of Victory Drive, is developed with a residential structure constructed in 1938, which is currently uninhabited. The property also contains three accessory buildings which were constructed in the same style as the principal building. The property is adjacent on the west side with the former St. Mary's Home for Girls, which now operates as the administrative offices for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Savannah. East of the subject property is a multifamily residential development originally built in 1970, which includes 150 dwelling units on 9.35 acres.

The subject property is within the 'Urban Transitional' area as identified by the Land Use Element within Plan 2040 (p. 184-185). 'Urban Transitional' character areas are those that are sometimes classified as "urban edge" or "urban expansion." This character area includes the Cuyler-Brownville Historic District, established neighborhoods such as Ardsley Park and Victory Heights, and commercial corridors on Abercorn Street and Victory Drive. Urban Transitional areas are identifiable by more automobile-oriented, suburban style residential areas that still provide access to urban amenities and public transit. Most of these neighborhoods are also pedestrian-oriented with well-used sidewalks, parks, and open spaces. Redevelopment and infill development opportunities are prevalent in this character area, and special attention should be paid to corridors suited for TOD.' PLAN 2040 prescribes an urban transition character more so than a suburban character for the subject property. Where a Commercial-Suburban designation may suggest future use that has a large surface parking lot, a Civic/Institutional designation would signal desire for a less intense and more community-oriented use. The Office and institutional zoning districts are ideal for uses that are relatively innocuous from an intensity perspective and desirable in close proximity of residences.

MPC Staff recommends **denial** of the request to amend the FLUM to reflect 'Commercial-Suburban' use. Alternatively, Staff recommends **approval** of amendment of the FLUM to reflect 'Civic/Institutional' use consistent with the adjoining parcel to the west. This designation will also permit the requested zoning and specifically identified use.

Mr. Josh Yellin, Agent for the Petitioner, said we are in complete agreement with Staff on this item.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Lynn Adams, Victory Heights Neighborhood Association, stated she lives behind this property. The residents had a meeting in May, the property is zoned for multi-family housing. We were excited about there being affordable housing opportunities here. The apartments that are there now are the most affordable on the east side. We would like to keep this for multi-family. There has been question about DOT not giving a ROW. However, there is a ROW to the side of it that allows the apartment complex next to it to have access. We are very opposed to a storage facility.

Mr. Wayne Noha, Board Member, said we need clarification regarding the access there. This was discussed in the first zoning appearance and the property owner was not interested in allowing access through his property to the newly rezoned property.

Ms. Melanie Wilson, Executive Director and CEO, said that is correct. It was suggested at that time for the applicant to speak with the adjacent property owners to see if they could somehow create joint access. DOT was not going to give them the driveway cut for a crossover. The traffic flow, which is already at a level service D, would be disturbed further. The zoning, based on what was proposed, was denied. The zoning in place now, was already there.

Ms. Laureen Boles, Board Member, asked for Ms. Adams to describe her access to the property.

Ms. Adams said she understood the DOT conversation as there are a series of cut throughs on Victory Drive that allow you access for north/south bound. There is one between this property and the apartment complex. There is another one as you get closer to Evergreen. We found out this weekend that Victory Heights has an application in, or is getting together an application with Historic Savannah, we are on the list of neighborhoods along with Avondale and Gordonston.

Mr. Ruel Joyner said he has storage units and has received three increases in a short amount of time. I have four storage units, one of them we went inside and found a mess. There were things ruined due to climate, rats, etc. There is a need for storage, way more than warehousing. If you go to Victory Drive now, many of the spaces are full or at capacity. There is not enough storage space.

Mr. Yellin said as it relates to access, there is no access to the residential neighborhood at the rear. We are on Victory Drive. We are surrounded by the existing multi-family. There is one driveway. What was being alluded to as the median break on Victory Drive, specifically lines up with the multi-family. There is nothing that lines up with this property for the site. We cannot get a median break, it would be restricted to right-in, right-out. That causes a lot of headaches for something that would put traffic there. What we are proposing is something that generates the lowest amount of traffic we could find.

Motion

Denial of the request to amend the FLUM to reflect Commercial-Suburban use.

