



CHATHAM COUNTY-SAVANNAH METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION

"Planning the Future, Respecting the Past"

STAFF REPORT

To: The Planning Commission

Through: Melanie Wilson - Executive Director and CEO

From: MPC Staff

Date: January 6, 2026

Subject: Zoning Map Amendment

Applicant: Mayor and Aldermen of the City of Savannah

Agent: Bridget Lidy, Director of Planning and Urban Design

Address: 4241 Ogeechee Road (Powder Magazine)

PIN: 20836 02002

Site Area: 14.61 acres

Alderman District: 5 – Dr. Estella Shabazz, Mayor Pro Tem

Chatham County Commission District: 5 – Tanya Milton, Commissioner

Request: Amend the Zoning Map to incorporate *Sec. 7.7 Historic Property Overlay*

File Number: 25-005001-ZA-MAP

Request

The Petitioner is requesting an amendment to the Official Zoning Map to apply the H-P-O-1 (Historic Property Overlay - 1) designation to the subject property identified as the Savannah Powder Magazine.

This request is being considered concurrently with a Zoning Text Amendment (File No. 25-005000-ZA) which adds clarifying design and maintenance standards to Article 7, Section 7.7 to establish a formal framework for local historic property designations. While Section 7.7 presently exists within the Ordinance, it has not previously been applied to any designated properties within the jurisdiction.

The Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) reviewed and approved the designation at its meeting on November 19, 2025.

Facts and Findings

Site

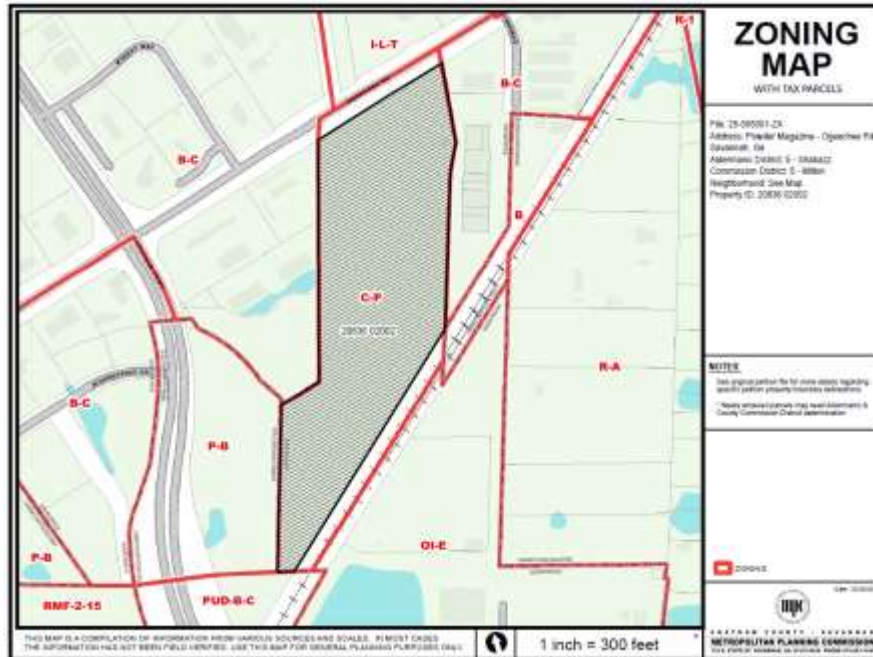
The subject property measures 14.61 acres and is located on Ogeechee Road. The site contains the Savannah Powder Magazine, a one-story Gothic Revival brick structure constructed in 1898 for the municipal storage of explosives. The building features original masonry detailing and specialized safety elements, including thick brick walls, iron vents, and asphalt-coated interior surfaces. In February 2025, the resource was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



Existing Zoning and Development Pattern

The parcel is currently zoned C-P (Conservation-Park). It is located in a wooded area and is not currently visible from the public right-of-way. The property remains under City ownership and served as Savannah's only non-military powder storage facility until its closure in 1971.

