



Chatham County - Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission

February 18, 2025 MPC Meeting 1:30pm
Minutes

February 18, 2025 MPC MEETING

Members Present: Karen Jarrett - In person
Travis Coles - In person
Amanda Wilson - In person
Dwayne Stephens - In Person
Traci Amick - In person
Michael Kaigler - In person
Stephen Plunk - In person
Tom Woiwode - In person
Jeff Notrica - In Person
Joseph Welch- In Person

Members Absent Joseph Ervin
Laureen Boles
Coren Ross
Jay Melder

Staff Present: Melanie Wilson, Executive Director/CEO
Edward Morrow, Director of Development Services/Current Planning
Subashi Karunaratne, Planner, Development Services
Sally Helm, Administrative Assistant II, Development Services/Current Planning
Sadie Esch-Laurent, Assistant Planner, Development Services

I. Call to Order and Welcome

II. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

III. Approval of Agenda

IV. Notices, Proclamations and Acknowledgements

[1. February 18, 2025 at 11:30 AM Personnel Committee Meeting, West Conference Room, 110 East State Street](#)

🔗 [February 2025 Personnel Committee Agenda.pdf](#)

Ms. Jarrett, Chairwoman, stated there was a Personnel Committee Meeting held today. No decisions were made at that meeting.

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

[2. Variance to GDP | 925 & 1303 E. President Street | 25-000401-ZA](#)

🔗 [925, 1303 E PRESIDENT ST_25-000401-ZA_VARIANCE FOR DEVELOPMENT PLAN APPLICATION.pdf](#)

Motion

Item removed from the final agenda.

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
Jeff Notrica	- Aye
Laureen Boles	- Not Present
Stephen Plunk	- Aye
Jay Melder	- Not Present
Michael Kaigler	- Aye
Traci Amick	- Aye
Amanda Wilson	- 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 Items Requested to be Withdrawn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

[3. Approval of the January 28, 2025 Meeting Minutes](#)

📎 [01-28-2025-mpc-meeting-minutes.pdf](#)

Motion

Approval of the January 28, 2025 meeting minutes.

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

4. Major Subdivision | Hopeton Plantation Tract 7 Phase 1A | 25-000147-SUBP

🔗 [APPLICATION.pdf](#)

🔗 [HOPETON WEST GDP_1.10.25.pdf](#)

🔗 [Staff Report 25-000147-SUBP-Hopeton West Phase 1A.pdf](#)

🔗 [SUBMITTAL_!_25-000147-SUBP HOPETON TRACT 7 PHASE 1A.pdf](#)

Motion

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

1. Show the signature of a Georgia Registered Land Surveyor and appropriate dedications of right-of way, shared community spaces, and storm water features.
2. Approval by the Chatham County Health Department and the City review departments including the City Engineer.

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

5. Major Subdivision | Hopeton Plantation Tract 7 Phase 1B | 25-000149-SUBP

🔗 [APPLICATION \(1\).pdf](#)

🔗 [SUBMITTAL_1_25-000149-SUBP HOPETON TRACT 7 PHASE 1B.pdf](#)

🔗 [HOPETON WEST GDP_1.10.25.pdf](#)

🔗 [25-000149-SUBP-Hopeton West Phase 1B-Staff Report.pdf](#)

Motion

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

1. Show the signature of a Georgia Registered Land Surveyor and appropriate dedications of right-of way, shared community spaces, and storm water features.
2. Approval by the Chatham County Health Department and the City review departments including the City Engineer.

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

6. Ratification of Resolution for Executive Director/CEO to Execute a Coastal Incentive Grant with the Georgia Department of Coastal Resources Division

🔗 [CIG_MPC_Resolution_Signed_KJ.pdf](#)

Motion

Approval of the Ratification of Resolution for Executive Director/CEO to Execute a Coastal Incentive Grant with the Georgia Department of Coastal Resources Division.

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

VIII. Old Business

IX. Regular Business

[7. Special Use | 116 & 0 Arnold Street | 25-000377-ZA](#)

📎 [116 & 0 ARNOLD ST_25-000377-ZA_SPECIAL USE PERMIT APPLICATION.pdf](#)

📎 [Staff Report.pdf](#)

Mr. Edward Morrow, Director of Development Services/Current Planning, presented the Staff report. **Mr. Morrow** stated the Petitioner requests MPC consideration of a Special Use Permit for the expansion of an existing Emergency Shelter currently located at 124 Arnold St onto two adjoining parcels. The Petitioner is looking to expand to the parcels currently identified as 116 & 0 Arnold St. Per Section 13.2 of the Ordinance, an emergency shelter is, “a facility which is owned and operated by a not-for-profit organization for the purpose of providing temporary overnight shelter, sleeping accommodations, meals on an emergency basis, and/or a variety of social services and/or medical services designed and intended to assist those housed in the facility to obtain permanent housing and to care for themselves.” The subject properties are both currently zoned D-C (Downtown Commercial). The property at 116 Arnold St. is 1,820 square feet (26 feet of frontage and 70 feet of depth) and contains a 2-story 512 square-foot residential structure built in or about 1900, according to the Tax Assessor. The structure is conforming. The property at 0 Arnold St. is about 2,426 square feet and is currently an undeveloped lot, according to the Tax Assessor. Both lots are conforming within the D-C zoning district. The emergency shelter that the Petitioner is looking to expand is called Inner City Night Shelter, Inc. It is located at 124 Arnold St and was established in 1983. Additionally, there is parking directly south of the emergency shelter in a dirt lot at 642 E. President St.