Alternatively, Staff recommends approval of amendment of the FLUM to reflect Civic/Institutional use consistent with the adjoining parcel to the west. This designation will also permit the requested zoning and specifically identified use.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Travis Coles

Second: Tom Woiwode

Joseph Ervin	- Not Present
Tom Woiwode	- Aye
Travis Coles	- Aye
Joseph Welch	- Aye
Coren Ross	- Not Present
Karen Jarrett	- Aye
Dwayne Stephens	- Aye
Wayne Noha	- Aye
Jeff Notrica	- Not Present
Laureen Boles	- Aye
Stephen Plunk	- Aye
Jay Melder	- Not Present
Michael Kaigler	- Aye
Traci Amick	- Aye

13. Map Amendment request to rezone from RMF-2-20 to OI-E | 2180 East Victory Drive| 23-002847-ZA

📎 [2180 E VICTORY DR_24-002847-ZA-MAP APPLICATION.pdf](#)

📎 [Staff Report - 2180 East Victory.pdf](#)

Mr. Edward Morrow, Director of Development Services/Current Planning, presented the Staff Report. He stated the Petitioner seeks to rezone the subject property from a multi-family residential designation (RMF-2-20) permitting up to 20 dwelling units per acre to the Office and Institutional – Expanded (OI-E) zoning classification for a proposed mini-warehouse storage development. The subject property, which is a 1.77 acre parcel on the north side of Victory Drive, is developed with a residential structure constructed in 1938, which is currently uninhabited. The property also contains three accessory buildings which were constructed in the same style as the principal building. The property is adjacent on the west side with the former St. Mary's Home for Girls, which now operates as the administrative offices for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Savannah. East of the subject property is a multifamily residential development originally built in 1970, which includes 150 dwelling units on 9.35 acres. The subject parcel was previously considered for rezoning from RMF-2-20 to RMF-2-45 in 2022. The request was heard by the MPC at its May 24, 2022, meeting and continued to permit the property owner the opportunity to seek additional access to the site through connection with an adjoining parcel. After this effort was unsuccessful, the request was considered at the July 26, 2022, MPC meeting, where it received a recommendation of approval with the condition that a traffic study be completed and presented to City Council. There is no record that the Petition was subsequently scheduled for a City Council hearing.

The only vehicular access to the property is via one existing curb cut. Because this portion of East Victory Drive is divided by a median, only right-in / right-out access is available. This limited access would require those entering the property traveling east to proceed past the site to the next median break, East Victory Drive Crossing, and make a U-Turn. This portion of Victory Drive is a State Highway and, therefore, any additional access points would require GDOT approval. Based on conversations with the City of Savannah Traffic Engineering Department staff, additional curb cuts are unlikely based on traffic counts and the proximity to the nearest signalized intersection. Preliminary 2050 MTP LOS data rates Victory Drive's level of service within this segment at level 'D' where LOS 'A' represents the highest rating and 'F' the lowest. Level of Service D is characterized by 1) high traffic volumes, 2) reduced speed and freedom to maneuver, 3) frequent stops and starts, and 4) increased potential for traffic delays.

The area has access to the City's public water, sewer, and stormwater systems. Based on the proposed lot coverage, on-site stormwater management facilities will be required and approved through the specific site development plan process should the requested rezoning be successful. The Chatham County-Savannah Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map (FLUM) designates the subject property as

'Residential General,' a designation permissive of relatively higher density residential development (in excess of 10 dwelling units per acre). A request to amend the FLUM was submitted concurrently with the rezoning petition. Per Sec. 5.15.2 of New ZO, the requested OI-E zoning requires a FLUM designation of "Office/Institutional" or "Commercial Suburban." The Petitioner has requested the Commercial-Suburban designation. The office/light commercial, institutional and group living uses within the requested zoning district are equally as appropriate as the moderate density residential uses permitted in the present zoning district, generally, as the site fronts a higher classification thoroughfare. Variants of both use classifications can already be found in close proximity to the site. Given the current LOS rating of 'D' at this location, however, major traffic generators should be avoided. The Petitioner's proposed use within the requested zoning district is among the lowest traffic generators that would be allowed, likely making it more appropriate under the circumstances. Based upon findings and evaluation MPC Staff recommends approval of the request to rezone the subject property from RMF-2-20 to OI-E to establish a mini-warehouse storage facility.

Mr. Dwayne Stephens, Board Member, asked if the building currently there would have to be demolished in order to put the storage facility there.

Mr. Morrow said that is the intent.

Mr. Joshua Yellin, Agent for the Petitioner, said we have been working with Staff for some time now on this petition. This item did come before you in 2022. The site is currently zone RMF-2-20, permitting 20 units per acre which would allow for 35 units on the property. A rezoning petition came in order to upzone the site to permit 45 units per acre which would be 79 units. There was a condition that the site obtain a traffic study, work with Traffic Engineering, and GDOT on obtaining access. Due to that traffic study and accommodations could not be made with GDOT, that petition never went before City Council. As mentioned in the prior hearing, the access was brought up in terms of getting a shared access agreement with the adjacent multi-family. There was a continuance, the Applicant met with the developer, they were not able to reach an agreement. What has been holding up the site from any type of development is the multi-family use. What we are seeing on these high traffic corridors that have existing traffic issues, they are trying to find uses that can be placed having minimal amount of traffic impact. We looked at what use could go in here, what use would have the lowest impact of traffic, the use here, is the self-storage facility. The traffic impact from the storage unit is significantly reduced.

