



CHATHAM COUNTY-SAVANNAH METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION

"Planning the Future, Respecting the Past"

STAFF REPORT

To: Metropolitan Planning Commission

From: MPC Staff via Melanie Wilson

Date: March 31st, 2026

Subject: General Development Plan (GDP) with Variance
409 Orchard Street
Aldermanic District 5 – Shabazz
County Commission District 2 – Hodge
Zoning District – Traditional Commercial 2 (TC-2)
PIN: 20074 50003
7,000 sq. ft. (0.14 acre)
Owner: Douglas Kaufman
MPC FILE No: 26-000746-ZA

Ken Gorski, Senior Planner for Development Services

Nature of Request

The Petitioner requests MPC approval of a General Development Plan (GDP) with Variance for four (4) new townhomes each with an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) at the intersection of Martin Luther King Boulevard and Orchard Street.

Requested Variances: Due to the lot size and proposed configuration, the applicant is requesting relief from the following zoning ordinance development standards:

1. Section 5.13.5: A variance to reduce the minimum lot width from 18' to 17' per townhome unit for each of the (4) proposed units.
2. Relief from the maximum allowable ADU building footprint percentage and living area:
 - a. Per Section 8.7.4d, "building footprint of the accessory dwelling unit shall be a maximum of 40% of the building footprint of the principal dwelling not to exceed 700 square feet." The requested variance would increase the maximum building footprint to 55% of the principal dwelling unit and allowable ADU living area would increase from 280 sq. ft. to 385 sq. ft. for each of the (4) proposed ADUs