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 review of the standards, the subject property and proposed use meet the requirements. MPC Staff recommends approval of the requested Special Use.

Ms. Evonne Prior, Executive Director for Inner City Night Shelter, said they are seeking the Special Use permit for the purpose of expanding the shelter. They have been doing a good work since 1983. We are limited in the services that we can provide due to lack of space. COVID changed a lot of things. Every inch in the building is being utilized for emergency shelter. If we are going to impact homelessness in our city, Inner City is going to be a part of that. The last homeless count that was sent was between 500-600 individuals that were either sheltered or unsheltered. Inner City served 494 of those numbers. That is with the limited space that we have. We would be able to make a big difference in homelessness in this City with being able to acquire this extra property. This will help us get better control of what is going on around the facility. People come because they want to eat, we cannot serve people that do not reside there.

Mr. Brian Felder, Architect, said these are D-C lots, 100% lot coverage is permitted. We will have to work through the parking requirements with the City. There is at least one historic structure we will have to consider retaining. We are looking for approval for the expansion of the use so we can move forward.

Ms. Jennifer Delong, Executive Director of Chatham Savannah Authority for the Homeless, said the point of expanding Inner City Night Shelter is because it is the only shelter in our community that is considered a low barrier shelter. Meaning that a person can begin active substance use disorder and get an emergency bed if there is a bed available at the Inner-City Night Shelter. It is a critical need that is unfulfilled in our community right now. There are excellent homeless shelters in the community. They are all congregant shelter bed spaces but what we are really in need of and where there is a deficit is the ability for someone to go into a shelter that is considered low barrier. Ms. Prior and her team are willing to take people in that have substance use disorder, severe mental illness, and people just coming back into our community from the Department of Corrections. This is the only facility that has that capability right now. Expanding capacity there is very critical to help meet the needs in our community.

Mr. Jeff Notrica, Board Member, asked if there were registered sex offenders or violent criminals in this facility and if they screen the people that come in and out. What kind of process do you have?

Ms. Prior said they have everyone. As far as the sex offenders that are there, we have a very strong relationship with probation and parole, which is a department of community supervision. Any sex offender that is there must be on active probation which means that the probation officer can come at any time, 3 or 4 in the morning, whenever they want, they come to make sure those persons are in the facility. People that have parole, just basic probation officers, have the ability to come. There are plenty of people that are on probation that may not be sex offenders, they just report to their probation officer as instructed. The sex offenders must have committed the crime in Chatham County and must be on active probation. We do not open a flood gate of sex offenders from across the state. We get calls every day asking for space.

Mr. Notrica asked how many beds/people are there now and how many will you be able to accommodate after the proposed expansion?

Ms. Prior said currently there are sixty-eight. That is adult male and female. We will have smaller dorm areas with approximately six people to a dorm. The full dorm has two bathrooms. We will add as many as the requirements will allow.

Mr. Notrica asked if they are proposing to tear down what is there now and build a new facility?

Ms. Prior said no, they will add on to what is there now.

Mr. Joseph Welch, Board Member, asked, besides sex offenders, what other offenders are in there.

Ms. Prior said people that come out of jail, anyone that might be on probation. The biggest issue is the sex offender.

Mr. Welch said his concern is the apartments around the area. The SCAD students. To expand this and add even more offenders in the area is concerning for those students. Have you looked at any other areas of trying to put this facility?

Ms. Prior said they are there now. We have looked several other places. We have a relationship with the facilities around us. Since the building has been constructed, we have not had any problems. We have a very strong relationship with the community.

Mr. Welch asked if there was a policy set on hours when the doors are locked?

Ms. Prior said 7pm.

Ms. Amanda Wilson, Board Member, asked how long Inner City has been at this location.

Ms. Prior said since 1983.

Ms. Wilson asked how long the apartment building has been there.

Ms. Prior said it has been completed about a year and a half now.

Ms. Wilson said the apartment building came in that area knowing you were there and what you were.

Ms. Prior said yes.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Stephanie Flowers, Member of the Public, said she was there just to see what was being done in that area. This sounds like something that needs to be done.

Motion

Approval of the requested Special Use Permit for the expansion of an existing Emergency Shelter currently located at 124 Arnold Street onto two adjoining parcels.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Travis Coles

Second: Tom Woiwode

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

8. Variance to GDP | 2815 Williams Street | 25-000487-ZA

🔗 [Staff Report.pdf](#)

🔗 [updated 2815 Williams St_25-000487-ZA_Variance for Development Plans.pdf](#)

🔗 [Site Plan.pdf](#)

🔗 [Petitioner Statement](#)

🔗 [public comment Seuntjens LOS-2815Williams.pdf](#)

Mr. Edward Morrow, Director of Development Services/Current Planning, presented the Staff report. **Mr. Morrow** stated the Petitioner requests a variance to the required off-street parking for a proposed Indoor Animal Services facility. The off-street parking requirement has been estimated at eleven off-street vehicle spaces. The site, previously developed for another commercial use, only has area to

accommodate nine conforming spaces, including one ADA space. The Petitioner is requesting approval of a reduction of the two required off-street parking spaces. The subject property is currently zoned Community Business (B-C) and has an existing structure (built in 1971) which previously housed a retail use. The current parcel and existing structure are limited for many uses by the inability to add more parking spaces to the site. The property has been operating with the existing parking lot for numerous businesses since 1971, and the new business will serve local and regional neighborhood needs which is consistent with the intent of the B-C zoning district. There exist no special conditions specific to this site which are peculiar to the land which are not generally applicable to other sites in the same zoning district. The structure to be used, however, is pre-existing, having been constructed prior to the adoption of the current Ordinance and development standards. MPC Staff recommends approval of the requested parking variance.