I should also mention that since some of these self-storage facilities have been developed and I think this is a very important point to make the City of Savannah has section 8.4.29 of the ordinance. All self-storage facilities within the City of Savannah are not actually permitted by right, they are all limited uses that have a page and a half of conditions that must be adhered to. This is unlike any other use within the City in terms of the requirements. Part of these requirements are that this be an internal unit. It can't be the old-style access with the roll up door from the outside. The units that everyone associates as being problematic self-storage. This has to be within the building and there are specific restrictions. We can't have boats or RV's outside. All of that is in the ordinance because when the city of Savannah redid NewZO in 2019, with these conditions, this use is not considered the use that it once was. We're taking it away from the errors where it shouldn't be. Specifically trying to put it in the B-C and the O-I areas, in those transition areas that are specifically next to multifamily residential or even residential itself. As was also mentioned in the Staff Report, we know that we have been building and are trying to build more multifamily housing. These two uses fortunately or unfortunately, go hand in hand. When we see more housing being developed, we see a greater need for these units.

Mr. Coles, Board Member, asked if the client was open to including climate control in these units?

Mr. Yellin said this will all be client controlled.

Mr. Dwayne Stephens, Board Member, said he does not have concerns regarding a storage unit but is concerned about the demolition of a structure in order to achieve storage.

Mr. Yellin said that is the proposal. The Applicant reached out to Repurpose Savannah to see about deconstruction. We have not received response at this time. We do understand the concern. With this site being outside of the historic district, we are working with what we have.

Ms. Boles, Board Member, asked if the footprint of the building will take up the whole site.

Mr. Yellin said no. There are both setbacks and buffers surrounding the property. The site does not have a zero-lot line permissive in this area.

Mr. Karen Jarrett, Chairwoman, asked if when the apartments were proposed, was the building going to stay on the site.

Mr. Yellin said there were a couple of different draft plans. One showing the house being made into a clubhouse, with no residents in there. Another showing nothing on the site. None of which were ever approved by the city.

Mr. Wayne Noha, Board Member, asked what the setback from the property line to the actual building was and how long has the building been vacant? He stated it is sad to see the building go but does not remember the last time it was occupied.

Mr. Yellin said the setback looks to be approximately 45 feet from the adjacent property line. Building to building will be significantly increased.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Lynn Adams said there are two more storage units .5 miles down the road on Downing and one more .6 miles behind Whole Foods. There are two directly across the street. There are currently 4 storage units surrounding our neighborhood. The traffic is mainly at night. My street usually gets a lot of the U-Haul's going on Downing. There are issues with rats and other pests. The floor plan is an issue, everything on that side of the road is two story. The third story proposed will tower over the existing apartment complex as well as the area. One of my neighbors wrote, "what are we going to name our neighborhood now, Storage Unit Landia". Another one said, "are we now the East Side Storage District". I would like to mention that a nonprofit is currently doing a study on Skidaway to bring up the businesses on Skidaway like what was done on Waters Avenue. Can we use this for anything else, a Library, any other type of commercial except a storage bin? On the attendance of the building, according to the property records there were homeowners until 2018. It did not become abandoned until then.

Ms. Ellie Isaacs, Director of Preservation for Historic Savannah Foundation, said we are not in support of this petition to demolish the historic house known as being associated with the Tombs family or otherwise known as the Big Daddy Grace Mansion. Big Daddy Grace was the founder of the International House of Prayer. There have been multiple people that have tried to buy or rent the house for office use. For whatever reason, those things did not come to fruition. This is one of the last mansions on this side of Victory Drive. If a Victory Heights Neighborhood was to come to fruition, this would be a contributing property within that district. The loss of this house would be a significant loss to the African American community.

Mr. Noha asked if HSF has approached the owner about purchasing the property.

Ms. Isaacson said no. The property has not been for sale.

Andrew Chase Rosen said he was in opposition of this petition. He expressed concerns regarding the accuracy of the traffic estimates. Specific to the zoning in this area, it is appropriate for housing there, it just might not be for the petitioner. There are plenty of uses that are not storage units, that would be appropriate for this site.

Mr. Yellin said the traffic numbers that were provided did come from the City of Savannah Traffic Engineering. This is a GDOT highway. We call it Victory Drive, but the level of service is based on GDOT standards that they are applying. With it being a state highway, we are limited to petition them to make improvements or to make new curb cuts. This does severely limit this site. We have looked at other uses for this site. If we were to do an office that was expanded, it has significantly more traffic. For a larger office complex in this area, you're looking at 800 plus trips per day for a shopping center that could fit on the 1.77-acre site, you're looking at 1000 trips per day. Our numbers were only 106.

