



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

**DATE:** December 20, 2022  
**TO:** THE MAYOR AND ALDERMEN OF THE CITY OF SAVANNAH  
**FROM:** METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION  
**SUBJECT:** MPC RECOMMENDATION

**PETITION REFERENCED:**

Proposed rezoning request of a parcel from an RSF-6 (Residential-Single-Family-Estate) district to an O-I (Office - Institutional) district at Merrydell Drive and Cedar Grove.

**Re: Map Amendment**

**Applicant: Savannah Country Day School**

**Agent: Josh Yellin**

**File No. 22-005457-ZA**

**MPC ACTION:**

**Approval** of the rezoning request to rezone the subject property from RSF-6 to O-I with conditions.

**MPC STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

**Approval** of the rezoning request to rezone the subject property from RSF-6 to O-I with conditions.

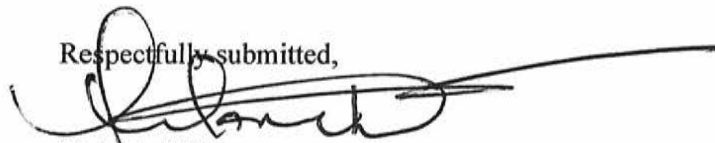
**MEMBERS PRESENT:** 7 +Chairman

Dwayne Stephens, Chairman  
Laureen Boles  
Travis Coles  
Elizabeth Epstein  
Tom Woiwode  
Wayne Noha  
Jeff Notrica  
Michael Kaigler

**PLANNING COMMISSION VOTE:** Approve Staff Recommendation (6-1-1)

<b>APPROVAL Votes: 6</b>	<b>DENIAL Votes: 1</b>	<b>ABSENT</b>	<b>Recused Vote: 1</b>
Epstein Noha Notrica Kaigler Stephens Woiwode	Boles	Coleman Ervin Jarrett Melder Watkins Welch	Coles

Respectfully submitted,



Melanie Wilson  
Executive Director

MW/sh

Enclosure

cc Mark Massey, Clerk of Council  
Lester B. Johnson, Assistant City Attorney  
Jennifer Herman, Assistant City Attorney  
Zarina Davis, Department of Inspections  
Bridget Lidy, Department of Inspections



# CHATHAM COUNTY-SAVANNAH METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION

*"Planning the Future, Respecting the Past"*

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## STAFF REPORT

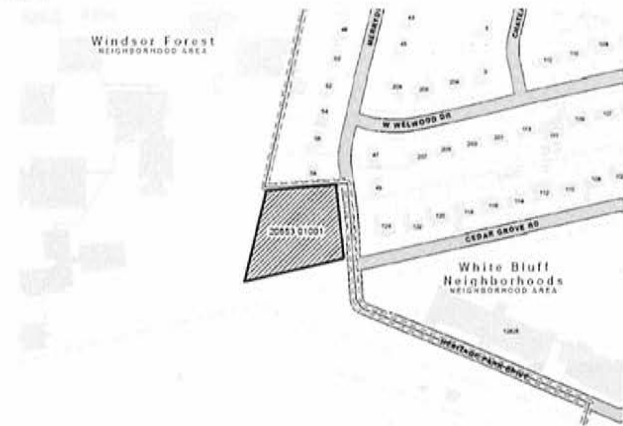
File No. 22-005457-ZA

Location: Merrydell Drive

PIN: 20653-01001 Acreage: +/- 0.81 Acres

Prepared by Marcus Lotson, Director

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**Petitioner:** Josh Yellin for Savannah Country Day School

**Owner:** Savannah Country Day School, Inc.

**Aldermanic District:** District 6, (Purtee)

**County Commission District:** 6, Commissioner (Whitely)

**Neighborhood/Subdivision:** White Bluff / Windsor Forest

**Current Zoning District:** RSF-6 (Single Family Residential)

**Future Land Use (FLU) Category:** Residential Suburban Single Family

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### Issue

The petitioner is requesting to rezone the subject property from RSF-6 (Residential Single Family) to OI-E (Office Institutional -Extended).

