



Chatham County - Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission

October 15, 2024 MPC Meeting
Minutes

October 15, 2024 MPC MEETING

Members Present: Karen Jarrett - In person
Travis Cole - In person
Laureen Boles - In person
Amanda Wilson - In person
Dwayne Stephens - In Person
Tom Woiwode - In person
Jeff Notrica - In person
Traci Amick - In person
Joseph Welch - In person
Jay Melder - In person
Stephen Plunk - In person

Members Absent Coren Ross
Joseph Ervin
Michael Kaigler

Staff Present: Melanie Wilson, Executive Director/CEO
Edward Morrow, Director of Development Services/Current Planning
Brad Clement, Senior Planner, Development Services
Subashi Karunaratne, 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. Special Called Personnel Committee Meeting](#)

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

Ms. Jarrett, Chairwoman, stated there was a Special Called Personnel Committee Meeting held today. The Committee agreed to create a committee to evaluate the form that is used for compensation as well as the compensation processes to make it easier for Boards in the future to evaluate the Executive Director. Mr. Travis Coles will be Chairman of that Committee for this evaluation.

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

[2. Site Plan with Variance | 1001, 1015 Whitaker & 120, 124 W. Park | 24-005206-ZA](#)

Motion

Item removed from the final agenda.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Travis Coles

Second: Dwayne Stephens

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

[3. Special Use | 513 E. Oglethorpe Suite G | 24-005199-ZA](#)

Motion

Item removed from the final agenda.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Travis Coles

Second: Dwayne Stephens

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

[4. MAP Amendment | Dean Forest Rd & Ogeechee Rd | Z-0924-000508](#)

Motion

Item removed from the final agenda.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Travis Coles

Second: Dwayne Stephens

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

[5. Site Plan-Variance| Preston Drive/ Pointe Grand | 24-004751-ZA](#)

Motion

Item removed from the final agenda.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Travis Coles

Second: Dwayne Stephens

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

Michael Kaigler	- Not Present
Traci Amick	- Aye
Amanda Wilson	- Aye

VI. Items Requested to be Withdrawn

6. Site Plan with Variance | 8608 Abercorn Street | 24-004758-ZA

🔗 [Parker's Kitchen Variance Requests Abercorn and Montgomery.pdf](#)

Motion

Approval of the request to withdraw the application.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Travis Coles

Second: Dwayne Stephens

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

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 September 24, 2024 Meeting Minutes

🔗 [09-24-2024-mpc-meeting-minutes.pdf](#)

Motion

Approval of the September 24, 2024 meeting minutes.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Travis Coles

Second: Laureen Boles

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

[8. Master Plan Amendment | 0 Little Neck Rd | 24-004499-ZA](#)

🔗 [8.13.2024 REVISED-2024-MASTER-PLAN-AMENDMENT-APPLICATION-AND-CHECKLIST TEH_SIGNED.pdf](#)

🔗 [StaffReport_24-004499-ZA_HopetonLanding.pdf](#)

🔗 [Hopeton South - Letter of Acknowledgement - Interparcel Connection.pdf](#)

🔗 [HOPETON LANDING PD AMENDMENT#2 NARRATIVE_.pdf](#)

🔗 [HOPETON LANDING PUD STANDARDS_AMENDMENT #2_.pdf](#)

🔗 [HOPETON LANDING PD MASTERPLAN_AMENDMENT #2_.pdf](#)

Motion

Approval of the request to amend the Master Plan for final access coordination with the adjacent PD development and revisions to the development guidelines to correct a mislabeled column heading in the Residential Development Standards table.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Travis Coles

Second: Laureen Boles

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

Dwayne Stephens	- Aye
Jeff Notrica	- Aye
Laureen Boles	- Aye
Stephen Plunk	- Aye
Jay Melder	- Aye
Michael Kaigler	- Not Present
Traci Amick	- Aye
Amanda Wilson	- Aye

[9. Site Plan w/ Variance | 0 Williams Street | 24-005193-ZA](#)

🔗 [0 WILLIAMS ST_24-005193-ZA_VARIANCE FOR DEVELOPMENT PLAN APPLICATION.pdf](#)

🔗 [Staff Report.pdf](#)

Motion

Approval of the request to permit 62% building frontage where 70% is ordinarily the minimum requirement.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Travis Coles

Second: Laureen Boles

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

VIII. Old Business

IX. Regular Business

[10. MAP Amendment | 1105 East Anderson St | 24-005184-ZA](#)

🔗 [1105 E ANDERSON ST_24-005184-ZA_APPLICATION.pdf](#)

🔗 [Neighborhood Outreach Attempt.pdf](#)

🔗 [Staff Report.pdf](#)

Mr. Edward Morrow, Director of Development Services/Current Planning, presented the Staff report. **Mr. Morrow** stated the Applicant requested the rezoning of the subject parcel from a TR-2 (Traditional Residential-2) district to a TC-1 (Traditional Commercial-1) consistent with the current FLUM designation for the subject property. MPC Staff was carbon copied on attempted e-mail correspondence with the named point of contact for the Benjamin Van Clark Park neighborhood association (per Open Neighborhoods). Neither MPC Staff nor the Applicant received a response regarding the request made September 20, 2004.