Mr. Joseph Ervin, Board Member, said given the historic significance of the African American community in the same vein that we looked at the Jewish cemetery, I feel the same way about this parcel.

The historic nature of that Victory Drive property, the Tumor family, Carver State Bank, and on down, it's just unfortunate that we're at this point. I am flabbergasted with this one.

Motion

Approval of the request to rezone the subject property from RMF-2-20 to OI-E to establish a mini-warehouse storage facility. With the condition that the facility, be climate controlled and the property be deconstructed and properly documented for historical purposes.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Joseph Welch

Second: Travis Coles

Joseph Ervin	- Nay
Tom Woiwode	- Aye
Travis Coles	- Aye
Joseph Welch	- Aye
Coren Ross	- Not Present
Karen Jarrett	- Nay
Dwayne Stephens	- Nay
Wayne Noha	- Aye
Jeff Notrica	- Abstain
Laureen Boles	- Nay
Stephen Plunk	- Aye
Jay Melder	- Not Present
Michael Kaigler	- Aye
Traci Amick	- Not Present

14. Special Use Request to allow recycling/salvage facility in I-H zoning district | 2760 Louisville Rd | 24-002912-ZA

🔗 [2760 LOUISVILLE RD_24-002912-ZA_APPLICATION.pdf](#)

🔗 [2760 LOUISVILLE RD SPECIAL USE EXHIBITS_5-20-24.pdf](#)

🔗 [Staff Report 24-002912-ZA - 2760 Louisville Rd..pdf](#)

🔗 [Sec. 8.5.3 Salvage Yard - Recycling Facility \(attach. 1\).pdf](#)

🔗 [Oblique Site View - Google Earth.jpg](#)

🔗 [Blackbun - Public Comment.pdf](#)

🔗 [Baucom Public Comment.pdf](#)

🔗 [P. Anderson Public Comments.pdf](#)

Mr. Brad Clement, Senior Planner, presented the Staff Report. Mr. Clement stated the Petitioner requests approval of a Special Use Permit pursuant to Section 3.10 of the Savannah Zoning Ordinance to establish a recycling/salvage facility. The proposed site will operate as a buyer and seller of recycled metal products open to the public with an anticipated daily commercial truck load of approximately 5 semi-trailers. This Special Use permit will re-establish its previous use, bringing it into conformity with current zoning regulations. The property is located at 2760 Louisville Road is situated at the southwest corner of the intersection of Louisville Road and Fair Street. The parcels in question consist of approximately 1.11 acres of developed and undeveloped industrial land. Plans submitted for the

proposed use include utilizing the existing 18,523 square foot building located adjacent to the existing truck scale and the construction of a new 2,205-square foot metal storage building located at the rear of the site adjacent to the new detention pond. Parking calculations for the proposed use indicate 5 dedicated off-street parking stalls which have been depicted on the submitted plans. The Petitioner intends the established operation to run on a managed schedule with approximately 5 semi-trailer pick-up/drop-offs during normal operating hours between 8-5 Monday through Friday. Plans indicate there will be no truck or vehicle queuing external to the site on public rights-of-way. The Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map (FLUM) designates the subject property as remaining Heavy Industrial surrounded by Heavy Industrial. The proposed Recycling Facility/Scrap Yard use would be compatible with adjacent parcels' future land use designations, current zoning, and the general pattern of development in the area.

The Special Use provisions of the Savannah Zoning Ordinance are designed to allow the reviewing authorities to consider the establishment of uses in zoning districts, where the use may be appropriate but should not be allowed by right. The review criteria outlined in Section 3.10.8 are the standards for considering a special use. In evaluating the request against these standards, the subject property and proposed use may be regarded as appropriate. The site has previously been operating in the same manner as the proposed use and will undergo significant site improvements as part of the re-establishment of the future use. If properly regulated, the proposed use is unlikely to have a negative impact on adjacent properties. MPC Staff recommends approval of the requested Special Use with the following conditions:

1. The Special Use Permit shall be nontransferable.
2. A Specific Site Plan be subsequently approved showing conformance with all applicable ordinances and City Department Reviews and Approvals.
3. A Final Plat be submitted affecting the recombination of the existing lots and abandoned rights-of-way as indicated in the application submitted.
4. Any future change to the scope or scale of the proposed site's operation should be further reviewed for continued appropriateness and approved by the MPC and City Council as a new Special Use.