Location	Land Use	Existing Zoning
North	Heavy Commercial / Outdoor Storage	B-C, I-L-T
South	Rail line, Church	OI-E
East	Commercial/Office Warehouse	B, B-C,
West	Restaurant / Retail	B-C



Public Notice

Mailed notice of the Planning Commission meeting was sent to all property owners within 300-feet of the subject property, signs were posted on site and required newspaper advertisements were run at least 15 days prior to the meeting. The mailed notice included instructions on how to access the public meeting via the internet.

Impact and Suitability

Public Services and Facilities

The site is served by City water, sewer and stormwater systems. Modifications requiring the issuance of a site development permit will go through the site plan review process which includes approval of all applicable Engineering and other reviewing departments.

Comprehensive Land Use Plan Element

Plan 2040 identifies the of the subject property for *Suburban-Residential* character with a designation of *Conservation-Park*.

Suburban-Residential character areas include low and medium density developments; generally, this character area features either single-family structures on large lots or medium-lot residential subdivisions with relatively uniform housing types and densities. However, multi-family apartments and attached single-family residential subdivisions are also prevalent in this area. Local streets are laid out in curvilinear patterns, with occasional cul-de-sacs and limited sidewalks. Suburban Residential areas adjacent to Suburban Commercial character areas should, to the extent possible, be designed as cohesive, connected neighborhoods. Alternative types of housing

options should be encouraged in suburban areas to accommodate multi-generational households, seniors, and others.

Conservation lands are those that are publicly or privately held and designated for preservation in a natural state or for use for passive recreation (e.g., fishing, hiking, camping).

Parks and Recreation lands are dedicated to open space that is accessible to the public or areas dedicated to sports, exercise, or other types of leisure activities.

Existing Zoning District

- Intent of the C-P Zoning District:

The Conservation-Park (C-P) zoning district is classified as a Conservation District within the City of Savannah's regulatory framework. Its primary purpose is to preserve and enhance park lands as permanent open space to satisfy the active and passive recreational needs of residents while simultaneously protecting cultural and historic resources.

- Allowed Uses: The uses allowed in the zoning district appear in a chart appended to the end of this report.
- Development Standards: The development standards of the zoning district appear in a chart appended to the end of this report.

Proposed Zoning District

- Intent of the C-P/H-P-O-1 Zoning District:

The combined intent of the C-P base zoning and the H-P-O-1 Overlay is to preserve the **Savannah Powder Magazine** site as permanent open space for passive recreation while providing site-specific design standards. While C-P governs general land use, H-P-O-1 adds the legal protections necessary to ensure future alterations remain visually compatible with the 1898 Gothic Revival structure. This dual application effectively safeguards the resource's historic integrity.

- Allowed Uses: The uses allowed in the zoning district appear in a chart appended to the end of this report.
- Development Standards: The development standards of the zoning district appear in a chart appended to the end of this report.

Zoning Ordinance Review

The following review criteria for rezoning are prescribed in the Savannah Zoning Ordinance Sec. 3.5.8:

Suitability and Community Need

- Whether the range of uses permitted by the proposed zoning district is more suitable than the range of uses that are permitted by the current zoning district.

MPC Comment: Yes. *The H-P-O-1 designation is a suitable augment to the current base zoning alone because it provides the critical design standards and legal protections necessary to safeguard the integrity of a unique historical resource. Further, as proposed, the Overlay permits the modification of the base zoning district to allow compatible development that respects the sensitive development context of a historic property. If rezoned to permit additional uses, future development on the property may occur with the assurance the historic resource is preserved.*

- Whether the proposed zoning district addresses a specific need in the county or city.

MPC Comment: Yes. *The amendment addresses a critical need to identify and protect significant municipal assets outside the Downtown Historic District. It ensures a more inclusive representation of local history by providing formal local designation for a unique resource that was recently listed on the National Register of Historic Places.*

Compatibility

- Whether the zoning proposal will adversely affect the existing use or usability of adjacent or nearby property.