Sanborn maps from 1916 show a dwelling on the parcel at that time. The Chatham County Tax Assessor similarly reports a dwelling, constructed in or about 1930, containing 1,059 square feet of living area. The parcel conforms to TR-2 standards and contains sufficient area to establish either a one- or two-family dwelling (over-under) as zoned.

Based upon findings and evaluation Staff recommend **approval** of the request to rezone 1105 East Anderson Street property from TR-2 to TC-1.

Mr. Josh Yellin, Agent for the Applicant, said most of the lots that are commercial on Waters Avenue corridor are deeper than what has been seen. The site is under common ownership with the adjacent site that is directly on Waters. The intent is to redevelop the site and potentially recombine for use. The current plans would be for a limited upper story residential with ground floor Pilates studio and potentially a small coffee shop.

He stated he reached out to the Benjamin Van Clark Neighborhood Association but did not receive a response. The Applicant also tried to reach out and did not get a response from them or the Live Oak Neighborhood Association. He stated they have tried to reach surrounding neighbors and will continue to try if requested by the Board.

Motion

Approval of the request to rezone 1105 East Anderson Street property from TR-2 to TC-1.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Travis Coles

Second: Laureen Boles

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

🔗 [1100 E 31 St_24-004754-ZA_Variance for Development Plans Application.pdf](#)

🔗 [Staff Report.pdf](#)

🔗 [Buffer Concept and Models.pdf](#)

🔗 [20241001_124114_resized.jpg](#)

🔗 [20241002181609714.pdf](#)

🔗 [Architectural Renderings.pdf](#)

🔗 [Floor Plans.pdf](#)

🔗 [RE_1100 E 31st Street.pdf](#)

🔗 [opposition-Schuff- Petition #24-004754-ZA .pdf](#)

🔗 [Combined support letters.pdf](#)

🔗 [McCorkle Slides.pdf](#)

Mr. Edward Morrow, Director of Development Services/Current Planning presented the Staff report. **Mr. Morrow** stated the Petitioner seeks MPC approval of two site plan variances in association with the development of an apartment building in the TC-1 zoning district. The building proposed will consist of twelve units on three floors with ground floor parking. One unit in the project must be affordable per conditions to the zoning of the property placed by Council June 2024. Variances requested include:

1. Four-story construction where 3 stories up to 45 feet is the maximum permitted;
2. Approval of a reduced buffer of varied width where a 'Type B' buffer is ordinarily required for a multi-family development adjoining a one or two-family residence.

The subject property was considered by MPC on May 21, 2024 for rezoning from a TR-2 (Traditional Residential-2) district to a TC-1 (Traditional Commercial-1), consistent with the historic use and current FLUM designation of the subject property. The property was ultimately approved by City Council on June 27, 2024 with one condition attached, that there be one affordable housing unit to be provided within this project.

The 1916 Sanborn map indicates both commercial and residential use on the property, with a restaurant and stores appearing to adjoin a single-family residence. According to the deed submitted to the MPC by the Applicant, the property was utilized for industrial purposes until 2003. A two-story building, with the ground floor likely used for commercial purposes and the second floor for residential purposes, was demolished by 2023.

The Petitioner proposes to construct an apartment building which is requested to contain a fourth story with a maximum potential height of 45 feet. The applicant intends to include twelve dwelling units, four on each floor.

There is an encroaching structure that is on the adjoining parcel. The requested modified buffer plan considers this encroaching structure which is pre-existing. The Petitioner would like to design around it.

MPC Staff recommends approval of the requests for 1) 4-story construction within a maximum possible height of 45-feet, and 2) a reduced buffer of varied width where the subject property adjoins an existing duplex, with the following conditions:

1. The buffer shall be consistent with that reflected in the submitted concept plan;
2. The single dedicated affordable housing unit shall be a 3-bedroom apartment.

Mr. Robert McCorkle, Agent for the Petitioner, said the property has 100-feet of frontage and 60-feet on 31st Street. We were before this Board in May for the rezoning of this property to TC-1 for the purposes of building a multi-family project on this site. The previous building that was on the property had a 0-lot line in the rear. The new building we are proposing is four stories in height, we are not asking for additional height, just an additional story. The building is a mass timber structure that will be built on top of a pedestal. Mass timber is a sustainable, low carbon, building alternative to concrete and steel. There

is one other project we are aware of that exists in Savannah with mass timber construction. This is constructed off site and then will be erected on site. This saves an incredible amount of time on the construction process. It will take approximately four days to build the mass of the structure on the site once it is brought in. This type of construction allows a lot of the wood to be exposed for different types of buildings that are architecturally interesting. This is an exciting addition to the Waters Corridor. There has been a lot of discussion over the years about this area needing revitalization. There were several letters of support provided for this project. Most of them noting this was feeding a need for revitalization in the area. There is a need for residents to be in walking distance of the businesses that are in the area and a need for residential units in the area. We are excited to see the project that is happening right behind this one.

