



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

METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION

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M E M O R A N D U M

TO: The Planning Commission

THROUGH: Melanie Wilson, Executive Director and CEO

FROM: MPC Staff – Ken Gorski – Senior Planner for Development Services

DATE: March 31st, 2026

SUBJECT: Text Amendment to the City of Savannah Zoning Ordinance

Re: Amendment to Section 8.7.22, Outdoor Vending Machines, Freestanding Automatic Teller Machines (Less than 25 square feet) AND Amendment to Section 8.7.23, Outdoor Vending Unit (25 square feet or greater)

Applicant: Robert & Anna Kelly

MPC FILE NO: 26-001037-ZA

REQUEST:

A Petition to amend Article 8, Section 8.7.23, Outdoor Vending Unit (25 square feet or greater), to expand the number of allowable zoning districts to include Office & Institutional – Expanded (OI-E) and Business – Neighborhood (B-N)

The Petitioner specifically requests modifications of the following standards:

Under *Section 8.7.23 Outdoor Vending Unit (25 square feet or greater)*

- *Sec. 8.7.23.a.i Location*
- *Sec. 8.7.23.a.iv Location*
- *Sec. 8.7.23.a.vi Ice Vending Units*
- *Sec. 8.7.23.b.i Development Standards*
- *Sec. 8.7.23.b.v Development Standards*
- *Sec. 8.7.23.c Signage*

To be consistent within the ordinance, the Zoning Administrator and MPC staff are providing revised language for Sections 8.7.22 & 8.7.23 since both pertain to Outdoor Vending Machines. The Ordinance text is proposed to be amended to read as follows, with text to be removed identified in ~~red~~ and new language identified in blue:

8.7.22 Outdoor Vending Machines, Freestanding Automatic Teller Machines (Less than 25 square feet)

Outdoor vending machines and freestanding automatic teller machines shall comply with the standards below.

Commentary: *For the purpose of this Section, outdoor vending machines shall include newspaper/magazine racks, whether or not a fee is charged for the product, LP gas storage racks, ice boxes and machines that offer for sale or rent DVDs, drinks, snacks, candy, toys and similar items.*

a. Location

- i. Outdoor vending machines and freestanding automatic teller machines may only be established in conjunction with a principal building and shall be located without impeding pedestrian or vehicular traffic, or occupying parking spaces, drive aisles, greenspace, buffers or landscaped areas required for the principal building.
- ii. Outdoor vending machines ~~{shall be}~~ not located immediately adjacent to the principal building ~~{as allowed by applicable building codes and ordinances}~~ shall be shielded from vehicles by bollards or similar devices.
- iii. Outdoor vending machines and freestanding automatic teller machines more than four (4) feet tall shall not block any window.
- iv. Within any local historic district, outdoor vending machines ~~{,not including newspaper/magazine racks, shall not be}~~ that are visible from any right-of-way, except for lanes, shall be placed on the side or rear of the principal building. Vending machines that are within a building yet are visible due to an open door or wall shall not be considered outdoor vending machines. This standard does not apply to newspaper/magazine racks.
- v. Except when designed for drive-up use, vending machines shall maintain at least four (4) feet of walkway free of obstruction to allow for pedestrian movement around such use.

b. Size

Outdoor vending machines and freestanding automatic teller machines shall occupy no more than 25 square feet of ground area per machine and shall be no more than eight (8) feet in height. The total width of all vending machines along a façade shall not be more than 10% of the length of such façade or 15 linear feet, whichever is less.

c. Signs

Signage on outdoor vending machines shall be limited to four (4) square feet on each side. Signage on automatic teller machines shall be limited to 12 square feet or two (2) square feet per linear foot of the machine, whichever is less, per side. Sign illumination shall be internal or shielded so as to be directed at the sign face with the light source not visible from any public right-of-way.

d. Lighting

A lighting plan shall be required if outdoor lighting is proposed.

e. Maintenance

Outdoor vending machines and freestanding automatic teller machines shall be maintained in a clean and litter free condition. For automatic teller machines, a waste receptacle shall be integrated into the structure housing the automatic teller machine.

f. **Design**

Outdoor vending machines and freestanding automatic teller machines shall be constructed and maintained with durable waterproof and rustproof material and shall identify the telephone number of the operator or responsible person to contact in the event of machine malfunction or if the machine is inoperative.

