CHATHAM COUNTY-SAVANNAH METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION

"*Planning the Future, Respecting the Past"*

STAFF REPORT

File No.	26-005530-ZA-Map
Date:	November 17, 2026
To:	The Planning Commission
Through:	Melanie Wilson, Executive Director/CEO
From:	Ely Zarka, Senior Planner – Development Services
Subject:	Zoning Map Amendment
Applicant/Agent:	Harold Yellin for Multiple Owners (Exhibit A)
Address:	265, 269, 273 Pinckney Rd, 0 Fort Argyle, Pinckney Rd
Parcel ID:	11027 01013, 11027 01012, 11027 01009, 11027 01011, 11027 01010
Site Area:	156.4 acres
Alderman District:	5 – Dr Estella Shabazz (If annexed)
Chatham County Commission District:	6 – Aaron "Adot" Whitely

Request

The Petitioner is requesting an amendment to the Zoning Map from R-A (County) to I-H (City).

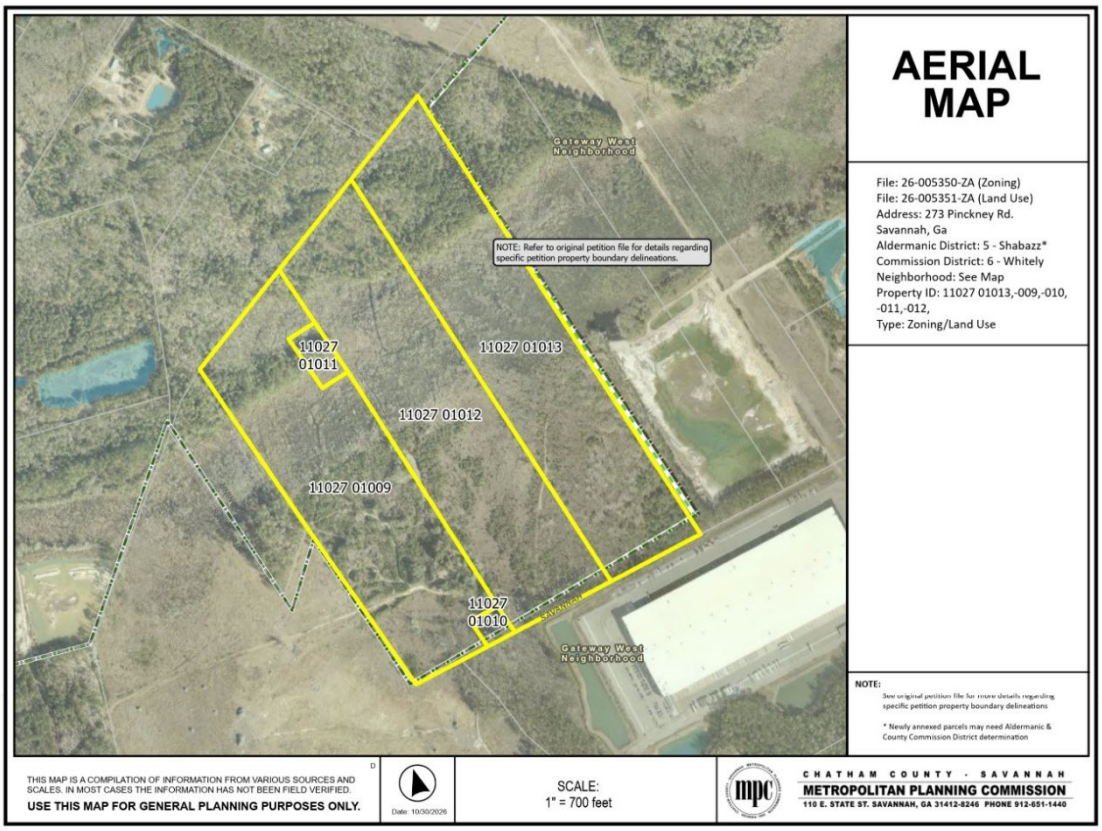
Facts and Findings

Zoning History

The subject site is made up of five parcels under different owners, collectively referred to herein as the Pinckney Tract. These sites are currently landlocked, vacant and zoned R-A in Unincorporated Chatham County, a concurrent annexation has been proposed for these properties to join the City of Savannah.