City Council did ask us to provide one affordable unit on the property which we agreed to do. The two variances that we are seeking today, one is for an additional story and one for reduction of the buffer. With regard to the fourth story, again, we are not asking for any additional height, we will be within the 45-foot limit. The fourth story allows us to park the project on the bottom floor. Part of the discussion we had through the rezoning process with the neighborhood was the concern to make sure we were parking the project per the Ordinance, which we were going to do and is why we are asking for the addition of the fourth floor within the 45-feet. We believe this is consistent with other large-scale projects that are coming down Waters Avenue. The second request is a reduction of the buffer. When we originally applied for this, we did not apply for a buffer variance as we were not aware that it existed. This variance does not exist, to our knowledge, anywhere around us. We asked for it to be waved. After talking with Staff, we tried to come up with a modified plan that would allow us to build the project and still provide some amount of buffer that exists. We believe what we are proposing is more than adequate and meets the criteria for the variance before you. We have provided several pictures of other buildings and homes, new and existing, that do not have existing buffers. What we are asking with this modified plan is to reduce the buffer in a manner that allows us to build the project. The neighboring property is the only one effected by this. The rear building is no inhabitable. The owner of the adjacent property added windows and a door to the building that open onto our property. It encroaches onto our property by 2-3 feet the way it was finished out. There are no rights to come onto our property or to even get in or out of that door. There are no easements in place there, but the property does encroach ours.

What we are proposing is to put a buffer in a space that ranges from 7 feet down to 1 or 2 feet down the length of our building along with a fence adjacent to our neighbor. We do not feel the neighboring property should have an expectation of a buffer. The building that was there historically, was 0-lot line in the rear and connected to the building there was no buffer. That neighboring property is built within the setback that would be applicable as 0-lot line to our property. We believe that any buffer we are able to put in place, we believe will be better than what was there previously. One thing I want to note about the buffer requirement as it exists in the current ordinance, it applies to a piece of property based on the uses. It does not take into consideration the size of the property or the location of the property. The buffer width is the same everywhere within the city no matter the property size. On our property a 15-foot buffer, which is what the Zoning Ordinance provides for, would remove 25% of the total area of our lot. That is a very large number, it is wider than the building setback that is required. We do believe, given the context of the neighborhood and none of these buffers exist around us, or have been applied to other projects around us, give the Urban design and how close these buildings are together, we think that any buffer we apply is a benefit. This is more than has been applied in any other project around us. We support Staff's recommendation for approval. Staff added an additional requirement that our one affordable unit be a three-bedroom unit. That is fine.

Ms. Karen Jarrett, Chairwoman asked about the access to the building that is adjacent. If something happens, fire safety wise, how will the fire department get in.

Mr. McCorkle said it can be accessed down the entire other length of the building which is in the back yard of our neighboring property. We are not sure why the neighbor chose to put the door on our property. That building, from our understanding, was completed without a permit. We did not have notice that anything was happening at the time. Our building will meet the setback requirement (10-feet) there will be space there. We are willing, and tried, to have a conversation with the neighbor to discuss there being a desire to have access to that door and they were not interested in having that conversation.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Jacky Zhao, Owner of 1106 E. 31st Street, expressed concerns regarding buffers and how they

provide a barrier for the noise and privacy. He mentioned parking concerns. Mr. Zhao said he understands the need for growth but urges the Commission to consider a solution to maintain buffers, address parking concerns, and reduce the impact on the neighborhood.

Ms. Katherine Schuff, Resident on 32nd Street, said she agrees with development in the area but does not agree with the variance for the number of stories allowed and feels it will look out of place. Ms. Schuff stated the majority of the homes in the area are one- and two-story homes and businesses and while the renderings are nice, she does not see an attempt to create something that is harmonious for the surrounding buildings.

Mr. McCorkle said the building in the back is not a residence. It is not occupiable. Essentially it is a garage space or storage space. There are other alternatives where the doors can be put. This issue would exist for them whether or not we had any variances or were building anything at all. The plan for this project has not changed. We showed this plan to City Council and to the neighborhood. We received a lot of letters of support. People are looking for revitalization in this area of which we are hoping to do.

Motion

Approval of the requests for a 4-story construction within a maximum possible height of forty-five feet, and 2) a reduced buffer of varied width, with the following conditions:

1) The buffer shall be consistent with that reflected in the submitted concept plan; and 2) The single dedicated affordable housing unit shall be a 3-bedroom apartment.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Stephen Plunk

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
Jeff Notrica	- Aye
Laureen Boles	- Aye
Stephen Plunk	- Aye
Jay Melder	- Aye
Michael Kaigler	- Not Present
Traci Amick	- Aye
Amanda Wilson	- Aye

[12. Master Plan Amendment | 175 West Mulberry Blvd | 24-005036-ZA](#)

🔗 [175 W MULBERRY BLVD_24-005036-ZA_MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT APPLICATION.pdf](#)

🔗 [E01-MULBERRY RECLASSIFICATION-9-17-24_.pdf](#)

🔗 [MPC Thomson Declarant Memo 08-08-12.pdf](#)

🔗 [Declarant Memo.pdf](#)

🔗 [24-005036-ZA Mulberry at Godley Station Master Plan Amendment - Staff Report.pdf](#)

Mr. Brad Clement, Senior Planner for Development Services presented the Staff report. **Mr. Clement** stated the Applicant is requesting MPC approval of an amendment to the Godley Station Master Plan (The Mulberry), a planned community located at the northeast corner of Benton Boulevard and Mulberry Boulevard within a PD (Planned Development) zoning district. The purpose of the proposed Master Plan Amendment is to change the land use restrictions of Hotel, Bank, Restaurant, and Office to one that would allow all the uses of the Community Business (B-C) zoning under the City of Savannah current zoning.