Findings

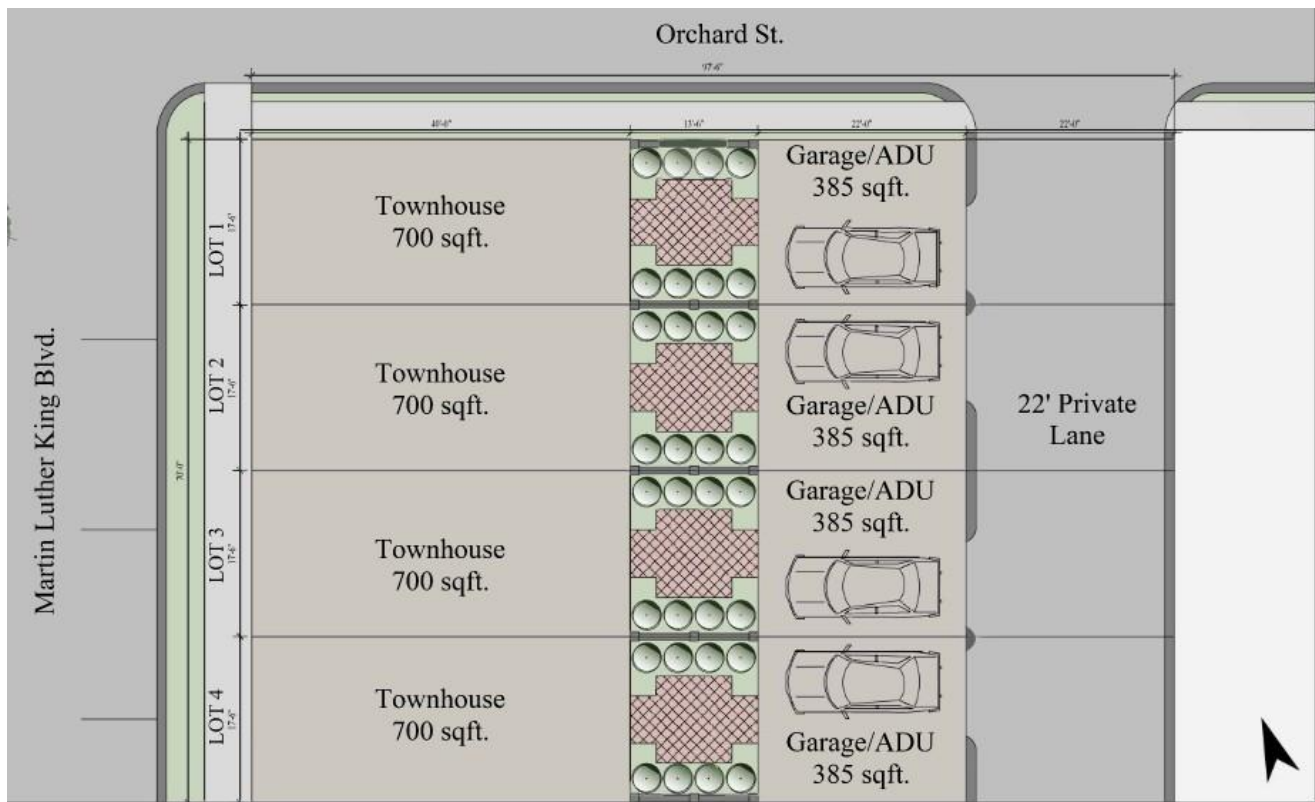
- **Notification:** Mailed notice was sent to all property owners located within 300 feet of the subject properties at least 15 days prior to the date of the public hearing.
- **Site:** The subject site is located on the north-east corner at the intersection of Orchard Street and Martin Luther King Blvd within the Jackson Park Neighborhood. The site is bordered on the north by Orchard Street and the Salvation Army complex, on the east by a SCAD parking lot, on the south by Mt Adams Rentals, and to the west by Martin Luter King Blvd. and single-family residential. The subject site is within a corridor zoned Traditional-Commercial-2 (TC-2) with adjacent properties being TN-3 and TR-3.
- **Zoning and Future Land Use:** The parcel is within the TC-2 zoning district and is an allowable use except for the requested variances. The Future Land Use Map indicates that this area is intended to be Traditional Commercial. This development plan is consistent with both the current zoning and desired future land use.
- **Lots / Utilities:** Each of the proposed (4) townhouse lots will be 17'-6" by 97'-6" (1,750 sq. ft.) with a 22-ft private lane along the eastern property line. The TC-2 zoning district requires a minimum lot size of 1,200 sq. ft. per townhome and 18-ft minimum lot width per unit. All (4) lots comply with the required minimum lot size but require variance from the minimum lot width. Each lot will be served by City of Savannah water and sewer system.
- **Public Services:** The site is served by the Savannah-Chatham Metropolitan Police Department and Fire Department. The site is also served by the Chatham Area Transit Authority, bus route Number 25 MLK, which will help to reduce traffic and parking congestion by offering convenient public means of transportation.
- **Sidewalks:** Sidewalks are not specifically required. There are existing brick sidewalks along Martin Luther King and concrete sidewalks along Orchard Street. These existing sidewalks should be protected, maintained and repaired (as needed) due to any construction or development activity around the site.
- **Access:** Each of the (4) townhomes will have pedestrian and CAT bus route access along the MLK Boulevard street frontage and parking/service access from the proposed 22-ft private lane off Orchard Street along the eastern edge of the property.
- **Variances:** The petitioner is requesting one variance to reduce the minimum lot width per townhome from 18-ft to 17-ft. The second variance is to allow the ADUs footprint limit be increased from 40% of the townhome footprint to 55%. This will result in the garage/ADU increasing from the 280 sq. ft. allowed by ordinance to 385 sq. ft.
- **Economic Development Zone:** This parcel is within Jackson Park along the "Urban Redevelopment Plan for the MLK Boulevard and Montgomery Street Corridor". This General Development Plan is consistent with the goals to emphasize smaller lots and increase the amount, diversity and affordability of traditional housing options. These proposed townhomes will address the desired scale and residential needs while also re-establishing the streetscape character at the corner of MLK Boulevard and Orchard Street.