The Petitioner was present but did not wish to speak.

There being no further discussion or questions, the Board entertained a motion.

Motion

Approval of the requested parking variance.

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

[9. Variance to GDP | 1001/1015 Whitaker St & 120/124 W. Park Ave. | 25-000446-ZA](#)

🔗 [1001, 1015 WHITAKER ST, 120, 124 W PARK AVE_25-000446-ZA_VARIANCE FOR DEVELOPMENT PLA.pdf](#)

🔗 [EXHIBIT A_20250124_SAV OFFICE BLDGS_VARIANCE NARRATIVE.pdf](#)

🔗 [EXHIBIT C_REVISED SITE PLAN AND ELEVATIONS.pdf](#)

🔗 [7WEBB_HI_0001X.pdf](#)

🔗 [7WEBB_HI_0005X.pdf](#)

🔗 [7WEBB_HI_0002X.pdf](#)

🔗 [7WEBB_HI_0003X.pdf](#)

🔗 [7WEBB_HI_0008X.pdf](#)

🔗 [7WEBB_HI_0000X.pdf](#)

🔗 [Staff Recommended Building Heights.png](#)

🔗 [Staff Report_Feb18.pdf](#)

🔗 [Combined Public Comments Compressed.pdf](#)

Mr. Edward Morrow, Director of Development Services/Current Planning, presented the Staff report. **Mr. Morrow** stated the Petitioner seeks MPC approval of a General Development Plan with variances to permit the construction of three buildings with a number of stories and building heights in excess of the three stories and 45-foot height permitted within the TC-2 zoning district. One building is proposed to have five stories and a height of 71 feet; two other buildings are proposed to have four stories with a height of 57 feet. The proposed structures will also require issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness based on their location within the Victorian Historic Overlay and approval of a Special Exception to permit a building footprint in excess of the maximum of 10,000 square foot permitted within the TC-2 zoning district. These requests will be heard by the Historic Preservation Commission at a future date.

The four subject parcels consist of approximately 0.966 acres (42,114 square feet) in total across two blocks. The development will effectuate the recombination of two parcels fronting Whitaker Street, which will result in parcel one having 236 feet of frontage with 113 feet in depth (26,668 square feet). The remaining two parcels fronting West Park Avenue will be recombined (parcel 2) resulting in a parcel 118 feet wide by 130.9 feet deep (15,446 square feet). Howard Street, classified as local, bisects the site.

Renderings have been provided and show what the Petitioner is asking to do. The request specifically along Whitaker Street, building 1, the Petitioner is requesting to build a structure that is four stories high with a maximum height of up to fifty-seven feet. Building 2, at the corner of Whitaker and Park is requested to have five stories and a height of 71 feet. Building 3, at the intersection of Park and Barnard, is requested to have 4 stories up to 57 feet. This configuration includes a Special Exception to permit a building that is in excess of 10,000 square feet in area in its footprint. That request is not before this Board but is in association with the parking garage which from Howard Street that bisects the two sets of properties. That request will be heard by the Historic Preservation Commission. New Construction will require an issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Historic Preservation Commission. All permits issued will be required to go through all City departments prior to issuance.

It is important to distinguish the present request from the first request that was heard. The original request had very little discussion about the structure itself because that request was in regard to changing the zoning to fit the character of a changing and growing district. The original development agreement that was discussed on March 28th, City Council entered into a Development Agreement for a parking garage. Per the Agreement the partnership will result in the construction of a three level, underground parking garage with 100 spaces to be made available to the public during business hours and the balance of parking spaces be available to the public on weekend and after business hours. This zoning went to City Council on January 9th and was with the condition that in the absence of the zoning district that adequately captured the characteristics and nuances of increasing commercial dominance mixed use nature of development along higher volume corridors within this district. The Planning Commission recommended approval of the request to rezone to TC-2. The permissible uses were restrictive to those in the TN-1 district. Staff has called for changes, the adoption of the new zoning district, or an overlay specifically to account for the fact that we do not currently have a regulatory structure that supports what is happening here. There was a published study that stated that in light of the fact that tourism and leisure was growing within our city and redevelopment was taking place, the parking matter study called for the identification of new locations for parking assets for identification of points of interest and creation of mobility options for people to get around our city more easily. Many STVRs are located in close proximity to this project and have an effect on the changing character of this district.

There is evidence of a public, private, partnership between Forsyth Commons, SEDA, and the City of Savannah. The city desires to acquire more parking, to get an underground parking garage and public restrooms within Forsyth Park. Upon completion of the parking garage and office buildings SEDA will lease the parking garage and buildings to Forsyth. Ultimately the charge was to construct a structure that would be a gateway entrance to the City's Historic District.