Site

The subject properties are located between Bush Rd and the existing WM Superior Landfill. This parcel is in the Victorian Historic District. These sites are currently undeveloped and encumbered by wetlands and floodplain.

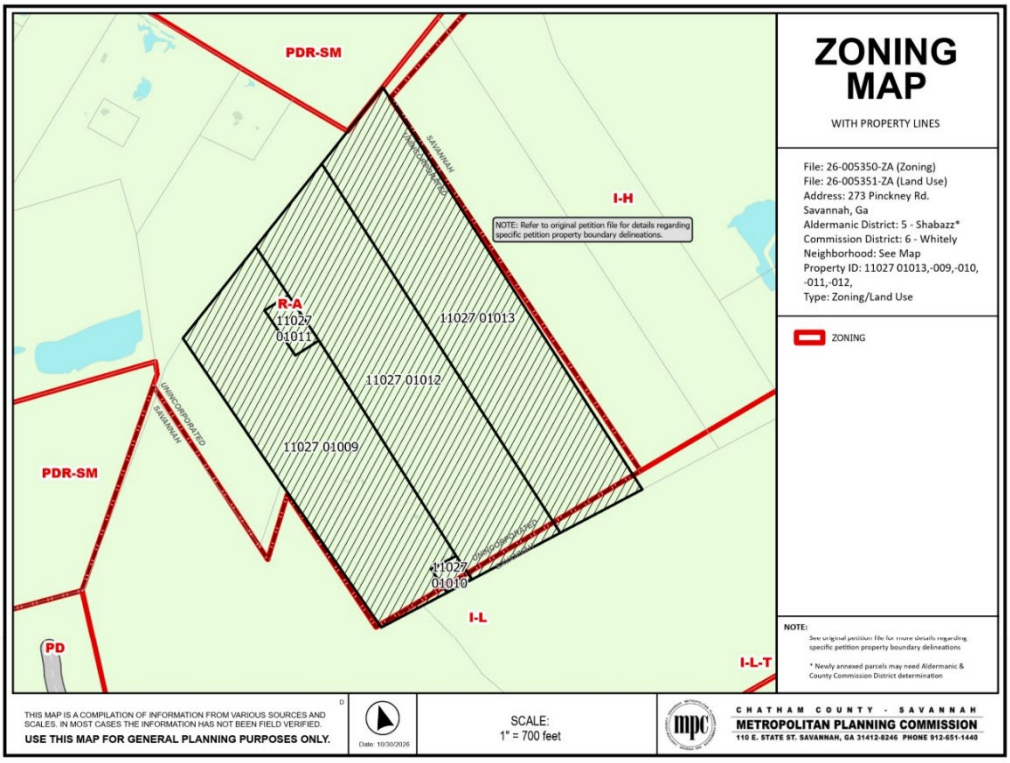


Aerial view of Subject Parcels

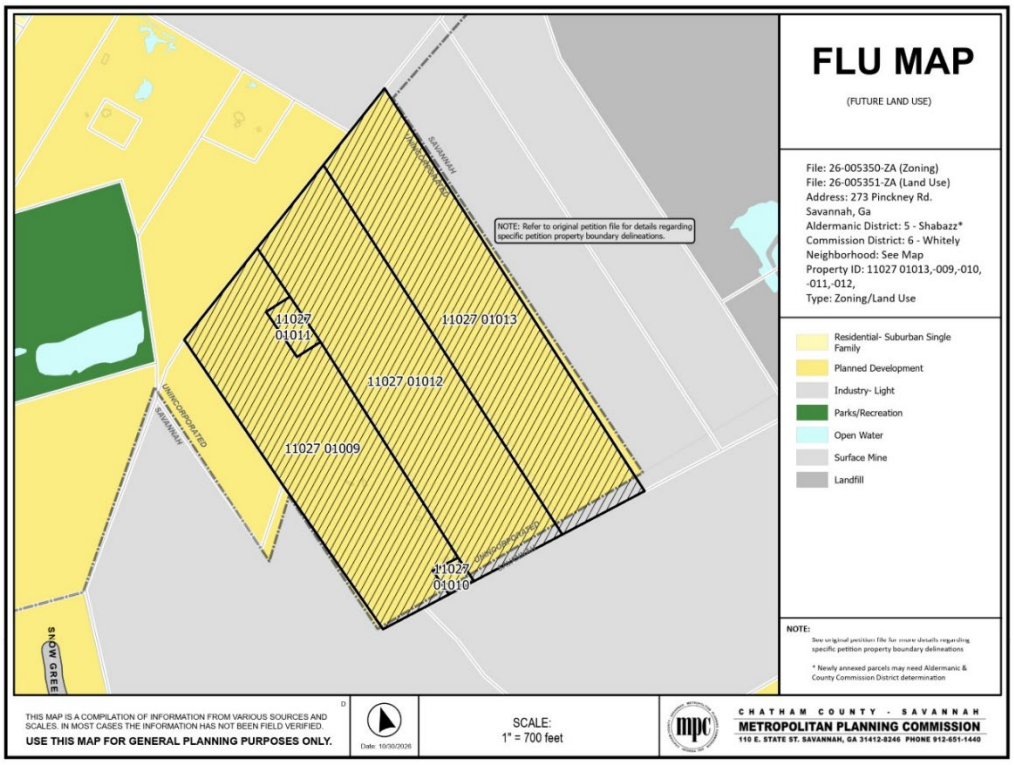
Existing Zoning and Development Pattern

The subject parcel is currently classified under the **R-A (Residential-Agriculture)**. The primary objective of this district is to safeguard rural lands situated within the county's designated urban expansion zones for systematic future urbanization, while concurrently precluding commercial strip development along rural arterial corridors to mitigate traffic congestions, vehicular safety hazards, and roadside blight. While the district is predominantly allocated for low-density residential occupancy, it permits ancillary agricultural and non-residential uses that are determined to be compatible with the prevailing rural character of the surrounding area.

Location	Land Use	Existing Zoning
North	Residential, Utility	R-A, PDR-SM
South	Industrial	I-L
East	Landfill	I-H
West	Surface Mine, Residential, Commercial	PDR-SM, I-L, PD, R-A



Current Zoning Map



Current FLUM 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.

Impact and Suitability

Public Servies and Facilities

The site currently lacks utility connections and is located adjacent to the landfill it is intended to serve. Any site modifications requiring a Site Development Permit or Land Disturbance Permit will undergo the applicable review processes through the City of Savannah. Furthermore, because the parcels are proposed as a surface mine to support landfill operations, it will be subject to extensive review and permitting by Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD).

Comprehensive Land Use Plan Element

The subject properties are located within the Suburban Residential Character Area, which contains must of the south-western side of Chatham County. This area is 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.