The property is adjacent to the Savannah Country Day School and the school intends to combine the property into the overall campus.

### Public Notice

As required by the City of Savannah Zoning Ordinance, all property owners within 300 feet of the subject property were sent notices of the proposed rezoning. The applicant also held a neighborhood meeting on 11/14/22 with members of the neighborhood association to discuss the proposed rezoning, the schools overall Master Plan, and plans to improve vehicle circulation. To date, staff has not received any written correspondence related to the request.

## **Existing Development Pattern**

The land uses and zoning districts surrounding the subject property include:

<u>Location</u>	<u>Land Use</u>	<u>Designation</u>
North	Single Family Residential	RSF-6
East	Single-Family Residential	RSF-6
South	School Campus	OI-E
West	School Campus	OI-E

The subject property is an undeveloped parcel located at the intersection of Merrydell Drive and Cedar Grove. The adjacent school campus was established in 1955 and the suburban neighborhoods that currently exist were primarily developed later around the campus. The property in question is on the boundary between the school campus and the residential neighborhood east of the site. The immediately adjacent developments include a congregate care facility and outdoor recreation facilities associated with the school. Ongoing improvements on the campus include the intent to relocate the current entrance at Cedar Grove and to create a dedicated driveway from White Bluff Road to the school without entering the neighborhood or using local streets.

## **Impact and Suitability**

### Public Utilities

The area has access to the City's public water, sewer, and stormwater systems.

### Transportation and Transit

The school has two primary access points, Stillwater Drive and Cedar Grove. Because the traffic occurs in concentrated time frames and, consists primarily of individual commuters not buses, there have historically been impacts on local traffic. The applicant would prefer to close the access point adjacent to the subject property and replace it with a new drive that would traverse the school's property and intersect with White Bluff Road.

While this proposal would require approval by the City of Savannahs Traffic Engineer and is not specifically connected to the zoning, the school has been in ongoing discussion about this alternative with the neighborhood.

### Community Development

The school has a long history at this site which predates most of the existing residences. It is a significant feature of the land use fabric in the area. As with many public and private K-12 schools, it abuts single family neighborhoods and must coexist without creating undue hardship on residents. The subject property had been owned by an unaffiliated religious institution for many years and thus remained undeveloped. At approximately eight tenths of an acre, the property is larger than lots commonly found in the area, which range between six and ten thousand square feet.

## **Future Land Us**

The Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map designates the subject property as Residential Suburban Single Family. While this is principally a residential designation, the Comprehensive Plan recognizes the intersection of schools, churches, and other institutional uses within residential communities.

### **Existing Residential Single Family (RSF-6) District:**

- **Intent of the RSF-4 District:** “The Residential Single-family-6 district is established to allow single-family detached development on 60-foot-wide lots with a minimum area of 6,000 square feet. A limited number of nonresidential uses are allowed that are compatible with single-family residential uses.”
- **Allowed Uses:** Allowed uses in the RSF-6 district are listed in Table 1 of this report.
- **Development Standards:** The development standards are listed in Table 2 of this report.

### **Proposed OI-E Zoning District:**

- **Intent of the Proposed OI-E District:** The intent and purpose of the OI-E zoning district is to, “...allow office uses as well as limited residential, group living, health care, educational, cultural, lodging and service uses. The OI-E district is intended to serve a transition district between the more intensive Nonresidential districts and less intensive districts,”
- **Allowed Uses:** Allowed uses in the OI-E district are listed in Table 1 of this report.
- **Development Standards:** The development standards are listed in Table 2 of this report.

## **Zoning Ordinance Review**

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

### a. Suitability and Community Need

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

**MPC Comment:** The range of uses allowed under the zoning are consistent with the existing residential. However, as this property is in a transitional area, the range of uses under the proposed zoning would be suitable and compatible with the existing school campus.