Today's conversation is about monumentality, Monuments are human landmarks which man has created as symbols for their ideals, aims, and actions that are intended to outlive them. They form a link between the past and future. It is from that lens that Staff has applied these criteria, general consistency. The variances are consistent with the intent of the ordinance in that the proposed structures are conceived in furtherance of an identified governmental purpose. Enhancement of parking and mobility services in proximity to Forsyth Park. Another being the creation of a structure of architectural significance that serves as a gateway to the City's Historic District. The label that is applied to such structures by the ordinance is monumental. While some relief is given, these structures must still meet the visual compatibility criteria which are not within the purview of this Board but the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC). This is a structure that has a stated purpose of being a gateway and a landmark. The HPC will consider visual compatibility. The Special Conditions, because of the specific charge on this particular petition, it was necessary that it be in close proximity to the park. It is located on a key intersection. There be no contributing resources to be demolished. There be requisite land area that was able to be assembled for the purpose of making this development possible and to have suitability of soils.

There are implications for a denial of some relief for the potential of the project to achieve a Landmark or Gateway status. Height and bulk alone are insufficient to view a structure with monumental qualities, especially one that is to remain practical. This is an office and a parking garage. Viewed in that context, well-reasoned allowances should be permitted for these types of structures. The Victorian and Mid-City districts are undergoing significant change. The present petition is unique in that it involves the advancement of a governmental purpose. This will not be the case for the vast majority of infill projects in this area. Preferences and policy surrounding mobility change over time. Parking lots disappear and sites are redeveloped. Future development is best conceived in the context of a new zoning district, overlay, or small area plan that strategically identifies and captures these limited opportunities and channels them toward meaningful expansion of the Historic Victorian Districts character.

Staff recommends denial as requested but offers an alternative recommendation. Building 3 adjoining Barnard Street should be compliant with the TC-2 Zoning District regulations and have a maximum height of three stories up to forty-five feet. Building 1 should have a maximum height of four stories up to fifty-one feet and Building 2 should have a maximum height of five stories up to sixty-three feet.

Mr. Jeff Jepson, Agent for Evans General Contractors, said there are a number of things we agree with. We have been collaborating with Staff for a long time. We agree that the diversity of height provides greater architectural development. This height is not mandatory for the development but promotes the best design. We agree with the recommendation to reduce building number three to three stories. We agree with Staff that the visual representation in the building along the residential component of Waldburg should also be limited to three stories so we provided that in a setback. The only thing we disagree on is eight feet on the five story and six feet on the four-story building. Those are the only two variances we are here to discuss today.

He stated there were three with the VNA Board that he personally attended, another three with them as a group. Other partners of mine have had numerous meetings with the VNA Board. The development agreement was approved by the city in a public meeting. This was approved at SEDA in a public meeting. We met with the Downtown Historic District for their input. We met with Historic Savannah Foundation for their input. The VNA had a number of people during the zoning hearing that stood here and said they felt they were not represented well by the VNA Board, we subsequently went back and met with them as well and produced a framework for a Good Neighbor Agreement. The last meeting with Staff we brought in six different options for height and massing to have a practical discussion with Staff. We listened to them and moved forward with those preferences. We are very sensitive to our neighbors. The property owners live here and own properties. We operate our business here. This is not an instance where a bunch of outsiders have come to develop something, we are invested in the community.

There is no loss of views, there are four rights of ways. There is no change in light or sun exposure that would affect trees or the neighbors. To reduce some of the square footage and make the buildings read architecturally better, multiple parties, Historic Savannah and many others said they did not want to see one large building, so we split that into two buildings. We have not incorporated surface parking in the development. Originally there was surface parking but there were strong suggestions made by Historic and MPC Staff to see that as future residential development. Over the million square feet of office space my firm has built here in Savannah, not one office building has ever been built with a twelve-foot floor

plates. LS3P has done over one hundred office buildings, not a single one of them has had twelve-foot floor plates. The new City offices that the City of Savannah built have floor plates that are 15-16 feet. The new County office that is being planned has floor plates that are 15-16 feet. In terms of best practices and architectural guidelines, the first-floor height should be 16-18 feet. We have reduced that down to fifteen feet to minimize it. In terms of the upper floors, the minimum considered best practice is fourteen feet 8 inches. We have reduced that to fourteen feet. We are sensitive to height and have been making compromises but there are functional things that are part of a building that make this really difficult to compress any lower. Structural steel and the size of those members. Current Building Codes require us build those to 135 mph winds. When you put together the structural steel for that, it gives a joist height at around twenty-eight inches deep. The first twenty-eight inches is taken up with steel structure and then below that, you have to put all the mechanical systems. Modern codes require even more. We have to bring in more fresh air to create a better environment for our employees. That requires the duct work to be much larger than it used to be. We are below the recommended minimums, in addition to that we have taken accessory structures off the roof and modified our system so we can have a chilled air system and not roof top units. We have ensured three -story structures as we transition into the non-commercial areas. We changed the architecture itself as you transition into those residential neighborhoods. The community designers walked around the park identifying and having discussions about which buildings were significant and why. We took elements from around the park to make sure those elements supported the architectural design in this project. We have been careful to hire LS3P which has a local office and has been on the Historic Savannah Board and sensitive to integrating office and residential. They have been doing that in the Historic and Victorian Neighborhood Districts for the last thirty years. We are very excited about the diversity of architecture, the change in scale of height, and the creation of some open spaces.