Over time, Godley Station began to be known as three separate parts, Godley Station South, where the subject site is located, Godley Station North, and the Highlands at Godley Station. As a result of this, a declarant was established for each of the three parts of Godley Station. The Mulberry at Godley Station lies with the Godley Station South portion of the larger development. The Mulberry portion was last amended in 2012 to allow for the addition of multi-family use where the area had previously been Commercial-Retail. The purpose of a Master Plan is to provide orderly development with uses related to each other in a harmonious fashion and to meet the needs of the immediate and surrounding areas. Sometimes because of various factors in marketing trends, needs, and economic constraints, changes to Master Plans are necessary. Such changes are not unusual as Master Plans for the most part are never static. When such changes are requested, the merits of such changes should be analyzed relevant to market demands, but also as they relate to the surrounding uses. The proposed amendment to change commercial/retail to residential multi-family would not adversely impact the existing uses in the immediate area which include a bank, an office, a restaurant, and a hotel. Also, directly across Benton Boulevard from the subject site are two existing apartment complexes and a church. Based on the previously stated findings, the proposed change in land use, if approved, would not be detrimental to the properties within the immediate area of to the City of Savannah.

MPC staff recommends **approval** of the proposed amended Godley Station Master Plan to change the land use of a approximately 14.9-acre parcel from the defined PD Commercial/Retail to accommodate allowable uses per the City of Savannah B-C use table with the following conditions:

1. An updated Godley Station Master Plan shall be submitted to MPC Staff prior to the approval of any additional site plans within the PD. The updated Master Plan shall reference MPC file number 24-005036-ZA and its associated conditions approved by the MPC.
2. All development standards and limited use restrictions associated with the uses within the Community Business (B-C) zoning district shall also be applied to any proposed future development within the pod identified as 'The Mulberry.'
3. Approval of any future development shall be subject to site plan approval of all reviewing departments of the City of Savannah.

Mr. John Georgino, Thomas and Hutton Engineering, stated they are requesting approval to amend The Mulberry Godley Station Master Plan to allow the uses under the Community Business Zoning District and are ok with the conditions. They have had conversations with Staff recently about other applications that have been submitted about updating the Godley Station Master Plan and making sure those updated uses get reflected on that. They are working through how to accommodate that request and can provide that updated document to the MPC and to the City so it can be tracked in the future.

Mr. Coles, Board Member, said Benton Boulevard narrows to one lane past this commercial site until it gets to Jimmy Deloach. Is there a timeline for finishing the widening from that point to Jimmy Deloach?

Mr. Jay Melder, City Manager, said GDOT recently appropriated \$13.5 million for the widening of Benton Boulevard to that point. The City of Savannah also allocated \$2.5 million toward that project. The project is funded and being programmed.

Ms. Jarrett stated she was concerned about the traffic in the neighborhood. She asked if an updated Master Traffic Study be in order for this area.

Mr. Giordano said the individual developments, as they come online, if they triggered the City's

requirement for a traffic study, would then necessitate that. As it currently stands there is nothing that requires a traffic update.

Mr. Clement said 2018 was the last traffic study for the Mulberry based on those uses. There was a determination that the expansion of uses of that single tract would not warrant a deeper study. As far as a traffic analysis of all Godley Station, he has not seen one.

Mr. Melder said last year GDOT released the Coastal Empire Transportation Study. One of the key corridors focused on that study. In that study it was under the Effingham Parkway Corridor, and it was broken into three sections. The section that covered Benton Boulevard, Highlands Boulevard, and Jimmy Deloach was referred to as the Effingham Parkway South Corridor. There is good State data in that report. GDOT is focused on freight traffic, but freight traffic is causing a lot of back up in that area as well.

Mr. Clement said there is a future application that is tied to a DRI so there was a larger traffic study that will reflect Benton Boulevard information as well.

Motion

Approval of the proposed amended Godley Station Master Plan to change the land use of a approximately 14.9-acre parcel from the defined PD Commercial/Retail to accommodate allowable uses per the City of Savannah B-C use table with the following conditions:

- 1.An updated Godley Station Master Plan shall be submitted to MPC Staff prior to the approval of any additional site plans within the PD. The updated Master Plan shall reference MPC file number 24-005036-ZA and its associated conditions approved by the MPC.
- 2.All development standards and limited use restriction associated with the uses within the Community Business (B-C) zoning district shall also be applied to any proposed future development within the pod identified as 'The Mulberry.'
- 3.Approval of any future development shall be subject to site plan approval of all reviewing departments of the City of Savannah.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Travis Coles

Second: Stephen Plunk

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

[Districts | 24-004284-ZA](#)