Mr. Michael Gerald Jr., Petitioner, stated we are a family-owned business that has been a vital part of the community for over four decades. We kindly request the approval of the necessary business permit and licensing for Savannah Iron and Metal, formerly Gerald's Recycling, to operate at 2760 Louisville Rd. The business was founded by big Mike Gerald who opened his first scrap metal recycling yard in 1981 on Lathrop Avenue. This is the only local scrap yard after Chatham Steel moved. Big Mike was a businessman who regularly donated to local charities, hospitals, church fundraisers, and individuals facing hardships. He opened and ran Gerald's Gym for 30 years providing a safe space and mentorship for at-risk youth, free of charge. The scrap yard funded his boxing program. A couple of years later, after struggling to keep the scrap yard alive, Mike made a difficult decision to sell two of the three properties that he maintained for scrap recycling. One week after his sudden passing, Gerald's Recycling was given 6 months to vacate the property at 44 Tremont Road. Despite its challenges, Savannah Iron and Metal continued to move forward, providing paperwork needed to show compliance. This was thrown on me and all new to me on what to do. This has been a hard learning process for me. I am trying to keep this company afloat. I do not want it to end with me. We have been a part of this community for 43 years. We have customers that have been faithful for over 35 years.

Ms. Laureen Boles, Board Member, said this is a family-owned business that you have been operating for 40 years. Were you a part of the business with your father? Can you speak to the non-compliance issue?

Mr. Gerald said yes, my father started this business when I was one. When my father passed, I thought we put in an application for permits. Another company that we work with handles this. Unfortunately, no one handled this, everything fell on me. I got the ESA done; I thought things were moving forward then. We were shut down, but I am in compliance now. We have our business license. There were no environmental violations. There were stormwater runoff violations. I didn't know we needed to have a retention pond, but we are doing what we have to do. We are still operating to be able to afford the attorney's, engineers, etc.

Ms. Boles Board Member, said it was mentioned that there would be approximately 5 additional semis on the property. Is that per day or hour? Was there a traffic study done?

Mr. Gerald said that is per day. When we get the metal, we do not keep anything on the ground. Everything goes to the shredder or to the steel mill. Sometimes there is a little left that will go in tubs, not left on the ground. We will run about 3 loads to the shredder. We have our own truck we do pickups for the community. There was not a traffic study required since there were less than 50 vehicles to be on the road.

Mr. Clement said the intersection changes classification at Louisville and Faire Rd. Traffic Engineering's concern was what to do with the unopened portion of Faire Road. It was unopened/unfinished and created issues. There was another partial portion of an unopened ROW they were looking at rather than truck traffic as it relates to this site.

Ms. Boles Board Member, said the concern is there are 6 federal lawsuits against industries in this community. To hear you have to operate in non-compliance in order to make the money to even get into compliance, that is an issue. We talked about communities being overburdened and the opportunity to downzone.

Mr. Gerald said the property is surrounded by heavy industrial. If it is not going to be my business there, there will be another heavy industrial business there.

Ms. Boles Board Member, said the City has received a grant for three of the communities adjacent to these industrial properties indicating these neighborhoods are at the 87% and therefore only 13% of the neighborhoods in the Country have more pollution dumped on them. This is an environmental justice issue. We really need to consider downzoning this area.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Faye Prescott said she is a resident of the community across the tracks there. I strongly object to the granting of the Special Use permit for this recycling established facility near our neighborhood. My home is 200 meters away from this facility. This will have a significant negative impact on our quality of life. The environmental impact it will have will be negative. There are children in this area, there is a community center for the elderly and the children. There is a park in that area. We are worried about the release of harmful pollutants released in the air and our water.

Mr. Joseph Welch, Board Member, asked how long Ms. Prescott has lived in that area.

Ms. Prescott said 50 years. I love that community; I am the Vice President of that community. We built a new home in this same community. This was not originally a scrap yard. Previously that was a family dwelling that had a store downstairs. After the family passed the property was sold and it was turned into a scrap yard.

Ms. Pamela Anderson, President of Woodville Community, said on behalf of Woodville Community Organization, I wish to express our concerns about the requested permit from Gerald Recycling. The Woodville Community has endured illegal land clearing off Louisville Road behind Mandy's store. The noise level was brought to the attention of the City of Savannah Code Enforcement Department. This was going on late into the night hours. EPA will be notified of this consideration with no regards to the quality of life in the neighborhood. Contamination will have a lasting impact on our soil, water, drainage system, and sewer. We ask you table this request to consider the Springfield canal that runs behind this area and how the community can better be served for flooding.

Mr. Ashley Mosley, Engineer for the project, said I think this should be approved. There will be NPDES monitoring for stormwater compliance. We have addressed each of the conditions. When the City came out and sited the property, he hired me. I want to bring this site into compliance.

Mr. Emmett Prescott said I am opposed to Gerald's Recycling. They started operating without a license. There is heavy industrial all around this area. The Community Center is only 150 feet from this site. The residential neighborhoods have not been taken into consideration at all. There are over 400

container trucks already coming through Woodville every day without Gerald's Recycling. This is not safe. Recycled trash falls off the trucks, there are big pieces of metal laying in the road that you have to go out and pick up.