Mr. Neil Dawson, LS3P Architect, said he lives in the Forsyth Ward and will experience this every day. It is something that we want to make sure is right. Building 3 will be three stories and forty-three feet, less than what is allowed by right. Building 1, although it is four stories, that fourth story is set back. The view from the street line would be forty-three feet. As someone that walks the park multiple times a day, it will look like a three-story building. Building 2, on the corner, we are proposing four stories as perceived from the street with the fifth story set back as well. As the pedestrian experiences this building from Whitaker Street over to Drayton, you will not perceive it as four and five stories, you will perceive it as three and four stories. This is two buildings set back with a hyphen connecting them. This design creates more of a public access and access to the park, which is positive. We think the building on the corner merits the fourth story. It is a public building that creates access to the parking and bathrooms. We have spent a lot of time working on the details. We have tried to design a building that meets all the visual compatibility standards in a way that is respectful and timeless.

Mr. Travis Coles, Board Member, said what your compromise here is for building one being four stories and fifty-seven feet, building two, five stories and seventy-one feet, and building three, three stories and forty-three feet. Is that correct?

Mr. Jepson said yes.

Mr. Coles asked, on the third building, with that being three stories, are we looking at three full stories or two stories and a setback third?

Mr. Morrow said it sounds like the Petitioner is intending to continue to develop consistent with the Site Plan that is shown. Even though the third building would be compliant, they intend to maintain the setbacks and not recoup the additional lost area.

Mr. Jepson said we are not requesting any variance at all for that building. This will be a full three stories.

Mr. Dwayne Stephens, Board Member, asked if the full three-story building will be forty-three feet versus the forty-five feet permitted.

Mr. Jepson said we are not asking for a variance for that building.

Mr. Stephens, Board Member, said we are solely here to uphold the Ordinance and be supportive of smart and intelligent growth in the community. When Mr. Dawson was speaking, he referenced only two buildings, and we see three. Is this legally two or three buildings?

Mr. Jepson said there are three buildings, but they are connected on the second, third and fourth floor by a glass design.

Mr. Dawson said they are two separate buildings by Building Code, but they share each other as a horizontal exit in the back.

Mr. Jepson said this design is a community approach. There are things that would have to be less efficient and less desirable if we built this with less. We think it is appropriate to take the lot for residential and use it as that. We are not asking you to change a use; we will continue to do office space and downzone some residential along where the residential street is on Whitaker. At the end of the day, we are trying to get a certain number of square footages not for economic reasons but because it supports the Development Agreement with the City and SEDA and allows us to get the garage paid for the City without them having to talk to any taxpayers.

Mr. Stephens, Board Member, said you were here before, this Board made a significant upzone and in that, when I voted, it was with the idea and understanding that this is what would make the project successful as opposed to needing more.

Mr. Jepson said this has been a challenge to do a parking garage. Staff and everyone's known we have had a target amount. We asked them what approach to take, file one petition and do both at the same time, and the recommendation between our attorney, counselors, and Staff was to split these petitions up. That is why we are here separately.

Mr. Stephens, Board Member, said he is struggling with the term Monumentality. The idea of the architecture being the monument itself I agree with, however, our Ordinance reads something different.

Mr. Jepson said until we read the Staff report, I had never heard that term associated with this particular project. We have been collaborating and changing designs, going through mass exercises, getting input and we have focused on the architecture because that is what people will see, not a label.

Mr. Stephen Plunk, Board Member, said if you do not get what you are asking for today, you mentioned you would have to relay out all the building designs. Would you have to take away some of the residential to get back what you would lose?

Mr. Jepson said they would have to go back and reevaluate with the architects and engineers relative to what is approved here today, what is the best way to accomplish this if we can.

Ms. Traci Amick, Board Member, asked what is more profitable, residential, or commercial.

Mr. Jepson said this project is office space, we will be occupying and using that office space. I do not know what the market is. We have not had any discussions about the market for that space. The residents in the area would prefer residential for sale but that is something that will be discussed down the line.

Ms. Jarrett, Chair, said there has not been anything mentioned regarding residential for this project.

Mr. Jepson said this square has been set aside and designated Future Land Use as residential since day one.

Mr. Stephens, Board Member, said this is not something that we are making any decisions on. He asked Mr. Morrow to explain?

Mr. Morrow said what we want to do is import architectural imagery around the word. We are importing an architectural term into a zoning context to say that this is the basis on which we are going to situate the relief. The design of this is for the Historic Preservation Commission. You are being asked today to evaluate the appropriateness of variances.

Ms. Jarrett, Chair, said the property on Waldburg, close to Barnard, is not part of our discussion.

Mr. Morrow said it is not within the scope but that is to again, underscore the fact that this came to us as a governmental product. This has been an ongoing conversation. There are multiple partners in this as evidenced by that Agreement. This is a public private partnership.

Ms. Melanie Wilson, Executive Director/CEO, said the items that we are discussing are the three buildings. You are here to make a decision regarding these three buildings and whether the height that the applicant has proposed is appropriate. Or, whether the height that Staff has recommended is the more appropriate height. For now, that is what the focus needs to be on. If there are concessions that need to be made with the design, that is up to the Historic Preservation Commission. The developer needs some sort of direction in regard to height so that they can go to the HPC with the design plans, according to the approved heights, and look for approval from them.

