



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

METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION

"Planning the Future - Respecting the Past"

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: The Planning Commission

THROUGH: Melanie Wilson, Executive Director and CEO

FROM: DeAndrae Spradley, Senior Planner – Development Services

DATE: June 23, 2026

MPC FILE NO: Z-0426-000623 (Chatham County)

SUBJECT: Zoning Map Amendment

PETITIONER(S): Richard A. Peterson

REQUEST:

The Petitioner is requesting for approval of the following:

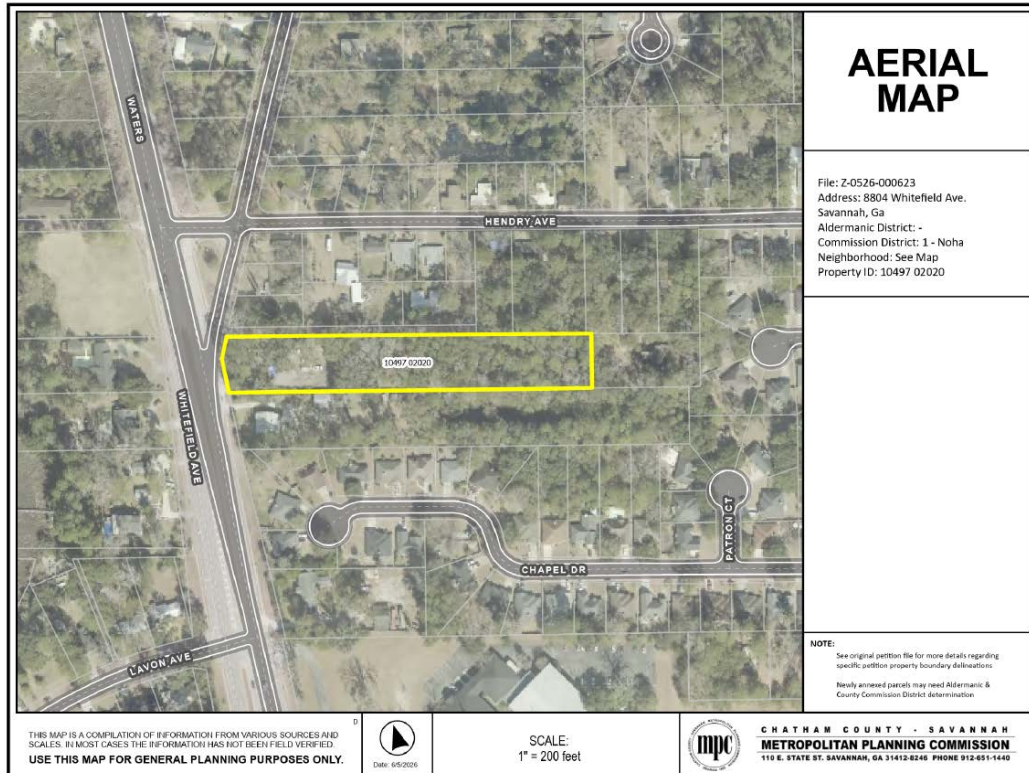
1. a rezoning (Zoning Map Amendment) to accommodate an existing landscape contractor business on a vacant parcel from Residential One Family (R-1) Residential Environmental Overlay (EO) to Business Limited (B-1) Environment Overlay (EO).

The Petitioner is requesting the variance for the purpose of bringing a nonconforming landscaping business into zoning compliance.