- 🔗 [Final Revisions 10.09.2024.pdf](#)
- 🔗 [combined public comment.pdf](#)
- 🔗 [TEXT AMENDMENT 24-0004284-ZA \(Joint Revisions\)_2.pdf](#)
- 🔗 [24-004284-ZA-TEXT Staff Report_.pdf](#)
- 🔗 [AFFORDABLE HOUSING Amendments_CombinedPPT_10.14.2024_final.pdf](#)

Ms. Subashi Karunarathne, Planner for Development Services, presented the Staff report. **Ms. Karunarathne** stated the City of Savannah, as the Applicant, requests an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance text to enable and regulate density increases for affordable housing in the TR, TN, and TC Zoning Districts. This proposal aims to establish a density bonus program that encourages affordable housing development within Savannah's traditional zoning districts. The requested text amendments would grant variances to allow a reduced lot area per unit below the minimum specified by these zoning districts, provided that the reduced lot area is used to facilitate affordable housing through the proposed density bonus program.

The Petition includes specific amendments to the following sections of the Ordinance:

1. [Section 3.12](#): Special Exceptions
2. [Section 3.21](#): Variances
3. [Section 5.4](#): Principal Use Table
4. [Section 5.9](#): Traditional Residential
5. [Section 5.12](#): Traditional Neighborhood
6. [Section 5.13](#): Traditional Commercial
7. [Section 8.1](#): Residential Use Standards for Limited and Special Uses

The sections under article 5 establishes a by-right standard for affordable housing while the sections 3.12, 3.2, and 8.1, creates a path to vary the standards under _____ to allow for affordable housing. Under TR districts the City proposes to include more housing types for affordable housing as limited uses. There are standards defined such as reduction of minimum lot area, lot width, increase of building coverage, and reduction of parking requirements, as well as specify what housing types are allowed in the TR-1,2, and 3, TN-1 and 2 and all TC districts. For the Special Exceptions, the Applicant is proposing additional review criteria that MPC may consider in the review process as public benefit, impartiality, resemble use, and adequate public services so it all comes together in one review.

According to the Housing Savannah Task Force, affordable housing is housing in good condition that can typically be rented or purchased without households paying more than 30% of gross income or fair market rent. In Savannah, approximately 45% of renters are cost burdened spending over 30% of their income in housing. The City is facing a significant affordable housing deficiency. This problem has been here since before early 2021. The Housing Savannah Action Plan (July 2021) for facilitating affordable housing includes the following recommendations:

- Define affordable housing in City Code
- Provide flexibility in affordable housing development standards including in PD districts
- Provide bonuses or incentives for affordable housing
- Allow increased density and dwelling units per lot/parcel
- Allow smaller, narrower, lot widths and lot areas
- Allow smaller building setbacks
- Allow larger lot coverage for buildings
- Reduce off-street parking requirements when alternatives exist, or none is necessary
- Encourage development of "missing middle" housing in neighborhoods
- Provide incentives for smart growth, mixed use, transit oriented and walkable development"

However, the current Zoning Ordinance lacks comprehensive integration of these strategies to effectively address affordable housing. With the proposed text amendment, the City proposes revisions to the Ordinance that would permit variances incentivizing higher densities tied to provision of covenanted

affordable housing in select traditional zoning districts. Ultimately, this would create a pathway within the existing regulatory framework for implementation of the strategy outlined by Housing Savannah above. The proposed text amendment complements a density bonus program for affordable housing (Affordable Rental Housing Density Bonus Program) currently in the proposal stage, led by Community Housing Services Agency, Inc. (CHSA), the Savannah Affordable Housing Fund (SAHF), and the City of Savannah's Housing Department. The program, while not codified within the text of the Zoning Ordinance, is a necessary companion to effectively tie the financial components of the strategy with contextual development standards to ensure the compatibility of a proposed development with the character of the receiving neighborhood.

At present the Zoning Ordinance inadequately accommodates the development of affordable housing typologies and lacks incentives for developers to prioritize affordability. The proposed text amendment aims to relax relevant development standards for explicit allowance of affordable housing creation through thoughtfully targeted provisions.

However, the proposed text still does not include a clear definition of affordable housing, nor does the City's Code of Ordinances provide one. This omission can lead to ambiguity regarding which developments qualify as affordable housing through the density bonus program. The proposal also does not define a specific period of affordability or establish a minimum time period for which the incentivized units must be covenanted for affordability. If structures built under the density bonus allowance are not deed-restricted for affordability, it may result in contradictions between development standards and use standards. Finally, the proposed text lacks a defined method for monitoring ongoing compliance with the affordable housing designation. MPC Staff recommends that refinements of the program to include these elements a top priority. While a portion of the impacted properties is situated within protected local historic districts, which ensures a COA is required for new construction, 61% of the affected properties lie outside these districts. Without further amendment, over 628 acres currently zoned for Traditional Development currently lacks protections against potentially incompatible development.