Mr. Jepson said the only reason I mentioned the residential area was because it was related to a question asked about how we would revisit the design and that area if we did not get the approval we were asking for. One of the things that we tried to do in the design was to avoid the mistake that was made at the Ellis Square Parking Lot. There are out ramps to the parking garage that are outside that are big concrete masses in an area where there are a lot of pedestrians coming and going. We lose a lot of square footage, almost 4,000 square feet on building one just to accommodate that ramp. We brought that inside the building to avoid the mistake made at Ellis Square. When we lose the footage on the first floor to provide a better design, we are trying to put it somewhere which is why we are trying to fit the fourth floor in but set it back.

Mr. Stephens, Board Member, asked if the entire ramp, in and out, at building one.

Mr. Jepson said yes and inside the building footprint.

Ms. Jarrett, Chair, said in the narrative, you talked about the parking deck having 290 spaces but on the next page 437 spaces are mentioned. There seems to be confusion about which building is which.

Mr. Jepson said the garage has been designed with 437 spaces with three stories underground.

Ms. Jarrett, Chair, asked, when the Development Agreement came before City Council, was there public discussion about what was being planned before the Development Agreement came before Council? Did the public know what was being considered before the Development Agreement was made?

Mr. Jepson said we met and gave a presentation of the proposed development with the VNA prior to. We walked them through the process. The public has been involved. The City has had their public meetings as well.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Andrew Jones, Attorney with Thomerson, Jones, and Edwards, representing Clara Greig and Tona Felicia Flagg, neighbors of the proposed office building. Mr. Jones said his firm sent a letter of opposition on their behalf with exhibits. February 7th his firm filed a petition for review of the rezoning and FLUM amendment with the Superior Court of Chatham County pursuant to the Georgia Zoning Procedures Law. With the petition having been filed, the Georgia Zoning Procedures Law provides for a stay of all proceedings furtherance of the Rezoning and FLUM Amendment. We maintain this hearing today, which is predicated on the Rezoning and FLUM Amendment, therefore violates the stay and that any decision made in this hearing on this matter will therefore be void under Georgia Law. The City of Savannah does not agree with us, but we maintain that position. Our firm sent a letter last Friday to the Executive Director of the MPC, the City and County Attorney's demanding that the MPC respect the stay and not have this hearing.

Moreover, the application for these variances does not comply with the Zoning Procedures law which requires disclosures by the applicants and their agents of campaign contributions. The application includes reportedly what are the required disclosure forms. There is no form for Jeff Jepson who gave thousands of dollars to City Council Members. Also missing is a form from Hunter McLean which also donated through its PAC. The disclosure form signed by Mr. Patterson omits the thousands of dollars of his own contributions. Also defective is the certification of the accuracy of the application which was signed by someone who was not the authorized agent. The authorized agent was Jeff Jepson.

Notwithstanding the above the proposed variances are unconstitutional under the Georgia and Federal constitutions because they pose significant detriment to my clients' property rights. My client's property will be particularly harmed by the Rezoning and FLUM Amendment and proposed Variances. All of which are for the benefit of Hunter- McLean, the parcels owners, and the developer. The Rezoning, FLUM Amendment, and proposed Variances also constitute unlawful spot zoning. This proposes a manifested abuse of power by the City against its citizens. The petition of review contends that the City was aware of the deficiencies of the applications disclosures and fraudulently concealed such deficiencies. Such concealment gives the appearance of a corrupt paid place scheme. Which undermines the confidence of the public and the Cities legislative process. Accordingly, we demand the MPC decline to rule on this application, it does not follow the law.

Ms. Elizebeth Hollis, member of the public, said she has lived on Whitaker street for forty years and treasures the neighborhood. We enjoy having Victorian homes all around us and hope the area remains that way. She expressed concern for the increase of traffic on Howard Street.

Mr. Tom Hollis, member of the public, said he lives on the 800 block of Whitaker Street. He expressed concern of the size of the proposed building being too large of a project for the neighborhood. He does not feel this should be permitted. He said the VNA gave the opinion of the board members only, not the members.

Mr. James Dalton, member of the public, said he did not know anything about this project until someone put a pamphlet on his door this week. He said he approached the Historic Department a few months ago about adding three small windows to the side of his brick home. They denied his request saying it would destroy the fabric of the building. He was disappointed with the decision but said it was reassured that if things were going to be that strict, there would not be much in the way of change in the area. He asked the Board to be as diligent as the Historic Committee was about the fabric of the building and apply that to the fabric of the neighborhood.

Mr. Kaigler, County Manager, asked who denied his request for windows.

Mr. Dalton said it was the Historic Review Board, and the purpose was only to have more natural light coming in his home.

Mr. Tom Kikot, member of the public, said he lives on Duffy Street. He walks by there every day. He does not feel there should be a five-story building allowed. Three stories are the largest that fits with the neighborhood. He stated his opposition to the project.

Mr. James Hundsrucker, member of the public, said Mayor Johnson stated January 9th, we are a city of people and residences, not STVRs and walking tourist traffic, truck traffic, and warehouses. Mr. Hundsrucker asked that the City revoke their agreement with the developer and SEDA to protect residents from this obtrusive development which will reduce the use and function. This undermines Savannah Historic Fabric and the Citizen's Constitutional Rights. There was no public hearing at City Council for this garage. He stated there were no plans presented at the VNA of which he was aware. Pedestrians experiencing the Victorian District is more important than a stand-alone seventy-three-foot-tall building that is self-aggrandizing.