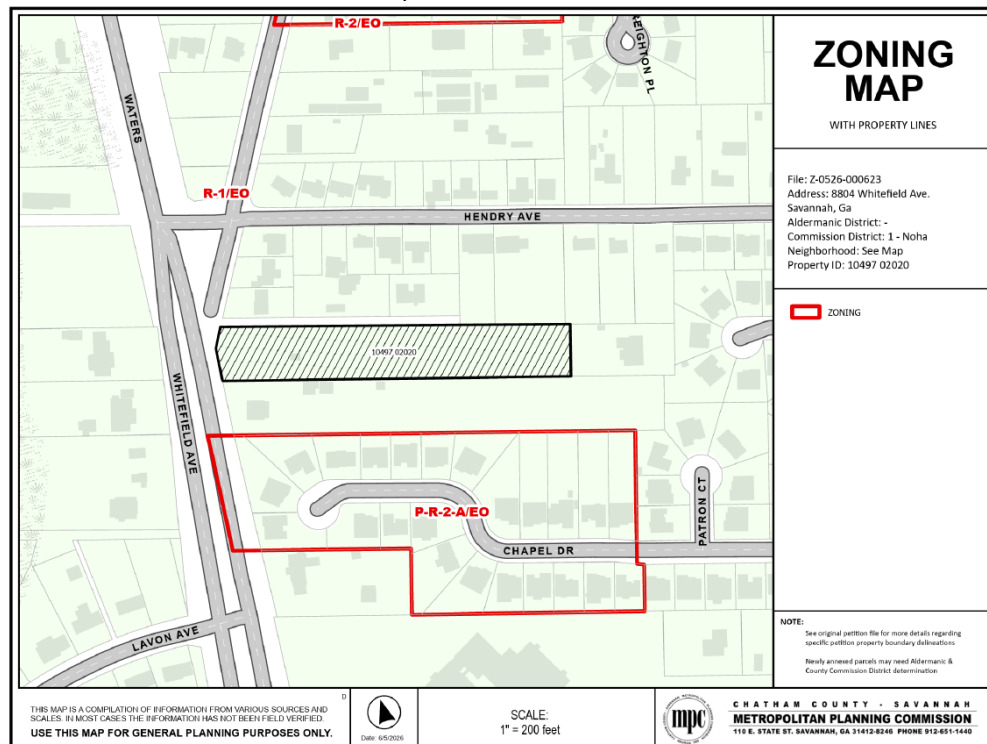
The referenced property is located at 8804 Whitefield Avenue, Savannah, Georgia 31406 on parcel id number 10497 02020.

For the last eleven (11) years, a landscape contractor has been operating on the property. In 2025, the landscape contractor was cited by the County's Code Enforcement Department for operating the landscaping business on a residential lot. The Petitioner is now requesting the variance so that the existing onsite landscaping contracting company can operate on the property as a legal conforming use.

Richard A. Peterson
 0426-000623-ZBA
 8804 Whitefield Avenue
 June 23, 2026

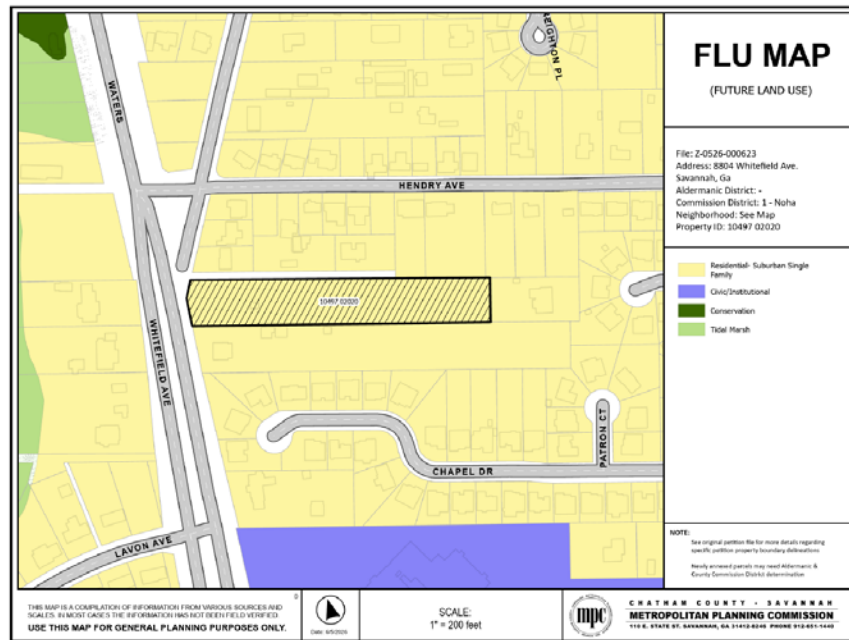


Aerial Map of 8804 Whitefield Avenue



Existing Zoning Map of 8804 Whitefield Avenue

Richard A. Peterson
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Future Land Use Map of 8804 Whitefield Avenue



8804 Whitefield Avenue facing east on Whitefield Avenue

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Private residential driveway about 50' from the front of property along Whitefield Avenue



Single family residential unit adjacent to property along Whitefield Avenue

Richard A. Peterson
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8804 Whitefield Avenue
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In front of the property along Whitefield Avenue



Directly across the street from the property facing west on Whitefield Avenue

CURRENT ZONING AND LAND USE:

Currently, the property is vacant. The adjacent land uses to the subject parcels are as follow:

Direction	Zoning	Land Use(s)
North	Residential One Family (R-1) Environmental Overlay (EO)	Single-family Residential
South	Residential One Family (R-1) Environmental Overlay (EO)	Single-family Residential
East	Residential One Family (R-1) Environmental Overlay (EO)	Single-family Residential
West	Residential One Family (R-1) Environmental Overlay (EO)	Single-family Residential

INTENT OF EXISTING RESIDENTIAL ONE FAMILY (R-1) ENVIRONMENTAL OVERLAY (EO) DISTRICT:

Per the County's Zoning Regulations, the purpose of this district shall be to create an environment where one-family dwellings, and certain nondwelling uses, are permitted to promote stability and the character of low-density residential development with adequate open space. A maximum density of five dwelling units per acre of net residential land area shall be permitted in this district.

The purpose of the Environmental Overlay District is to establish supplemental standards to bolster those currently in the Chatham County Zoning Ordinance to:

- a) protect and enhance community character;
- b) provide for safe and orderly development; and
- c) protect environmental quality, especially the estuarine system that surrounds the community.

INTENT OF PROPOSED BUSINESS LIMITED DISTRICT:

Per the County's Zoning Regulations, the purpose of this district shall be to create and protect areas that's limited to business and certain industrial-like activities with limited traffic generation potential, are permitted by this District. The Business Limited (BL) District is intended to be applied in areas that would not be appropriate for more intensive commercial districts because of the character of the surrounding land uses and other factors.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FUTURE LAND USE ELEMENT:

Per the County's Plan 2040, the property is within the 'Residential- Suburban Single Family' Future Land Use Map designation. This Land Use classification is identified for single-family detached residential dwellings at a density not to exceed five (5) units per gross acre. This category includes non-residential uses that are compatible with the residential character and scale of the neighborhood.

The surrounding area is developed with single-family residential lots. In 2025, the property was cited by Code Enforcement for the presence of a nonconforming landscaping business in a residential zoning district. Currently, there's no principal structure located on the property and there's only a small utility building and fenced outdoor storage area onsite. The surface of the parcel is unimproved and the Petitioner has not submitted an official Site Plan showing any improvements to the property.

This designation is not consistent with the Petitioner's proposed zoning of Business Limited (B-1). Therefore, a Future Land Use Map (FLUM) amendment should be considered to ensure future development consistent with the adopted Comprehensive Plan and its associated goals and policies. Staff is advising the Petitioner to consider a broader amendment of the FLUM to reflect the existing single-family residential development pattern. The Future Land Use immediately adjacent to the property is featured below:

- north - Residential- Suburban Single Family;
- south - Residential- Suburban Single Family;
- east - Residential- Suburban Single Family; and
- west- Residential- Suburban Single Family.

PUBLIC SERVICES AND FACILITIES:

The property is served by the Chatham County Stormwater System. However, there are no public sewer or water services readily available to the Petitioner's property. Chatham County Transit Route Number 20 runs immediately adjacent to the property on Whitefield Avenue. There are no fire or police stations within 0.25 miles of the property.

ORDINANCE EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR MAP AMENDMENT:

1. *Will the proposed zoning districts permit uses that would create traffic volumes, noise level, odor, airborne particulate matter, visual blight, reduce light or increased density of development that would adversely impact the livability or quality of life in the surrounding neighborhood?*

Staff Comment: The Petitioner's requested Business Limited (B-1) Zoning District is inconsistent and incompatible with the existing surrounding single-family residential zoning. The intent of the B-1 Zoning District is to create and protect areas with limited business and certain industrial-like activities are permitted within the Zoning District. Conversely, the Residential One (R-1) Zoning District exists to create an environment where one-family dwellings, and certain non-dwelling uses, are permitted to promote the stability and character of low-density residential development.

Therefore, the proposed Business Limited (B-1) Zoning on the property would introduce a higher intensity within the immediate area of the property or generate an increased traffic volume within the area. The Petitioner's Zoning request will have an adverse impact on the noise levels, odors, airborne particulate matters, visual blights, or reduction of light to the parcels immediately adjacent to the property. The requested use is incompatible with the surrounding low-density, single-family residential character.

2. *Will the proposed zoning districts permit uses that would adversely impact adjacent and nearby properties by rendering such properties less desirable and therefore, less marketable for the type of development permitted under the current zoning?*

Staff Comment: The proposed zoning allows a mix of uses that are commercial in nature, some described as 'industrial-like.' The property and all adjoining properties are presently zoned and subdivided for single-family residential dwelling uses.