MPC Comment: No. *The zoning proposal is not expected to adversely affect the existing use or usability of adjacent or nearby properties.*

- Whether the zoning proposal is compatible with the present zoning pattern and conforming uses of nearby property and the character of the surrounding area.

MPC Comment: Yes. *The zoning proposal is compatible with the existing zoning pattern, the conforming uses of nearby properties, and the overall character of the surrounding area. No development is currently proposed on the site and it is presently zoned for Conservation use.*

- Whether there are other existing or changing conditions affecting the use and development of the property which give supporting grounds for either approval or disapproval of the zoning proposal.

MPC Comment: Yes. *Supporting grounds include the February 2025 National Register listing and the 2020 Surplus Property Land Use Preference Survey. The survey recommended the site remain in City ownership with a mix of passive recreation and civic uses, a vision that is legally reinforced by this local historic designation.*

Consistency

- Whether the zoning proposal is in conformity with the policy and intent of the Comprehensive Plan and other adopted plans, such as a redevelopment plan or small area plan.

MPC Comment: Yes. *The proposal is in conformity with the Savannah GPS Strategic Plan, Goal 2, which directs the City to "Invest in Equitable Community Development and Resiliency"*

by identifying and protecting significant cultural and local historic assets outside the Downtown National Historic Landmark District. Further, the amendment aligns with the 2020 Savannah Surplus Property Land Use Preference Survey Report, which specifically identified the Powder Magazine as a site to be retained under City ownership for a mix of passive recreation and civic/institutional uses. The overlay provides the legal framework to ensure future development is consistent with these adopted policy visions.

Reasonable Use

- Whether the property to be affected by the zoning proposal has a reasonable use as currently zoned.

MPC Comment: *The property currently has reasonable use under its existing C-P (Conservation-Park) zoning, which allows for uses such as public parks, natural areas, and botanical gardens. However, the current base zoning lacks associated protective standards necessary **to prevent demolition or evaluate material changes** to the structure of historical significance on the site. The proposed map amendment is not intended to remove current reasonable uses but to augment the base zoning with a protective overlay that recognizes the property's historic importance and ensures its long-term physical integrity.*

Adequate Public Services

- Whether adequate school, public safety and emergency facilities, road, ingress and egress, parks, wastewater treatment, water supply and stormwater drainage facilities are available for the uses and densities that are permitted in the proposed zoning district.

MPC Comment: *Adequate City services will be available to serve the proposed use. Modifications requiring the issuance of a site development permit will go through the site plan review process which includes approval of all applicable departments.*

Proximity to a Military Base, Installation or Airport

MPC Comment: *The proposal is not impacted by proximity to an airport or military installation.*

Recommendation

MPC Staff recommends **approval** of the request to amend the Official Zoning Map by applying the *Historic Property Overlay* standards of Section 7.7 to the subject property at 4241 Ogeechee Road, designating it as **H-P-O-1**. This recommendation is based on the finding that the Local Historic Property Designation Criteria are met, specifically criterion 3.17.4.a.i, as the property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of local history in politics and government.

ARTICLE 5.0 BASE ZONING DISTRICTS

C-P Uses

C-P	√= Permitted Use L= Limited Use S=Special Use	Use Standards
Agriculture, personal	√	
Agriculture, restricted	√	
Botanical garden/arboretum	√	
Cemetery (Mausoleum, Columbarium, Memorial Park)	L	Sec. 8.3.1
Cemetery, pet	L	Sec. 8.3.3
Community Garden	√	
Park, general	√	
Wildlife Refuge	L	Sec. 8.3.4
Library/community center	√	
Museum	√	Sec. 8.7.24
Campground; recreational vehicle park	S	Sec. 8.4.8
Golf course	√	
Stadium or outdoor arena; Amphitheater; Outdoor sports facility or complex	L	Sec. 8.4.13
Retail consumption dealer (on premise consumption of alcohol)	S	Sec. 8.7.24 and Sec. 7.14
Watercraft Launch/Ramp	√	
Utilities, major	S	
Utilities, minor	√	