Mr. Chris Balcom said he owns the building at 2744 Louisville Rd. I am the adjacent property owner to this site. My tenant in the front of the building is a tortilla company. They supply corn and flower tortillas to Bull Street Taco and Javo Burrito. I operate a vintage car brokerage out of the back. Mike's family has operated this scrap yard off Fremont for years. It's a 17-acre site. There was no scrap yard behind us on this site. I have been there for 6 years; it has been undeveloped vacant land. When they lost the lease on the 17-acre site that was when Mike set up shop behind us. He assured us there would be no traffic on Faire Street and the impact on our property would be minimal. I did not know that he was setting up shop with no permits or development standards. There has been heavy traffic, messy roads, scrap metal and fluids falling on my property, open burning, and double stacked shipping containers. We are requesting denial of this petition.

Mr. Nicholas Houston said he is the co-owner of the property directly adjacent to Mr. Gerald's lot. There was not a scrap yard here previously. This was a 17-acre property business that was moved to a 1-acre property trying to do the same thing. When the property was originally cleared, we all met and discussed concerns. The concerns that were discussed were never addressed. This has been a non-stop nightmare. The traffic is very bad. I am still picking up scrap metal dropped in the streets.

Ms. Grace Newland said she operates the business that is on the front part of the property at 2744 Louisville Rd. I strongly oppose the Special Use permit. The recommendation made to approve is based on the plan being presented. I have reason to believe, based on past experience, the plan will not be followed. There has been nonstop daily trespassing in our parking lot with their customers parking and going through trailers, dropping off pieces of metal. We have called the police numerous times on his customers fighting. There was a standoff at one point. Our Right Of Way is blocked all the time. At one point we had water come into our shop through the roll up door from that property. After we called the water company, we found out they were illegally trying to tap into the water line.

Mr. Gerald said there are never more than 50 customers a day. What has been said about the traffic is not true. I thought I was doing everything properly when we moved. The only concern when we had the meeting was, they wanted the road to stay blocked off at Faire Street. I put rocks down on the road when they complained about the dirt road and mud. We have owned this property for 20 years. There was a restaurant up front that was Mandy's restaurant. We are away from any houses, about 1/4 mile away.

Mr. Stephen Plunk, Board Member, asked for clarity on the previous use of the property. Are you saying this was used as a salvage yard for several decades until 5-6 years ago?

Mr. Gerald said no. This property was licensed for a scrap yard. There has been a scale there since 2006. It was always my dad's backup plan to have this place. I am in the process of discussing purchasing the parcels in the back of mine. We have never operated at night; we operate 8-4 only. I try to work with my neighbors.

Ms. Boles, Board Member ,asked if the petitioner was operating now.

Mr. Gerald said no.

Ms. Boles , Board Member, asked how long it will take to fix all the issues to be able to open back up and operate legally.

Mr. Gerald said he is not sure.

Mr. Joseph Welch, Board Member, asked how long the petitioner has been operating without a license. It costs money to come into compliance, it takes a lot of money to run a business. You could come in compliance with things and then come back before this Commission.

Mr. Gerald said from December of 2023 until March of 2024.

Ms. Boles , Board Member, said I am not willing to give you a chance to come in compliance on the communities' lives.

Ms. Jarrett , Board Member, asked if a Special Permit could be granted if there is property the petitioner does not own and an issue with the ROW.

Mr. Clement said those are all conditions placed on the Petitioner.

Ms. Boles, Board Member, said it is my understanding that Special Uses are granted to people who have been good actors in business in the general. They can handle a Special Use permit. I am not seeing that here.

Ms. Melanie Wilson, Executive Director/CEO, said Special Uses, like any other request, have provisions that will allow you to make decisions based on public health, safety, and general welfare, following the other processes.

Motion

Denial of the requested Special Use.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Laureen Boles

Second: Joseph Ervin

Joseph Ervin	- Aye
Tom Woiwode	- Aye
Travis Coles	- Aye
Joseph Welch	- Aye
Coren Ross	- Not Present
Karen Jarrett	- Aye
Dwayne Stephens	- Aye
Wayne Noha	- Not Present
Jeff Notrica	- Aye
Laureen Boles	- Aye
Stephen Plunk	- Aye
Jay Melder	- Not Present
Michael Kaigler	- Aye
Traci Amick	- Not Present

15. Map Amendment request to rezone from I-L to B-C | 3202 Ogeechee Rd | 24-002868-ZA

🔗 [3202 OGEECHEE RD_24-002868-ZA_APPLICATION.pdf](#)

🔗 [NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION APPROVAL.pdf](#)

🔗 [A2 DAYCARE_EXISTING CONDITIONS PLAN.pdf](#)

🔗 [A2 DAYCARE3_STAKING PLAN.pdf](#)

🔗 [FLU MAP 24-002868-ZA.pdf](#)