The incompatible commercial zoning between the parcels zoned for residential use will have the impact of making adjoining parcels less valuable and desirable for the use where they are presently zoned by the County.

If the Commission is inclined to seek a remedy to permit the continuation of the nonconforming use, the County Zoning Ordinance contains a district explicitly created for existing nonconforming uses in largely residential contexts – PD-N (*Planned Development Rezoning for Certain Nonconforming Uses*).

3. *Will the proposed zoning district's permitted uses generate a type or mix of vehicular traffic on a street or highway that is incompatible with the type of land use development along such street or highway?*

Staff Comment: Allowance of the proposed use can be expected to result in the expansion of commercial/light industrial use and traffic within the area that's currently predominantly single-family residential uses.

4. *Will the proposed zoning district permit uses that would generate greater traffic volumes at vehicular access points and cross streets than is generated by uses permitted under the current zoning district to the detriment of maintaining acceptable or current volume capacity (V/C) ratio for the streets that provide vehicular access to the proposed zoning district and adjacent and nearby properties?*

Staff Comment: The proposed use generates traffic at a rate greater than that of a single-family home that's the ordinarily anticipated use of the property as currently zoned by the County. The existing nonconforming use is unlikely to generate traffic at a volume that would significantly impact the current volume capacity ratio of the streets serving the property.

5. *Will the proposed zoning districts permit uses or scale of development that would require a greater level of public services such as drainage facilities, utilities, or safety services above that required for uses permitted under the current zoning district such that the provision of these services will create financial burden to the public?*

Staff Comment: The proposed used and those permitted in the requested zoning district do carry implications for demand on services such as drainage and, potentially, public safety. Commercial operations typically require provision of a dust-free, typically impervious, parking surface. Additionally, the proposed use is a landscaping business which is more likely to handle flammable and toxic substances (pesticides, fertilizers, fuels, etc.) in greater volume than would a single-family dwelling or other us permitted in the current zoning district. Due to the small size of the site, however, these services are unlikely to be required at a level regarded as burdensome to the public.

6. *Will the proposed zoning district permit uses or scale of development that would adversely impact the improvement or development of adjacent and nearby properties in accordance with existing zoning regulations and development controls deemed necessary to maintain the stability and livability of the surrounding neighborhood?*

Staff Comment: The petitioner's proposed zoning change does not adversely impact the improvement or development of the adjacent and nearby properties in accordance with the existing zoning regulations. The proposed zoning change will not adversely affect the stability and livability of the surrounding neighborhood.

7. *Will the proposed zoning districts permit development that is inconsistent with the comprehensive land use plan?*

Staff Comment: The County's Plan 2040 states that single-family residential (detached & attached) are the recommended primary uses for the Residential-Suburban Land Use designation. The recommended secondary uses include the following:

- small scale commercial and apartment buildings;
- civic and institutional facilities; and
- neighborhood park.

Based on the recommended housing options within the County's Plan 2040, the proposed zoning to Business Limited (B-1) is inconsistent with the adopted Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

STAFF'S EVALUATION:

There's an existing natural landscape buffer that's about fifty feet (50') wide that is located in the front of the property along Whitefield Avenue. This buffer area serves as a natural screen from the Petitioner's intended use and the surrounding single-family residential dwelling units. Additionally, there's a large, cleared landscape area with plenty of mature shade trees that's about 200 feet immediately adjacent to the driveway that further provides a natural screen and landscape buffer.

The Petitioner seeks to rezone the property from a single-family residential zoning designation to a limited business designation for the purpose of bringing a nonconforming use into zoning compliance.

The Petitioner's requested zoning district would require the property to be developed in accordance with commercial development standards (paving, lighting, parking, etc). Currently, the property could only legally be used for primary residential purposes.

MPC STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Based upon the review criteria, MPC Staff recommends **DENIAL** of the request to rezone the property from **Residential One Family (R-1) Residential Environmental Overlay (EO)** to **Business Limited (B-1) Environment Overlay (EO)**.

If the Board is inclined to support the continued operation of the nonconforming use, Staff recommends rezoning the property to Planned Development PD-N/EO to permit only the present use in the proposed configuration without any associated expansion of permissible non-residential uses until such time as adopted policy documents reflect a more cohesive approach to the future development of the area.

Note: Staff recommendation is based on information available at the time of the agenda posting; however, this may change based on information provided at the public hearing.