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

**MPC Comment:** The improvement of the campus is a benefit to the city and does address specific needs identified by the residents. It will also allow an improved buffer from the school due to the required buffer between the residential uses and the proposed zoning district.

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

**MPC Comment:** The zoning proposal is not likely to adversely affect the existing use or usability of adjacent or nearby property.

- 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:** The zoning proposal is compatible with the present zoning pattern because the subject property will be added to the existing school campus.

- 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:** Based on review of the schools Master Plan, they are undergoing a process to make a series of improvements to address the long-term viability of the location. The proposed rezoning is one of the few areas that the school can expand without significant impact on neighboring properties.

#### 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:** Public and private schools are typically found within or adjacent to residential communities. The Comprehensive Plan recognizes this. The proposed rezoning is in conformance with the policy.

#### b. Reasonable Use

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

**MPC Comment:** **The most reasonable use under the current zoning is single family residential.** The location, however, is less desirable than many others in the area for that use because of adjacency to the school's entrance. Other nonresidential uses are unlikely due to the size of the property. It is too small to accommodate a nonresidential standalone principal use.

c. 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 services are available.

**Analysis**

In 2020, the applicant sought rezoning of the school campus to the current zoning district. The MPC recommended approval, and the Mayor and Aldermen adopted the change from RSF-6 to OI-E for the campus. The OI-E district has also been applied to other neighborhood private schools including Benedictine Military School, Memorial Day School and Calvary Day School. The subject property is unique in the neighborhood and could likely serve either a residential or institutional use. However, based on the size and location of the property, the highest and best use is likely in association it with the school campus, and for it to serve as a buffer between the uses.

As a land use matter, the property has never been developed. It has not been deemed feasible to construct single family residential, and it is not appropriate for a standalone nonresidential use with frontage on Merrydell or Cedar Grove. With rezoning and incorporation into the campus, it can become an asset and improvement for the neighborhood as well as the school.

**Recommendation**

Based upon the existing zoning pattern and character of the area, as well as the review criteria, The Planning Commission recommends **approval** of the request to rezone the subject property from RSF-6 to OI-E with the following conditions.

1. The subject property shall be recombined with the school campus prior to approval of a development plan.
2. The proposed access identified on the schools Master Plan shall be approved by the City of Savannah Traffic Engineer.

**Table 1: Comparison of Principal Uses for the RSF-6 (Existing) and OI-E (Proposed) Zoning Districts**

RSF-6	OI-E
Single-family detached Agriculture, personal Community garden Park, general Library/community center Police/fire station or substation Child/adult day care home School, public or private (K-12) All places of worship Personal care home, registered Golf course Retail consumption dealer Dock, private Dock, residential community Marina, residential Watercraft launch/ramp Utilities, major Utilities, minor	Agriculture, personal Community Garden Park, general Library/community center Police/fire station or substation Child/adult day care home Child/adult day care center School, public or private (K-12) All places of worship Assisted living facility Personal care home, registered Personal care home, family Office, general Office, medical Art/photo studio; gallery Services, general Catering establishment Instructional studio or classroom Personal service shop Psychic; palmist; medium; fortune teller Repair-oriented services Retail consumption dealer (on premise consumption) Bed and Breakfast Homestay Bed and breakfast Utilities, major Utilities, minor



<b>Table 2. Comparison of Development Standards</b>		
<b>Standards</b>	<b>RSF-6</b>	<b>OI-E</b>
<b>Building Setbacks (min ft)</b>		
Front yard	25	15
Side (interior) yard	27	10
Side (street) yard	15	10
Rear yard	25	20
From access easement	5	5
Building Separation	See Fire Code	See Fire Code
<b>Building Coverage (max)</b>	40%	75%
<b>Height (max ft)</b>	36	36
<b>Parking Area Setback (min ft)</b>		
From collector or arterial street rights-of-way	15	15
From local street rights-of-way	10	10
Abutting lane, property line or access easement	5	5