



## METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION

*"Planning the Future - Respecting the Past"*

### STAFF REPORT

**To:** The Planning Commission

**Through:** Melanie Wilson, Executive Director and CEO

**From:** Subhashi Karunaratne, Planner – Development Services

**Date:** March 31, 2026

**Subject:** General Development Plan (GDP) with Variance

**Applicant/Agent:** Stephen Chapin Jr., for Ramsey Run Apartments, LLC and Christopher Woods LLC

**Address:** 1029 Shawnee St and 11965 Apache Ave

**PIN:** 20845 01011 and 20845 01013

**Site Area:** 1.45 acres

**Alderman District:** 6 – Kurtis Purtee

**Chatham County Commission District:** 6 – Aaron "Adot" Whitely

**File Number:** 25-004180-ZA-MAP

#### Request

The petitioner is requesting the following variances for a General Development Plan in connection with a proposed multi-family development within the RMF-2-25 zoning district:

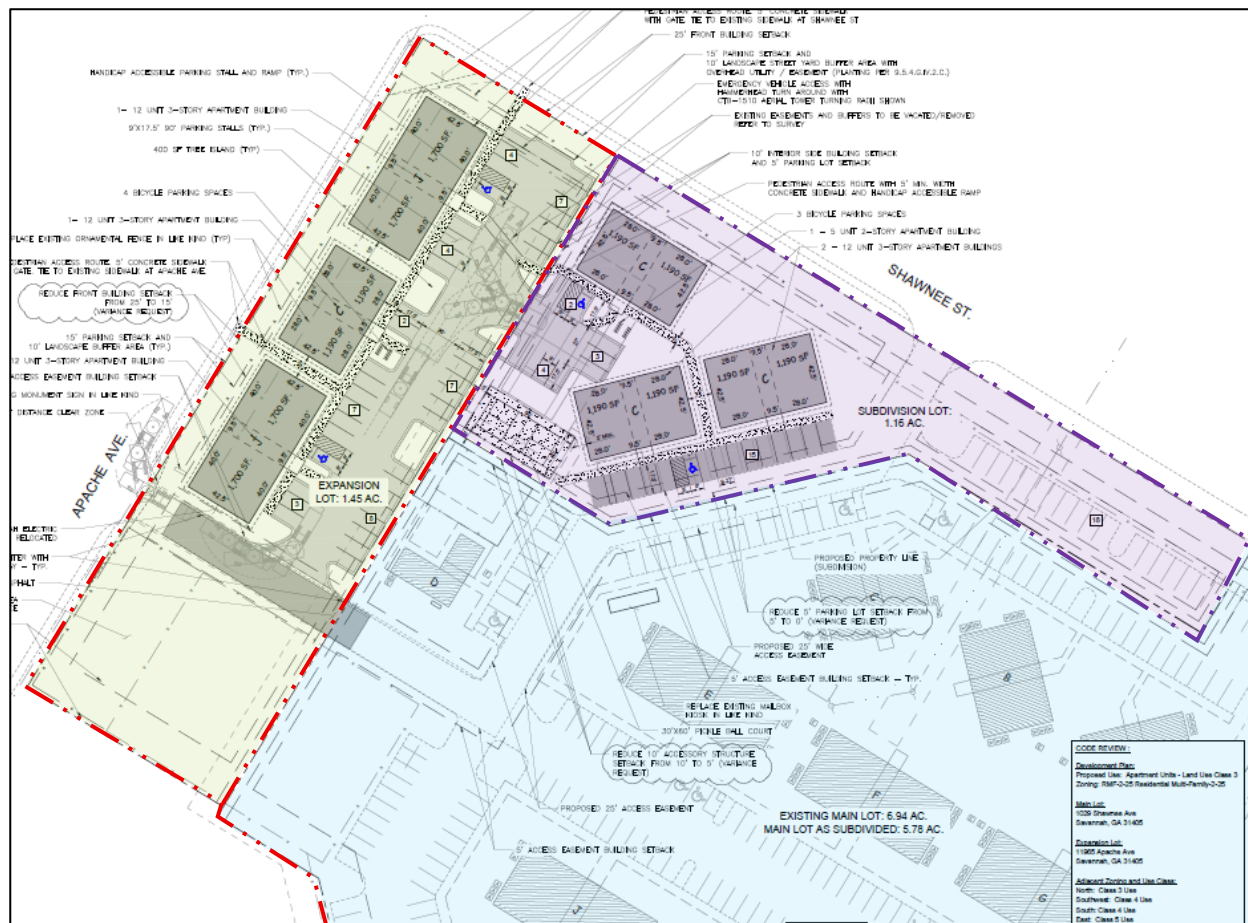
1. A reduction of the required front building setback from 25 feet to 15 feet along Apache Avenue at 11965 Apache Avenue;
2. A reduction of the required parking lot setback from 5 feet to 0 feet along a proposed subdivision line at 1029 Shawnee Street; and
3. A reduction of the required accessory structure setback from 10 feet to 5 feet along a proposed subdivision line at 1029 Shawnee Street.