In the absence of an infill development overlay or other limiting mechanisms, the proposed changes to the traditional districts could lead to map amendment requests in areas not initially anticipated, and potentially resulting in unanticipated developments. Although many impacted zoning districts align with specifically designated historic districts, the TC-1 and TC-2 districts are not confined to specific geographic areas of the City, raising concerns about housing proposals in outlying regions that may not be prepared to receive them. Zoning districts are designed to promote orderly and patterned development, with means such as maximum permitted densities, setback standards and maximum lot coverage established to create a comfortable and hygienic built environment. Without contextual guidelines for introducing new housing typologies and forms, as well as standards to limit the height and bulk of new developments adjacent to smaller, less dense residential areas, the proposal risks altering the character of well-established neighborhoods. A pre-approved plan book or design manual featuring existing (organic/locally grown) missing middle housing types could help mitigate this risk. The proposed affordable housing developments should adhere to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs standards for multifamily housing and prioritize diverse unit types with explicit emphasis on two- and three-bedroom configurations.

MPC Staff recommends approval of the proposed text amendment with the following conditions:

The following four (4) updated programmatic elements shall be presented to the Planning Commission by the Department of Planning and Urban Design within one hundred eighty days of the date of City Council adoption in support of its competent future disposition of requests for Special Exceptions pursuant to the proposed text amendment:

1. A definition of affordable housing;
2. A defined period of affordability;
3. Nomination of an ombudsman and a documented explanation of the intended mechanism for ongoing compliance monitoring;
4. Delineation and establishment of an infill development boundary to prevent adverse rezonings and development in locations lacking adequate infrastructure.

MPC Staff also recommends creation of the following programmatic elements for future refinement of the density bonus program:

1. Contextual guidelines for missing middle housing typologies such as a pre-approved plan book or design manual; and
2. Occupancy standards to ensure incentivized housing developments are effectively tailored to meet the needs of Savannah's diverse community.

Ms. Bridget Lidy, City of Savannah's Urban and Design Department, said this has been a momentous task pulling this together. This was originally presented earlier this year with some concepts and ideas. They have been actively working with our partners here at MPC as well Briana Paxton to try and address issues in the Ordinance that prohibits a variance to lot area when increasing density. They are looking at this as an incremental process.

Ms. Briana Paxton, Applicant in partnership with the City of Savannah and MPC Staff, said this has been a very collaborative effort with MPC Staff and the City Staff and me as a private citizen. Building a property for my daughter is the reason I am here. I was trying to build a duplex on a 30' wide lot in the Live Oak Neighborhood, TR-2 zoning. Per current zoning, that is illegal. One of the reasons is, in the City of Savannah density is defined as minimum lot area per unit. Other municipalities might define it as floor area ration or another concept. We use this minimum lot are per unit so when you, as an applicant, cannot meet that, you cannot build that development because we also prohibit variances on minimum lot area per unit. I have been under contract with the Land Bank since last June. There is another applicant, Brad Baugh, who is a local developer who has five properties under contract with the Land Bank, same situation, and another local nonprofit developer wanting to build a duplex, same situation. They want to do affordable housing, doing two units instead of one which is currently illegal. We are trying to fix this varying density problem in a very managed way. The issue has put us in a situation where we cannot rebuild missing middle housing (duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes) that exist in many areas of Savannah.

There are many households today that cannot find housing in Savannah that they can afford. Households in Savannah that make \$50,000 or less per year struggle to find housing. I am one of those households. My building a duplex and being able to rent out the other side to afford my mortgage, is my best chance at home ownership. Homeownership and property ownership is recognized as one of the number one way that people build wealth. In 2021 the Savannah Regional Justice Task Force found that 30% of households of color in Savannah have a net worth of zero. We are trying to use this text amendment to allow us to increase opportunities for housing and homeownership and in turn, decrease inequities. There are close to 1700 properties in the TC, TN, and TR districts that already exhibit this missing middle housing type we are trying to recreate. The City of Savannah Revenue Department was able to provide data on the number of water meters per property, same situation. Approximately half have one meter, the other half have more than one meter. We know these are areas of town where missing middle housing and small scale multifamily already exist.

The area median income for all households in Savannah is \$56,000. The median sales price from Redfin, for 2024, is \$324,000. That leaves a gap of \$140,000 where the median family cannot afford the median sales price. Married couples have a little more of the median income but a single female head of household, that is a \$240,000 gap. The median cost of rent in Savannah is around \$1700 per month. The median renter can only afford \$1200. There is a \$500 gap in affordability. Savannah's household size has been trending down. Approximately 40% of households are single person households. There is a large number of households that are four or more persons. Over 50% of the housing units offered in Savannah are single family detached homes with three bedrooms. There needs to be a density bonus for affordable housing, only if we are providing affordable housing.

The text amendment applies to TC, TN, and TR neighborhoods which is approximately 8000 parcels. These areas were chosen because they are close to downtown, close to transit, and they are areas where missing middle housing already exists. This would be considered smart growth infill. We expand the type of residential housing types allowed for those missing middle types so you could build two-to-four-unit properties in these districts, as is already allowed. This will be allowed by-right. TR-1 and TR-2 you could build up to four units and TR-3 a duplex, all when you meet affordable housing standards, and you meet alternative development standards which are outlined in the text. We added, if you are trying to do more than four units, you must come before this Board through a Special Exception hearing process.

We added a new Special Exception that would apply only when someone is seeking a density bonus for affordable housing. There is clarifying language added for parking, when there is no lane and no street, where do you put that required parking space in those limited situations.