Exhibits: Proposed Townhome Zoning Ordinance chart & analysis

	TC-2 Standards	Lot 1	Lot 2	Lot 3	Lot 4
Lot Area per Unit	1,200 sqft. min	1,706.25 sqft.	1,706.25 sqft.	1,706.25 sqft.	1,706.25 sqft.
Lot Width per Unit	18' min *	17'- 6" *	17'- 6" *	17'- 6" *	17'- 6" *
Front Yard	5' max.	0'-0"	0'-0"	0'-0"	0'-0"
Rear Yard	10' min.	13'-6"	13'-6"	13'-6"	13'-6"
Side Yard (interior)	10' min.	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Side Yard (corner)	5' max.	0'-0"	0'-0"	0'-0"	0'-0"
Building Coverage	-	63.58%	63.58%	63.58%	63.58%
Building Frontage	70% min.	100%	100%	100%	100%
Building Footprint	10,000 sqft. max.	700 sqft.	700 sqft.	700 sqft.	700 sqft.
Height	3 stories up to 45'	3 stories	3 stories	3 stories	3 stories
ADU	1 PER Principal Dwelling Unit	1	1	1	1
ADU Rear Yard	5' min.	22'-0"	22'-0"	22'-0"	22'-0"
ADU Side Yard (int.)	10' min.	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
ADU Side Yard (cor.)	5' max.	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
ADU Building Footprint	MAX. of 40% of the building footprint of principal dwelling unit *	385 sqft. (55%) *	385 sqft. (55%) *	385 sqft. (55%) *	385 sqft. (55%) *
ADU Height	25' max. or height of Principal Dwelling Unit, whichever is less	2 story	2 story	2 story	2 story

Site Coverage Ratio	63.6% covered	36.4% non-covered
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* : Required Variance



Proposed General Development Plan

Discussion:

This general development plan complies with TC-2 zoning except for the two requested variances. These variances seem reasonable and rational for a project of this scale and scope given the limitations of the small corner lot. Decreasing the minimum townhouse width from 18' to 17' will not significantly impact the overall footprint and functionality of the principal residences. Increasing the allowable footprint percentage and living area of the ADUs does not compromise any other regulations and results in a more functional size to satisfy the desire and need for more diverse and affordable housing options. Beyond the basic compliance requirements for zoning, this concept coincides with the future land use map as well as the goals of the economic development zone.

Variance Criteria:

Per Article 3 Section 3.21.9(a), the Zoning Board of Appeals may authorize a variance in an individual case upon finding that:

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 variance is consistent with current development standards, with adjustments to two specific size and dimensional criteria. It is also consistent with the economic development corridor and future land use. The request should not have any negative impact upon public health, safety or welfare.

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 parcel is a small corner lot along MLK Boulevard that does not allow curb cuts or private parking from this right-of-way. The variances have been requested to optimize the remaining buildable area due to the lot size and layout decisions necessary for street frontage, parking and access.

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

MPC Comment: The special conditions and circumstances are not a result of the actions of the applicant.

- 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 variance to reduce the minimum lot width does allow (4) smaller townhomes instead of (3) larger units which increases potential profits by creating another unit to sell or rent. This also increases the availability and affordability of (4) smaller units as

opposed to (3) larger ones. The variance to increase the allowable ADU size will also increase the value of the properties, but will create slightly larger units for more flexible and viable low-cost housing options.

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 literal interpretation of the provisions of the regulations would not deny the applicant of rights commonly enjoyed by similarly situated property owners. They could still develop the parcel as intended, just with one less townhome and ADU.

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 requested variance is the minimum needed to allow for the additional townhome and the increase for the ADUs allows for larger units without compromising the other design standards.

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 variances would allow the Petitioner the special privilege of developing an additional townhouse and larger ADUs than would normally be permissible.

Recommendation

MPC staff recommends **approval** :

- 1) A variance to reduce the minimum lot width per townhome unit from the required 18' to 17' as requested in the application. (Ordinance Section 5.13.5)
- 2) Relief from the maximum allowable ADU building footprint percentage and living area:
 - a. The requested variance allows the maximum building footprint for each ADU to increase from 40% to 55% of the principal dwelling unit and the maximum allowable ADU living area would thus increase from 280 sq. ft. to 385 sq. ft. (Ordinance Section 8.7.4d)

The above General Development Plan must still comply with all other relevant Ordinances and regulations and shall be subject to review and approval by the City Engineering Department, Traffic Division, Chatham County Department of Public Health, and any other applicable state or local departments or jurisdictions.

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