The existing Future Land Use designation is Planned Development. Master planned areas accommodating cluster development, neo-traditional development, or mixed residential, commercial, or civic uses. Such developments are characterized by internal or external linkages among residential, commercial, institutional, or recreational use components. This category includes Amenity Communities, Village Centers, Town Centers, and existing PUDs.

Existing Zoning District

- Intent of the R-A Zoning District:

The purpose of this district is to protect those rural areas within the urban expansion areas of the county for future urban development, and to protect certain rural highway roadside areas against strip development, which can lead to traffic congestion, traffic hazards, and roadside blight.

- Allowed Uses: The uses allowed in the R-A zoning district appear in a chart appended to the end of this report.

- Development Standards: The development standards of the R-A zoning district appear in a chart appended to the end of this report.

Proposed Zoning District

- Intent of the I-H Zoning District:

The IH district is established to provide sites for activities which involve large-scale warehousing, processing, manufacturing facilities, major transportation terminals and waste-related facilities that have a greater impact on the surrounding area than industries found in the IL-T and IL districts. It is the intent of this district to provide an environment for industries that is unencumbered by nearby non-industrial development.

- Allowed Uses: The uses allowed in the I-H zoning districts appear in a chart appended to the end of this report.

- Development Standards: The development standards of the I-H zoning districts appear in charts 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.

  Staff Comment: *The proposed I-H district would allow a much broader range of intense, industrial uses that are not all generally consistent with development near residential neighborhood. However, the district is specifically allowed and intended to serve intensive waste-related facilities. The intended use by the applicant is also permitted in a less restrictive district with a special use permit, as an independent use.*

- Whether the proposed zoning district addresses a specific need in the County or City.