Over the last two months we have talked to every neighborhood association and group that cares about housing. The information you heard is what was presented to them. Many comments in the neighborhoods want homeownership prioritized and there are several supporting agencies supporting this text amendment.

Mr. John Anagnost, Zoning Administrator for the City of Savannah, said if an applicant currently wants to request modification to zoning standards for housing there are two processes, a Variance or Special Exception. A variance has a broad leeway to modify standards significantly but does have more stringent review criteria that are applied by the Zoning Board of Appeals and in some cases by the Planning Commission or Historic District Board of Review. Special Exceptions have a little looser criterion but are much more narrowly defined. There are certain things that can be done through a Special Exception. In essence they accomplish the same thing. One of the key things mentioned, in the Zoning Ordinance, there are specific standards that may not be varied even if you ask for permission from the ZBA or the Planning Commission. They do not have the authority to make variances to certain things. One of those is, Lot area per unit. The other is, allowed housing types may not be varied through a Variance or Special Exception. That is one element this proposal would change. This proposed amendment would also allow a Staff approved modification process that would not require going before the ZBA or this Board. It would allow a Staff person to review a development application and approve with no public noticed review if it meets certain criteria. That is what we are calling the by-right option. The changes that are allowed are minor and they are discretely defined, meant to be objective. Alternatively, the Special Exception process says, if you want to have a larger modification than what is allowed by the by-right standard, you will have to go to the Planning Commission. The Housing Services Department at the City of Savannah has to have already looked at what the developer is proposing and agree that it is going to provide affordable housing units in the number and type that the Housing Services Department can approve.

Zoning is not the only means that the City can apply its policy goals. The process and by-right modifications would be in the Zoning Ordinance but the specific definition of what constitutes affordable housing for this purpose would be in policy documents that are maintained by the Housing Services Department and would be accountable to the City Manager and the City Council through that department not through enforcement of zoning regulations. The Housing Services Department is drafting guidelines that will provide a time period of affordability, the level of affordability for different household incomes, the number of affordable units that we require at the maximum site area. The number that has been discussed so far, is a maximum site size of 10,000 square feet (1/4 acre). To ensure this type of density bonus, or increase to the number of housing units, would be oriented to small infill lots. This is not intended to be multiple acre apartment developments. Housing Services will be more flexible to respond to the changing market conditions and changing needs of low- and medium-income households rather than changing the Zoning Ordinance each time.

The by-right option is where the applicant will go to Housing Services Department, present plan, the Housing Services Department will review and determine if it meets standards. If meeting standards, they will then be referred to City Staff to review the development permit and if circumstances and standards are met, they would be allowed to get an additional unit out of the lot that normally would not be allowed. The other option, if they wanted a fourplex, they would come before the Planning Commission for approval.

The basic goal is to provide a pathway in two different ways, either by-right with minor modifications, or with larger modifications through a Special Exception, to allow additional development of affordable units and allow greater use of existing lots in existing neighborhoods in Savannah.

Ms. Traci Amick, Board Member, asked when the homes that were previously allowed to be built, not be allowed anymore, who and why did they make that decision. What was the purpose of that?

Mr. Anagnost said with a lot of those cases, that happened with the original application of zoning in 1960. That was the first Zoning Ordinance. A lot of neighborhoods had zoning districts that limited the housing types. NewZo did that again in some neighborhoods further restricting the housing types. Zoning

was originally upheld by the Supreme Court in the late 1920's and became popular in the US in the 1930's and 40's. Some of the thought process around zoning was to separate uses that are compatible to each other. After zoning was invented, it began to be used to segregate people economically and by the same token, racially. In a lot of cities, after World War II, that was a motivation for applying zoning.

Ms. Melanie Wilson, Executive Director/CEO, said in addition to what Mr. Anagnost mentioned, there was also great concern from people about incompatible land uses. That is where some of the Planning Document (Master Plans, Comprehensive Plans) discussions took place. Some areas that had very small lots were not compatible with adjacent uses and in a lot of those cases, they did averaging. People were not told to tear down incompatible houses; they became non-conforming uses. The goal of the non-conforming use was it would go away once the life cycle of the property went away. In Savannah, that did not happen. A lot of the homes remained in place. Upkeep on those homes exceeded the tax value. In other communities, if your house value is less than 50%, you can do maintenance. With that being done, additional development was happening around it.

Ms. Amick asked about the by-right option and if they qualify, they could build right next door to me with no notice.

Mr. Anagnost said the by-right option is meant to reflect housing types that one could already expect to be in the neighborhood. It would now be allowed with a lot size reduction. Most lots will not be able to make use of a 50% lot reduction, there will be restraints that will need to be met. As long as the lot coverage and the setbacks are marginal increments for what the current standard is, you will have a similar building envelope. There are specific driveway standards that will have to be met.

Ms. Amick said in areas where parking is limited already, there will be even more parking on the street.

Mr. Anagnost said by geography, these neighborhoods are well suited to not using private vehicles. All have access to public transit and a mix of uses where it is not difficult to walk to bike to local amenities. Low-income houses are statistically likely to own fewer vehicles per household and more likely to use public transit. Federal guidelines for affordable housing specify lower parking requirements than you would typically find for bank financing.