The reduction to the front building setback at 11965 Apache Avenue is necessitated by the existing limited width of the lot, which restricts the ability to construct new apartment buildings consistent with the existing development pattern.

A minor subdivision is also proposed at 1029 Shawnee Street to separate the new apartment buildings from the existing development. As a result, the reduction to the parking lot setback is requested to allow the existing parking lot drive aisle to remain in its current location, and the reduction to the accessory structure setback is requested to accommodate the existing pool deck and the proposed construction of a pickleball court.

## Facts and Findings

The subject properties, both zoned RMF-2-25, comprise a combined area of approximately 8.39 acres, including 11965 Apache Avenue (1.45 acres) and 1029 Shawnee Street (6.94 acres). The property at 11965 Apache Avenue is currently vacant and is proposed to be developed with three apartment buildings totaling 36 units, along with 42 parking spaces. The property at 1029 Shawnee Street is proposed to be subdivided into two lots: one 5.78-acre lot containing the existing apartment buildings, and a second 1.16-acre lot designated for new development. The proposed development on the 1.16-acre lot includes three apartment buildings with 29 units, 15 new parking spaces, and 18 retained existing parking spaces, for a total of 33 parking spaces.



| <div style="text-align: center;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">SITE DATA TABLE:</div> </div> |               |               |                   |                  |                           |                           |                                      |                                      |                          |                          |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|-------------------|------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Property Description                                                                                                                       | Parcel ID     | Property Area | Allowable Density | Proposed Density | Standard Parking Required | Standard Parking Provided | Handicap Accessible Parking Required | Handicap Accessible Parking Provided | Bicycle Parking Required | Bicycle Parking Provided |
| Existing Main Lot (as subdivided)                                                                                                          | 2-0845-01-011 | 5.78          | 144.5             | 144              | 144                       | 195                       | 6                                    | 11                                   | N/A                      | N/A                      |
| New Subdivided Lot                                                                                                                         | TBD           | 1.18          | 29                | 29               | 29                        | 42                        | 2                                    | 2                                    | 3                        | 3                        |
| Expansion Lot                                                                                                                              | 2-0845-01-013 | 1.45          | 36.25             | 36               | 36                        | 42                        | 2                                    | 2                                    | 4                        | 4                        |
| <b>Totals</b>                                                                                                                              |               | <b>8.39</b>   | <b>209.75</b>     | <b>209</b>       | <b>209</b>                | <b>279</b>                | <b>10</b>                            | <b>15</b>                            | <b>7</b>                 | <b>7</b>                 |

*Proposed general development plan data (Parcel ID for 11965 Apache Avenue is 20845 01013 and parcel ID for 1029 Shawnee Street is 20845 01011)*

### **Existing Zoning and Development Pattern**

The property is zoned as Residential Multi-family-2-25 (RMF 2-25). The RMF-2-25 zoning district allows multi-family and other residential developments with specific density established at the time of rezoning (e.g., RMF-2-25). Unlike RMF-1, RMF-2 is intended for locations near higher-classification roads, mass transit, retail, and employment centers. A limited number of nonresidential uses are permitted if they are compatible with the residential character of the area.

The surrounding area is characterized by a mix of multifamily residential development and commercial uses. The Georgia Southern University Armstrong Campus is located directly south of the site, across Abercorn Street. Abercorn Street, a major arterial roadway to the south and southeast, carries significant traffic volumes and provides primary access to the area. Development in the vicinity generally consists of large-footprint buildings designed to accommodate commercial activities.

| Location | Land Use            | Existing Zoning |
|----------|---------------------|-----------------|
| North    | Apartments          | RMF 2-25        |
| South    | Commercial (Retail) | B-C             |
| East     | Commercial (Retail) | B-C             |
| West     | Commercial (Retail) | B-C             |



## Zoning Map

## 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.

## Standards at Issue

1. Section 5.10.5 of the Zoning Ordinance requires lots within the RMF-2-25 zoning district to maintain 25-foot front yard setback. The proposed development would encroach into both the front setback and therefore require variances from these standards.

| 5.10.5 Development Standards for Permitted Housing Types |       |       |       |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Standards                                                | RMF-1 | RMF-2 | RMF-3 |
| <b>Building Setbacks [2][3] (min ft)</b>                 |       |       |       |
| Street Access                                            |       |       |       |
| <b>Front Yard</b>                                        |       |       |       |
| Single-family detached                                   | 20    | 20    | --    |
| Single-family attached                                   | 20    | 20    | 20    |
| Two-family                                               | 20    | 20    | 20    |
| Townhouse/Stacked Townhouse                              | 20    | 20    | 20    |
| Three-Four Family                                        | --    | 20    | 20    |
| Apartment                                                | --    | 25    | 25    |

2. Section 5.10.5 of the Zoning Ordinance requires lots within the RMF-2-25 zoning district to maintain 5-foot parking area setback. The proposed development would encroach into the parking area setback along the proposed property line.