  Staff Comment: *The proposed I-H would permit the use of a landfill. This would allow the site to be used as a surface mine, which would only serve the adjacent landfill as cover material for the landfill. This use does extend the potential life-span of the landfill while also keeping that vehicle traffic off the nearby residential roads.*

Compatibility

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

  Staff Comment: *The proposed I-H district would expand the range and intensity of uses permitted on the subject properties. While industrial uses are generally present in the area, as are independent surface mines under more specific designations in Chatham County, these are directly adjacent to wetlands and floodplain areas. The activity of a surface mine, whether independent or only in service to the landfill, could increase operational activity that may adversely affect the environmentally sensitive*

areas. Similar proposals have occurred for similar requests in 2017 and 2022 on the sites directly to the east, and the surface mine directly south of the landfill.

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

  Staff Comment: *Partially. The proposed I-H district is compatible with the industrial areas to the east. Several sites in the vicinity and general area also serve as surface mines. Bush Rd is residential in nature however lots of intensive and industrial uses exist between Bush Rd and I-95.*

- 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.

  Staff Comment: *The intended use of landfill is compatible with the adjacent uses however the use of a landfill, or as a surface mine part of a landfill, would generally be incompatible with many uses in many areas.*

Consistency

1. 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.

   Staff Comment: *The site is currently designated as Planned Developed, a concurrent future land use map amendment is proceeding with this application to redesignate the site to a future land use of Landfill.*

Reasonable Use

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

   Staff Comment: *The subject parcel could have reasonable use as presently zoned.*

Adequate Public Services

3. 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.

   Staff Comment: *As part of the reasoning for the request the Petitioner's goal is to have fill dirt available essentially on site for the landfill so that vehicle traffic is internal to the site and not traversing Bush Rd or Little Neck Rd. Typical City services will be not be required for this site to serve the proposed purpose. Modifications requiring the issuance of a site development or land disturbance permits will go through all applicable departments. Extensive review and approval will be required by Georgia EPD as a landfill.*

Proximity to a Military Base, Installation or Airport

Staff Comment: *The subject parcel is not within an installation Airport Airfield Overlay.*

Analysis Summary

The proposed I-H zoning district is consistent with how the site has been historically treated post-NewZO. The intent of the site is for surface mining activities, not as an independent, principal use, but to serve the adjacent landfill. The use of surface mine as a standalone use is only permitted in A-1 with a Special Use Permit.

However, the I-H zoning district, while tailored for the use of a landfill, does introduce the possibility for several environmental and site impacts in areas directly adjacent to extensive wetlands and floodplains. Other development applications in the area, most recently off of Fort Argyle Rd have discussed the impacts of surface mines, stormwater, flooding, etc and the impact on the residents and environment. While the surface mining activities will have to adhere to environmental buffers, it does bring into question at what point has that use expanded to far or to close to the environmentally sensitive areas.

Given the above concerns the other side of this proposal would be what does a reasonable use of this site look like if not granted. The site while zoned residential is still adjacent to other industrial sites, the landfill and another landfill serving burrow pit. Current development would also likely require a well and septic tank to serve as utilities. If the landfill requires more cover material and cannot get that material on site that reintroduces vehicle traffic transporting that material along the residential roads to the site. This was an issue in the past that was resolved by the internal access to cover material.

Staff finds that the intended use of the site is necessary for the landfill to continue operation in a way that reduced impact to the adjacent residential areas. However clarity about the way these sites are intended to be used, and the nature of the "accessory" relationship needs to be clarified. Concerns about the environmental impact are relevant, and will continue to be an active topic throughout the operation's lifespan if approved.

Recommendation

MPC Staff recognizes two possible options for approval, both in conjunction with the specific action taken for item 26-005351-ZA-FLUM:

1. Approval of the request rezone the property from R-A (county) to a designation of I-H (City)

with two conditions

a. A recombination plat combining the subject properties with the adjacent sites so that they exist on the same parcel as the landfill.
b. The subject parcels are to be used as a surface mine only to operate subordinate to the landfill.

2. Denial of the request with the recommendation that the Petitioner follow through with the A-1 zoning designation which would require a Special Use Permit.