🔗 [ZONING MAP 24-002868-ZA.pdf](#)

🔗 [Staff Report.pdf](#)

Mr. Edward Morrow, Director of Development Services/Current Planning, presented the Staff

Report. Mr. Morrow stated the Petitioner requests the rezoning of the subject parcel from an I-L (Light Industrial) district to a B-C (Community Business), consistent with the adjacent use and current FLUM designation, for the use of child day care center. The site has approximately 97' of frontage on Ogeechee Road within which a new curb cut is proposed based on the submitted concept plan. However, approval of the proposed curb cut will require GDOT review. This review will occur during the specific Site Plan review following rezoning. Alternatively, access to the site can be achieved through the existing curb cut on Horizon Park Drive that presently serves the day care center. The development pattern in the area is characterized as 'Suburban Residential' with a mix of low-medium density residential and small-scale commercial uses. Suburban Residential areas are automobile-oriented and have limited public transit. Lot sizes are larger. Suburban Residential areas adjacent to Suburban Commercial character areas should, to the extent possible, be designed as cohesive, connected neighborhoods. Based upon findings and evaluation MPC Staff recommends approval of the request to rezone 3202 Ogeechee Road property from I-L to B-C.

Mr. Kaelan Lutz, representing the Petitioner, said the owner of the existing daycare owns the lot with the existing daycare, and has purchased the lot next to it for the purpose of building a new building. The current daycare tenant is at capacity and has a wait list to accept more children. Currently she is using a house on the other side of Ogeechee Road as extra space. The new building will allow the care of more children.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Ashleigh Laudon said she owns and operates a dog daycare. My biggest concern is rezoning, I would like to make sure that does not affect our business. We have been operating there for 11 years now. We have never had any complaints. I just want to make sure this will not be an issue having new zoning. I am concerned about the retention pond with the new business going in or if that is even relevant with the rezoning process.

Mr. Michael Kaigler, County Manager, asked, with the nature of both businesses, is there adequate fencing separating those businesses (the kennel and the daycare)?

Mr. Morrow said yes, the Petitioner has agreed to install fencing and screening so there is adequate buffering between the two different uses.

Ms. Karen Jarrett, Chairwoman, asked if this would be a dry or a wet detention.

Mr. Lutz said it would be a wet detention approximately 4 feet deep. We are installing a chain link fence around the pond.

Mr. Travis Coles, Board Member, suggested a second chain link fence around that pond with the nature of children around water.

Mr. Lutz said they could look into that.

Motion

Approval of the request to rezone 3202 Ogeechee Road property from I-L to B-C.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Travis Coles

Second: Stephen Plunk

Joseph Ervin	- Aye
Tom Woiwode	- Aye
Travis Coles	- Aye
Joseph Welch	- Aye
Coren Ross	- Not Present

Karen Jarrett	- Aye
Dwayne Stephens	- Aye
Wayne Noha	- Not Present
Jeff Notrica	- Aye
Laureen Boles	- Aye
Stephen Plunk	- Aye
Jay Melder	- Not Present
Michael Kaigler	- Aye
Traci Amick	- Not Present

[16. GDP request variance relief from Article 9, Sec. 9.3.5.c | 125 Crossroads Parkway | 24-002892-ZA](#)

🔗 [125 CROSSROADS PKWY_24-002892-ZA_VARINACE FOR DEVELOPMENT PLAN APPLICATION.pdf](#)

🔗 [Staff Report 24-002892-ZA 125 Parkway \(2\).pdf](#)

Mr. Brad Clement, Senior Planner, Development Services, presented the Staff Report. Mr. Clement stated the Petitioner requests approval of a General Development Plan for a chassis parking/outdoor storage expansion as part of an existing warehouse and distribution center. As proposed, a variance is needed to permit gravel surfacing for uses where asphalt or concrete (impervious) surfacing are required. The gravel area will replace existing grass (pervious) areas within and adjacent to the paved trailer parking areas of the site. The total new gravel pad expansion has been indicated to be approximately 3.30 acres. This site is and has been operating in its current capacity for some time and the Petitioner's provided Site Sketch and Legal Description indicate modest parking and storage additions and lot reconfigurations. The expansion of the trailer/chassis storage area with the inclusion of gravel and gravel berms is appropriate and ideal as proposed based on evidence of the existing pattern of use. The proposed gravel surfacing material does not meet the alternative paving material described above and requires approval from the MPC. Denial of the request would result in the Petitioner being required to surface the identified areas with asphalt, concrete, or an approved alternative such as concrete pavers, brick, turfstone or the like.