| 5.10.5 Development Standards for Permitted Housing Types   |       |       |       |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Standards                                                  | RMF-1 | RMF-2 | RMF-3 |
| <b>Parking Area Setback (min ft)<br/>(Apartments Only)</b> |       |       |       |
| From collector and arterial street rights-of-way           | --    | 15    | 15    |
| From local street rights-of-way                            | --    | 10    | 10    |
| From lane, property line or access easement                | --    | 5     | 5     |

(--) = not applicable

3. Section 5.10.5 and Section 8.7 of the Zoning Ordinance requires lots within the RMF-2-25 zoning district to maintain 10-foot side yard setback. The proposed development would encroach into side setback and therefore require variances from these standards.

| 5.10.5 Development Standards for Permitted Housing Types |       |       |       |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Standards                                                | RMF-1 | RMF-2 | RMF-3 |
| <b>Building Setbacks [2][3] (min ft)</b>                 |       |       |       |
| Street Access                                            |       |       |       |
| <b>Side (interior) Yard</b>                              |       |       |       |
| Single-family detached                                   | 5     | 5     | --    |
| Single-family attached                                   | 5     | 5     | 5     |
| Two-family                                               | 5     | 5     | 5     |
| Townhouse inc. Stacked (end unit)                        | 5     | 5     | 5     |
| Three-Four Family                                        | --    | 7     | 7     |
| Apartment                                                | --    | 10    | 10    |

### 8.7.3 Accessory Structures

Accessory structures, not to include accessory dwelling units, are allowed in all zoning districts and shall be subject to the following requirements, except as expressly provided elsewhere in this Section:

#### c. Setbacks

- i. An accessory building or structure shall not be located within five (5) feet of the rear property line. An accessory building or structure shall meet the same side-yard setback requirement as the principal structure.

## **Zoning Ordinance Review**

### **General Development Plan with Variances – Sec. 3.21.9.b.i**

The Planning Commission is authorized to grant variances to the standards of *Article 5, Base Zoning Districts*, upon the basis of the criteria established in *Sec. 3.21.10*.

The following review criteria for Variances are prescribed in the Savannah Zoning Ordinance *Sec. 3.21.10*:

#### **A. General Consistency**

*The variance shall be consistent with the intent of this Ordinance and the Comprehensive Plan and shall not be injurious to the neighborhood or otherwise detrimental to the public health, safety, or welfare.*

**MPC Comment:** The requested variances are inconsistent with the development standards for the zoning district.

#### **B. Special Conditions**

*i. Special conditions and/or circumstances exist which are peculiar to the land, buildings or structures involved and which are not applicable to other lands, buildings or structures in the same zoning district.*

**MPC Comment:** The irregular and narrow shape and dimensions of the lots present a unique challenge, making it difficult to construct the proposed buildings without encroaching into the required setbacks.

*ii. The special conditions and/or circumstances do not result from the actions of the applicant.*

**MPC Comment:** The special conditions are a result of the petitioner's chosen design. However, the design reflects a reasonable effort to work within the site's constraints in order to expand the property's functionality.

*iii. The special conditions and/or circumstances are not purely financial in nature so as to allow the applicant to use the land, buildings or structures involved more profitably or to save money.*

**MPC Comment:** The request is likely financial in nature.

#### **C. Literal Interpretation**

*Literal interpretation of the provisions of the regulations would deprive the applicant of rights commonly enjoyed by other properties in the same zoning district under the terms of the Ordinance and would result in unnecessary and undue hardship on the applicant.*

**MPC Comment:** The subject property is zoned RMF-2-25, which permits a maximum density of up to 25 units per acre. However, strict application of the required setbacks, in combination with the limited lot configuration, would prevent the site from achieving the allowable density. As a result, literal interpretation of the Ordinance would deprive the applicant of development rights commonly

enjoyed by other properties within the same zoning district and would result in unnecessary hardship.

**D. Minimum Variance**

*The variance, if granted, is the minimum variance necessary to make possible the reasonable use of land, buildings, or structures.*

**MPC Comment:** The variance is not required to make use of the subject property; However, the requested variance is the minimum necessary to accommodate maximum densities allowed on the lots.

**E. Special Privilege Not Granted**

*The variance would not confer on the applicant any special privilege that is denied by this Ordinance to other lands, buildings, or structures in the same zoning district.*

**MPC Comment:** The requested variance does not confer a special privilege but rather provides reasonable relief necessary to develop the property in a manner consistent with the intent of the zoning ordinance. Given the site's dimensions and the allowable maximum density, the variance enables development comparable to other properties within the same zoning district.

**Staff Recommendation**

MPC Staff recommends **approval** of the following requested variances for a General Development Plan in connection with a proposed multi-family development within the RMF-2-25 zoning district:

1. A reduction of the required front building setback from 25 feet to 15 feet along Apache Avenue at 11965 Apache Avenue;
2. A reduction of the required parking lot setback from 5 feet to 0 feet along a proposed subdivision line at 1029 Shawnee Street; and
3. A reduction of the required accessory structure setback from 10 feet to 5 feet along a proposed subdivision line at 1029 Shawnee Street.