Ms. Paxton said with the by-right avenue, the property has to have vehicle access from the lane.

Mr. Stephen Plunk, Board Member, said a lot of this seems like a band aid solution that we are trying to address the ban on density increase when increasing lot area because of our definition of density by minimum lot area by unit. Was there any thought to just addressing that out right if that is the big issue?

Ms. Paxton said the real purpose of this is to provide more units of affordable housing. That is why we are limiting density bonus if and only if, you are providing affordable housing. As we have seen in Savannah, our most acute need right now is affordable housing.

Mr. Edward Morrow, Director of Development Services/Current Planning, said this is really about the misuse of a tool that is there under circumstance of hardship. We do not want to misuse the variance route because of criteria as hardship. We are attempting to address something for a particular public benefit. There is an urgent public need.

Ms. Wilson said there should be more discussions in 180 days, this is the first step. This is a public benefit; it is not a case where someone created their own hardship such as overpaying for a lot and wanting to build more units to afford what they paid for the lot. Savannah is the 9th most expensive rental market in the country right now. This is a way to address that need yet move forward to adding additional criteria to address more concerns. This is a great start.

Mr. Morrow said the idea is that Planning and Urban Design would come back to this Board within 180 days to deliver these policy documents to this Board to provide an understanding of what the targeted aim of this program are.

Mr. Plunk asked Mr. Anagnost if there would be any problem with bringing this back in 180 days. If Savannah is the 9th most expensive place to live, we need to be doing more than even building at the affordable level. We need to be looking at increasing density at all levels. Has there been thought to

expanding?

Mr. Anagnost said the Housing Department wants to move forward with those guidelines as quickly as possible. They want that program to be a success and see a lot of opportunities to start producing units under that program. We will attempt to meet that goal.

Ms. Wilson said as we all sat down to discuss the timeline, Faye DiMassimo from the City is the one who came up with 180 days.

Mr. Anagnost said the City of Savannah has a task force for advancing affordable housing goals. There will be additional items that come forward in the future.

Mr. Tom Woiwode, Board Member, said in November of 2019, for a first-time buyer, a house was about \$150,000 and there was approximately a six-month supply on the market. Now there is a three-month supply on the market with a median price range of \$336,000. Fortunately, or unfortunately, Savannah has been discovered and a lot of people are moving here. That is one of the reasons we are dealing with an issue of affordability in this area. Housing supply is bad in Savannah and its surrounding areas. That is all a function of density. Any developer would be happy to get twice the density that was asked. We are stuck on a 60' wide density, county wide. Ultimately, if we want to attack the affording housing crisis, it starts with what we are doing today. Is there any indication from the County at improved densities, infill development, and improve the things we are doing here?

Mr. Anagnost said there is a document that captures what you are talking about. It is an affordable housing work plan that was issued in 2022.

Ms. Wilson said the County is looking at this issue as well. They have partnered with the City to go after the funding to start looking more at housing affordability. The County does not have the infrastructure in place yet. There needs to be support for the intense density.

Mr. Jay Melder, City Manager, said this has been an intense collaborative effort. It shows great community spirit that a resident brought forth the petition and the authorities recognized the importance and came together to make sure this is something that could be brought forth to the Planning Commission and City Council. In the districts that the team has proposed, this is extraordinarily appropriate for this type of "gentle density". Hopefully this can be proof of concept that restoring some historic housing types will prove to be a positive thing for this community, to build to its vibrancy. Thank you to the team that put this together.

Motion

Approval of the proposed text amendment with the following conditions:

The following four (4) updated programmatic elements shall be presented to the Planning Commission by the Department of Planning and Urban Design within 180 days of the date of City Council adoption in support of its competent future disposition of requests for Special Exceptions pursuant to the proposed text amendment:

- 1.A definition of affordable housing;
- 2.A defined period of affordability;
- 3.Nomination of an ombudsman and a documented explanation of the intended mechanism for ongoing compliance monitoring; and
- 4.Delineation and establishment of an infill development boundary; to prevent adverse rezonings and development in locations lacking adequate infrastructure.

MPC Staff also recommends creation of the following programmatic elements for future refinement of the density bonus program:

- 1.Contextual guidelines for missing middle housing typologies such as a pre-approved plan book or design manual; and

2.Occupancy standards to ensure incentivized housing developments are effectively tailored to meet the needs of Savannahs diverse community.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Travis Coles

Second: Laureen Boles

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

X. Presentations

XI. Approved Staff Reviews

XII. Other Business

[14. Nominating Committee Report](#)

Mr. Jeff Notrica said after talking with the current office holders, everyone that is in current positions wants to stay on for another term. No one else came forward as wanting to be considered. He opened the floor to see if any Board Member would like to nominate anyone for office.

Ms. Karen Jarrett, Chairwoman, said the floor is open for nominations.

There being no nominations, Mr. Coles motioned to close the nominations, seconded by Mr. Notrica.

Mr. Notrica motioned to approve the officers currently serving to be reappointed to another term, seconded by Mr. Plunk. The Board agreed unanimously.

XIII. 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.