Ms. Clara Greig, member of the public, said she lives at West Park and is opposed to the variance requests. She does not feel this project belongs in this neighborhood. All of the homes views on West Park will be directly impacted by the building on the corner and the building on Park and Barnard. She expressed concern over a loss of privacy. She said people will be able to look down into her fully fenced in back yard and be able to see into her windows. This development should be in harmony with the neighborhood, and it is not.

Ms. Tana Fileccia-Flagg, member of the public, said she is one of the residents that is severely impacted by this. When this development is finished, we will be sitting on our front porch looking at a monument. We did not move here to stare at a monument. The value of our home will be going down because of this project. The neighborhood does not want this.

Mr. Josh Yellin, member of the public, said he wanted to make sure the Board received for the record, the response to Mr. Jones' assertion. The response from the City of Savannah, the City's position is Mr.

Jones has misinterpreted the statue. While it is correct there has been a Superior Court case filed, it has no bearing on today's variance action. The request of a stay on this proceeding is invalid. This proceeding is unrelated to the TC-2 rezoning which is in question. As Mr. Jones knows, he can seek an injunction in that hearing, he has not tried to stop that from going forward and he is trying to come here to stop it in a different means. Mr. Yellin expressed his support for this project.

Mr. Gerald Neil, member of the public (online), said per the ordinance the petitioner has the burden of proof to show that the variance meets all the individual criteria for approval. Mr. Neil feels this has not been met and should be denied.

Ms. Elanie Picard, member of the public (online), said she lives on Whitaker Street. She asked for denial of the height variances requested. She stated this is not maintaining the Victorian Historic residential character of the neighborhood.

Mr. William Dallas, member of the public (online), said he owns property one block from the site. He expressed his opposition to the variances and asks for denial of the request. He stated the parking garage will change the character of the neighborhood.

Mr. Lynn Gullede, member of the public (online), said he asks the Board to vote no to the height variances.

Mr. Jepson said he wanted to note that he is a resident of that area. We live and serve in this community. He said they will meet with anyone who requests to meet. We have had several press conferences, community meetings, Board meetings, and neighborhood meetings with the community and the elected officials. With respect to parking, there was an extensive parking study done. The study was favorable. The only recommended improvements, even after the garage and offices are there, was an improvement to pedestrian traffic. They recommended stop signs to improve pedestrian connectivity to the park on weekends. There are a number of residents that have raised concerns on Howard Street that we shared with the City. As far as community benefits, we talked to the City early on. We worked out an arrangement where the City did not have to pay money for this land. We are donating the money to the City. We then figured out a path and plan to build the garage and get the garage paid for without affecting any taxpayers. This does not affect the School Board; the County and City still get their mileage rate. The City will own the garage. The City decided based upon their global Master Plan, they long needed a better parking solution in and around the park and because we had enough property in a location that worked for them, they were the ones that said this would be a good solution to work together on.

Our design has made lots of sacrifices along the way and lots of challenges that if we did not give up, we would not be here asking for six feet on the four story and eight feet on the five-story building. We think this design, because of the input from all of these people, is a much better design than being forced to come back. We have made really good attempts to make sure the extra height is set back and located in positions that make it less intrusive and less visible. We have specifically designed this to fit into the community.

Mr. Joseph Welch, Board Member, said in all his years of being a part of this Commission, he has never had a petitioner or audience member, demanding this Commission see things that way and vote that way. That is appalling Mr. Jones, no one puts a demand on this Commission to see things their way. To pick a man on what his political contributions are, that has nothing to do with this project. That should not have been brought forward.

Motion

Approval of the following:

Building 1 shall be permitted to contain 4 stories up to a maximum height of 57 feet.

Building 2 shall be permitted to contain 5 stories up to a maximum height of 71 feet.

Building 3, adjoining Barnard Street, shall conform with the development standards of the TC-2 zoning district, which permit 3 stories up to 45 feet in height.

with the condition that building 1 and 2 step back the top floor as reflected in the images shown in the petition,

and building 3 may maintain all three floors at full floor size.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Travis Coles

Second: Jeff Notrica

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

X. Presentations

XI. Approved Staff Reviews

XII. Other Business

[10. Master Plan Amendment | Highlands Business Park | 143, 149, 155 Shellbark Way | 25-000046-ZA](#)

📎 [143, 149, 155 SHELLBARK WAY_25-000046-ZA_MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT \(1\).pdf](#)

Mr. Edward Morrow, Director of Development Services/Current Planning, presented the Staff report for discussion with the Board Members and the Petitioner. Mr. Morrow said this PUD is at a stage where there is significant development but still has portions needing to be developed. There have been many different versions of these Master Plans that have been modified and changed. They usually come in as a whole in the beginning ultimately getting cut up into these final Master Plans that represent sub areas of the larger group. What is being shown here is the actual request you will likely hear at the next Planning Commission meeting. This is a request to put apartments in the area shown at Benton Boulevard and Highlands, north of the Alpha C-17 petition that came through recently. This is an application most recently looked at for the B-C standards to these Commercial Zoned properties for the purpose of the developer picking up more land. When the standards were conceived, the cost of building was very different.