The Zoning Administrator has provided that areas intended for trailer/chassis storage are acceptable with gravel surfacing without need of a variance where the items to be stored are placed in designated storage areas via use of a lift, but not were placed via a vehicle such as a truck. The Petition has been forwarded for MPC approval as it is evident that vehicle use is the primary means of storing and retrieving the containers. Per documentation submitted by the Petitioner, the expanded storage is necessitated by a postCovid-19 increase in on-demand shipping and in-store pickup which has placed unexpected demand on existing distribution centers. To meet demand, Centers must have increased trailer availability and, thus, associated outdoor storage. The proposed expansion is not inconsistent with the intended use of the site, and Staff acknowledges merits to avoidance of added impervious surface. However, it appears that the site was under-built with regard to the on-site storage need and would benefit from a redesign to ensure adequacy of all required functional areas. MPC Staff recommends denial of the requested variance to allow gravel surfacing within the specified outdoor storage bays.

Mr. William Latta said the Staff agrees the expansion of these areas is an appropriate and ideal use for this site and how it is functioning. When you look at the proposed use for these areas, trailer storage, yes, I would think it was more appropriate as an outdoor storage area. The Staff Report says is acceptable for the site with the caveat that it is placed by a lift. However, in reviewing the ordinance, I don't see that detail anywhere. There are a multitude of sites across the City of Savannah where there are non-paved surfaces being used as outdoor storage areas. These include material handling facilities and heavy equipment facilities that have excavators driven across the areas. There are freight terminal trailers being parked on non-paved surfaces. We are just asking for the same opportunity. The comment about this is basically the same stormwater runoff as a paved surface, that is just not true. These aggregate bases, depending on how they are designed, can actually improve the stormwater runoff for these areas. There is an excess of greenspace on this site. This is a very small portion we are talking about. We are improving this site and in the least intrusive manner.

Mr. Travis Coles, Board Member, asked if it would be a true statement to say the site is not being used as it was originally designed. Looking at the bobtails parked on what used to be grass, I don't think that is what was originally designed for use.

Mr. Latta said for those areas of the site, correct.

Mr. Coles , Board Member, said do you not feel it reasonable to go back and look at the site as a whole, not redesign it from the ground up, but make adjustments other than just filling those spaces in with gravel?

Mr. Latta said in doing so, we might find that gravel is the best thing to put in those spaces. It is the best manner in handling stormwater rather than install an additional stormwater infrastructure because we are paving it.

Ms. Laureen Boles, Board Member, asked how you could manage stormwater with the gravel.

Mr. Latta said the way the pervious surfaces work, stormwater flows into them, they flow into the gravel base where there is excess volume for stormwater to be stored. It still goes into the ground similar to landscape, but you have additional volume you have accounted for to handle that stormwater. You are providing pressure which is helping that stormwater enter the ground. It is a better solution than just paving the area.

Ms. Boles, Board Member, stated she does not agree with that and asked the Petitioner to make sure and have an engineer look at that.

Mr. Latta said if you take that gravel base and extend it all the way to the top, they can handle upwards of 500 inches per hour of stormwater. I have videos to show that. What we are proposing is the gravel base to just come up to the surface.

Ms. Jarrett, Chair, said her experience as a municipal engineer and working with firefighters, gravel tends to rut. If you have trucks that are going to be pulling these things in and out, that gravel is going to rut on you, and you will have to replace it. Have you considered open cell concrete blocks that would provide earth in the middle with storage permeability.

Mr. Latta said you are right with the rutting. The maintenance on that is much easier to regrade and restore the surface as opposed to your closed cell concrete blocks.

Ms. Boles, Board Member, asked if the petitioner owned all of the greenspace around the site.

Mr. Latta said yes.

Ms. Jarret, Chair, asked if it is anticipated that it will always be owned by the Petitioner.

Mr. Latta said not that he knows of at this time.

Motion

Denial of the requested variance to allow gravel surfacing within the specified outdoor storage bays.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Laureen Boles

Second: Travis Coles

Joseph Ervin - Aye

Tom Woiwode - Aye

Travis Coles - Aye

Joseph Welch	- Aye
Coren Ross	- Not Present
Karen Jarrett	- Aye
Dwayne Stephens	- Aye
Wayne Noha	- Not Present
Jeff Notrica	- Aye
Laureen Boles	- Aye
Stephen Plunk	- Aye
Jay Melder	- Not Present
Michael Kaigler	- Aye
Traci Amick	- Not Present

X. Presentations

XI. Other Business

17. Revisions to Public Notification Requirements

🔗 [FINAL Revisions to Public Notification Requirements CITY AND COUNTY 06.10.2024.pptx](#)

Ms. Bridget Lidy, City of Savannah Planning and Urban Design Dept. and Mr. Marcus Lotson, Chatham County Building Safety and Regulatory Services Dept. both spoke briefly regarding the presentation of Revisions to Public Notice Requirements. The presentation was for information only and can be found attached to the agenda.

XII. Executive Session

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.