8.7.23 Outdoor Vending Unit (25 square feet or greater)

a. **Location**

- i. Such units shall be allowed only within the [OI-E, B-N](#), B-C, B-M, IL-T, IL and IH zoning districts.
- ii. The use shall be located on a road classified as a collector or arterial as identified in [Appendix A-1](#).
- iii. Such units shall only be allowed on a site occupied by another principal building. ~~[; and further, such]~~
- iv. [Such](#) units ~~[shall be]~~ [which are not](#) located immediately adjacent to the ~~[other]~~ principal building ~~[as allowed by applicable building codes and ordinances]~~ [shall be shielded from vehicles by bollards or similar devices](#).
- v. Such use shall not be allowed within the boundaries of any local historic overlay district.
- vi. **Ice Vending Units**
 1. An ice vending unit shall not be located within a 300-foot radius of an existing ice vending unit [on the same side of the collector or arterial street required in part ii above](#).
 2. Only one (1) ice vending unit shall be allowed on any single parcel.

b. **Development Standards**

- i. A site plan shall be submitted for review according to Sec. [3.8](#), Development Plan Review [unless waived by the City Manager or his or her designee](#).
- ii. Such units shall be not less than 25 nor more than 250 square feet in size.
- iii. Such use shall not be located on or in any parking spaces required for a principal use.
- iv. Such use shall provide a minimum of two (2) off-street parking spaces.
- v. A trash receptacle with a minimum capacity of at least 30 gallons shall be placed adjacent to an ice vending unit. Such receptacles shall be properly maintained and emptied by the ice vending unit owner or his designee at least once every [three \(3\) to four \(4\)](#) days.

c. **Signage**

Signage shall be permitted on any two (2) sides of the unit only and shall not exceed one (1) square foot for each linear foot of unit wall as measured along the longest wall. In no case shall permitted signage exceed 20 square feet per side. [Sign illumination shall be internal or shielded so as to be directed at the sign face with the light source not visible from any public right-of-way](#).

BACKGROUND AND THEORY:

Section 8.7.22 does not specifically limit smaller outdoor vending machines (25 square feet or less) to certain zoning districts, hence they have been located within broader zoning classifications. Per Section 8.7.23, larger outdoor vending machines (greater than 25 square feet) “shall be allowed only within the B-C, B-M, IL-T, IL, and IH zoning districts”.

The proposed revisions seek to expand the allowable zoning districts to include OI-E and B-N, which are consistent with the districts already allowed. Language has also been simplified, revised or added on related topics such as vehicular and pedestrian protection (i.e. bollards) and signage lighting to be consistent on both ordinance sections that relate to Outdoor Vending Machines.

Coordination with Plan 2040:

Economic Development Goal 4: Focuses on implementing outreach and programs that lead to "economically inclusive entrepreneurial growth" through "enhanced presence of small business support services." The amendment's expansion into OI-E and B-N districts directly supports this by providing more locations for large-scale vending installations.

Economic Development Strategy E.4.1: Explicitly calls for increasing the "efficiency of permitting and licensing policies for businesses through streamlining procedures." The proposed City Manager waiver for site plan review (Sec. 8.7.23.b.i) is a procedural streamline consistent with this strategy.

Land Use Goal 5: Aims to create "safe, attractive, vibrant, and pedestrian-friendly streetscapes." The new requirement for bollards (Sec. 8.7.23.a.iv) for larger vending units is a direct application of this goal. This amendment increases the zoning use district location opportunities and enhances the safety of the consumer public by codifying clear access distances and bollards (or similar) for pedestrian and vehicular protection.

Quality of Life Goal 4: Addresses "food insecurity" and "access to healthy food." The expansion of ice vending and larger units into neighborhood districts (B-N) supports local service availability in areas that community survey respondents have identified as lacking basic resources.

The **GPS** plan emphasizes "implementing operational efficiencies" and "eliminating redundancy." Providing administrative flexibility to waive site plan reviews for minor installations (like a vending unit on an already developed lot) removes a layer of costly, time-consuming and redundant review.

The proposed amendment is highly consistent with the "Business-Friendly" ethos promoted by both guiding policy documents. This amendment acts as a form of "targeted deregulation" to support small entrepreneurial ventures.

ORDINANCE ANALYSIS:

Per section 3.7.7 of Article 3, Savannah’s Zoning Ordinance offers four (4) review criteria for consideration of proposed text amendments:

- a. **Consistency** – The extent to which the proposed text amendment is consistent with the remainder of the Zoning Ordinance, including any purpose and intent statements.