In this case there is no longer a declarant relationship. There are questions as to who the actual declarant is. When the ability to make a change to the Master Plan is appropriate and when it is not. It is a privilege to develop in a PUD, you go in one time and there are understandings. When a developer goes in and makes actual infrastructure investment, they know how many toilets are going to flush. They know what the capacity of the roads needs to be. These are things that are known. Once you get away from that original approval and start making lots of new changes over the course of thirty years, the original document and all of the assumptions that came with it are no longer valid. That is the place that we are at and that is why Staff is asking for something different but necessary at this juncture. As you can see here, the Godley Station Master Plan is on its third iteration, North Godley, third, Highlands, third, South

Godley, first, The Mulberry, second, and Alpha C-17, the first iteration.

Staff wants to make sure that when we come before this Board, it is for the purpose of saying, Staff has researched this and has confidence of making decisions consistent without policies of the State. This PUD is at a point where there has been so much change and a lack of reconciliation as it has been modified to ensure that any of the final Master Plans we are editing, we cannot always be confident they are reconciled to the original Master Plan. This will take the work of Thomas and Hutton and Coleman Company who has done over seventy percent of the work out here.

The area shown in pink, the question being when residential is added, what is the impact to the original approval of the number of acres that was supposed to be designated for residential, many of which were single family homes. Previously when Neil McKensey from Coleman Company was here talking about a credit of density, this is the reconciliation that we need to be able to justify. What is the impact to the other acreage that was designated for that purpose? The place that they want to put residential now, is not the place they were originally designated to go. The residential was supposed to be in a certain identified geographic area.

Mr. Gary Wiggins, Owner of the project, said he took the project over in 2014. Originally it was all an Office-Industrial Flex project. Nothing ever came of that portion of the project. The residents there were certainly needing more services. There were no services for the residents. Early 2014 we held a town hall meeting, and the residents said they needed retail and other services. That was the idea of producing the first petition that we did. The biggest problem with the retail is that you need a certain number of rooftops. I had the original Master Plan changed with multifamily and then the surface level retail. We have been marketing that since 2014 and are unable to get it off the ground. We need more rooftops out there; we had a shovel ready project permitted and ready to break ground. When you look at the original Master Plan that was approved for all of North Godley, this was all multifamily that was changed back with the original developer in 1999. It was 100% multifamily in the original PUD. I am trying to do the best I can for the residents out there. We went through the accounting of multifamily that has been built versus approved and even after this approval, there is still one hundred acres left to be built versus the original approval. As far as counting goes, we are still under the cap.

Ms. Karen Jarrett, Chairwoman, asked how many acres are set aside for multifamily that have not been built?

Mr. Wiggins said the PUD is 95% built out. The service level retail is the only land left. I do not feel this is a big ask.

Ms. Jarrett, Chairwoman, said the reason this seems to be a big process is because we keep hearing from people who live in that area saying Benton Boulevard is a nightmare to drive on. Adding more multi-family will add to that.

Mr. Wiggins said there is a reduction in trips overall from retail commercial to multi-family.

Ms. Jarrett, Chairwoman, said not during the peak hours, the multi- family would generate more traffic at those times.

Mr. Coles, Board Member, asked if there was a resolution as to who the declarant actually is.

Mr. Wiggins said this came up in 2014, Brooks Stillwell, the City Attorney, ruled there is no declarant. I am the declarant of this Master Plan and have been acting that way since 2014. There is a letter o Bates, the City Attorney, to get this resolved.

Mr. Coles, Board Member, said the main concern is specifically a letter that was said by someone else, that they were the legitimate declarant. Before a vote is placed on something, we want to make sure we are giving an answer to the person who has the right to ask the questions.

Mr. Wiggins said before we come back before the Commission, we will have clarity.

Mr. Kaigler, County Manager, asked if the Petitioner has addressed the issue of traffic.

Mr. Wiggins said when we come back before you, we can demonstrate the difference between service

level retail and multifamily traffic. It will be a reduction.

Mr. Jarrett, Chair, said it will not be a peak hour reduction. Peak hour will be higher.

Mr. Coles, Board Member, said this is a difficult situation to be in to ask a developer what about the roads. Often, they have no control over that. That is at the State level. As we have experienced at Savannah Chatham Day, there is a lot of conversation at the State level and from the Georgia Department of Transportation of investing and fixing the roads in our area. Unfortunately, if you have ever been a product of a school system in Georgia, you build for what you have, that is what the State funds, what we have, not what is coming. Unfortunately, the roads do not typically get addressed until the developments are built.

Ms. Jarrett, Chair, said in her opinion, the developers do not design the initial development/Master Plan for the traffic they need to design for.

Mr. Coles, Board Member, said in this area we are developing so quickly with so much residential and retail commercial development, the State has to catch up. One part of that would be asking the developer to contribute to the funding for improving roads.

Mr. Joseph Welch, Board Member, said having retail would create more traffic, it would be continual throughout the entire day versus having homes built.

Ms. Amanda Wilson, Board Member, said having retail space with grocery stores etc., does keep some of the residents off of the main roads. It keeps them in the community and off the roads. It is disappointing to see some of the retail leave.

Ms. Melanie Wilson, Executive Director/CEO, said one of the reasons Staff has brought this before you, we are trying to figure out how to get one document that shows everything that has changed over the years.

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.