MPC Staff Comment: *The proposed text amendment is consistent with the remainder of the Zoning Ordinance. It is not in conflict with other Ordinance provisions and would bring consistency within the Outdoor Vending Machine sections that aligns with similar amendments relating to applicability of OI and B-N zoning districts.*

- b. **New or Changing Circumstances** – The extent to which the proposed text amendment represents a new idea not considered in the existing Zoning Ordinance, or represents a revision necessitated by changing circumstances over time.

MPC Staff Comment: *The amendment expands upon existing provisions within the text. The proposed text amendment represents a revision to clarify and bring consistency between similar ordinances and zoning concepts.*

- c. **Error or Inappropriate Standard** – Whether or not the proposed text amendment corrects an error in the Zoning Ordinance, or otherwise improves upon existing requirements or standards.

MPC Staff Comment: *The proposed text amendment clarifies and expands upon existing requirements and standards. It improves upon the existing standards by aligning similar sections of related ordinances and broadening the allowable zoning districts to those that are consistent and appropriate to the subject functionality. It is not the result of any specific error within the Ordinance.*

- d. **Compliance with Higher Law** – Whether or not the proposed text amendment revises the Zoning Ordinance to comply with state or federal statutes.

MPC Staff Comment: *The proposed amendment is not intended to align the Ordinance with state or federal statutes.*

POLICY ANALYSIS AND SUMMARY:

The text amendment expands the allowable zoning districts for Outdoor Vending Machines, ensures consistency, clarifies language within the ordinance, and better aligns with current and future land use patterns. At the same time, the existing standards remain and are enhanced for such vending machines to be planned and implemented within safety guidelines and in appropriate locations.

- **Sec. 8.7.22.a.ii.:** The text added is to improve the safety and security of detached vending machine facilities by requiring vehicular and pedestrian protection by means of bollards or similar measures.
- **Sec. 8.7.22.a.iv.:** Language was added to clarify that within historic districts, outdoor vending machines must be located to the side or rear of the principal-use building but that this requirement does not apply to newspaper or magazine racks.
- **Sec. 8.7.22.a.v.:** Language was added to clarify that outdoor vending machines shall maintain at least 48” clear pedestrian access unless they are designed specifically for drive-up use applications.
- **Sec. 8.7.22.c.:** Language was added to clarify that any signage lighting must be designed and installed such that it does not create light pollution or glare that is specifically visible from public rights-of-way.
- **Sec 8.7.23.a.i.:** The revision expands allowable zoning districts to include OI-E and B-N, which are consistent with the intent and function of the previously allowed districts.

- **Sec. 8.7.23.a.iv.:** The text added is to improve the safety and security of larger detached vending machine facilities by requiring vehicular and pedestrian protection by means of bollards or similar measures.
- **Sec. 8.7.23.a.vi.:** Language was added that explains that the 300-foot radius limitation for Ice Vending Unit locations is intended to be applied on the same side of the respective collector or arterial street.
- **Sec. 8.7.23.b.i.:** Language was added to allow the City Manager or a designated official to waive the requirement for a site plan review at their discretion.
- **Sec. 8.7.23.b.v.:** Language was modified to change the required trash receptacle maintenance/emptying from at least once every 2 days to at least once every 3-4 days.
- **Sec. 8.7.23.c.:** The same new language for signage lighting was added to match Sec. 8.7.22.c.

MPC STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

The proposed amendments to Sections 8.7.22 and 8.7.23 expand automated services into the B-N and OI-E districts to improve local convenience and reduce vehicle trips while mandating vehicular protection, such as bollards, to ensure pedestrian safety.

The updates also include more sustainable maintenance schedules for trash receptacles and new requirements for shielded signage lighting to preserve the aesthetic character of surrounding neighborhoods.

Finally, the clarified 300-foot separation requirement for ice vending units prevents clustering, ensuring these structures do not create undue visual clutter within the local streetscape.

Based upon review and consideration by the Zoning Administrator and MPC Staff, the applicant's request to expand the allowable zoning districts is reasonable and consistent with current zoning policy, Plan 2040 objectives and goals, and the overall intent of the ordinance.

MPC Staff recommends **approval** of the proposed amendments to Article 8, Section 8.7.22 and Section 8.7.23 as described and outlined above.

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