



METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION

"Planning the Future - Respecting the Past"

M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: October 18, 2022
TO: THE MAYOR AND ALDERMEN OF THE CITY OF SAVANNAH
FROM: METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION
SUBJECT: MPC RECOMMENDATION

PETITION REFERENCED:

SUBJECT: Text Amendment to the City of Savannah Zoning Ordinance
Re: Amendment to Section 13.5, 7.8, 7.9, 7.10, and 7.11 to revise definitions and clarify "true stucco"

Applicant: MPC staff on behalf of HPC and HBDR

Leah G. Michalak, Director of Historic Preservation

MPC FILE NO: 22-004185-ZA

MPC ACTION:

Approval for text amendments to the Savannah Zoning Ordinance to revise the definitions of "stucco" and "true stucco" and clarify "true stucco" within the four (4) historic district overlays.

MPC STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Approval for text amendments to the Savannah Zoning Ordinance to revise the definitions of "stucco" and "true stucco" and clarify "true stucco" within the four (4) historic district overlays.

MEMBERS PRESENT: 9 + Chairman


Dwayne Stephens, Chairman
Laureen Boles
Travis Coles
Tom Woiwode
Elizabeth Epstein
Karen Jarrett
Jay Melder
Wayne Noha
Jeff Notrica

Michael Kaigler

PLANNING COMMISSION VOTE: Approve Staff Recommendation (10-0)

APPROVAL Votes: 14	DENIAL Votes: 0	ABSENT
Boles Coles Epstein Kaigler Jarrett Melder Noha Notrica Stephens Woiwode		Coleman Ervin Watkins Welch

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
Candra Teshome, Department of Inspections





METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION

"Planning the Future - Respecting the Past"

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: The Mayor and Aldermen of the City of Savannah

FROM: The Planning Commission

DATE: October 18, 2022

SUBJECT: Text Amendment to the City of Savannah Zoning Ordinance
Re: Amendment to Section 13.5, 7.8, 7.9, 7.10, and 7.11 to revise definitions and clarify "true stucco"

Applicant: MPC staff on behalf of HPC and HDBR

Leah G. Michalak, Director of Historic Preservation

MPC FILE NO: 22-004185-ZA

ISSUE:

Proposed text amendments to the Savannah Zoning Ordinance to revise the definition of "stucco", add a definition for "true stucco", and clarify "true stucco" within the four (4) historic overlay districts.

BACKGROUND:

The Downtown Savannah Historic District Board of Review (HDBR) and the Savannah Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) discovered, during the course of the typical Certificate of Appropriateness review process, that the definition of 'true stucco' is not adequately defined in *Sec. 13.5 Defined Terms, Historic* within the zoning ordinance. Additionally, they found that it is only appropriate for buildings to have "true stucco" (as defined in the proposed definition) within the local historic districts and, therefore, propose to adjust that language throughout *Secs. 7.8 Savannah Downtown Historic Overlay District, 7.9 Victorian Historic Overlay District, 7.10 Cuyler-Brownville Historic Overlay District, and 7.11 Streetcar Historic Overlay District*.

After drafting the proposed text amendments at the request of the HDBR and HPC, MPC staff presented the proposed text amendments during two public HPC meetings as well as an HDBR meeting. Additionally, MPC staff invited neighborhood association presidents/liaisons (via email) of all four (4) historic districts to a virtual meeting to discuss and accept comments regarding the proposed amendment. The DNA liaison and Cuyler-Brownville President attended the meeting and provided comment which is incorporated in the proposed amendment.

FINDINGS:

The International Building Code has introduced "Climate Zones"; Savannah is in Climate Zone 2 which is "Moist (A)". Non-traditional/non-conventional stucco (such as a single coat of plaster, stucco over wood-framed walls, stucco over wood sheathing) cracks quickly and easily when the wood swells. Stucco applied directly onto masonry (without a vapor barrier), such as a concrete block, acts as a moisture barrier and

moisture management system. The ordinance, in Sections 7.8.10, 7.9.10, 7.10.10, and 7.11.10, states: *“Though certain building materials are prescribed herein, the Board may approve alternative materials that are not listed as prohibited upon a showing by the applicant that the material or product is visually compatible with historic building materials and has performed satisfactorily in the local climate.”* The HPC and HDBR found that stucco over wood-framed walls (not true stucco as defined by the proposed definition) does not perform satisfactorily in the local moist climate and, once it has weathered, cracked, and molded, is not visually compatible.

Amend Section 13.5 Defined Terms, Historic as follows:

Stucco: Plaster used for coating wall surfaces, architectural details, and/or ornamentation. ~~Exterior plaster applied as a two- (2) or three- (3) part coating directly onto masonry. Historic stucco consisted primarily of hydrated or slaked lime, water and sand with straw or animal hair as a binder. Also referred to as “true stucco.”~~ Exterior Insulation Finishing System, or EIFS, is not considered stucco for the purposes of this Ordinance.

True Stucco: Exterior plaster applied as a traditional two- (2) or three- (3) part coating directly onto masonry, architectural details, and/or ornamentation. Exterior Insulation Finishing System, or EIFS, is not considered stucco for the purposes of this Ordinance.

Amend Sections 7.8 Downtown Savannah Historic Overlay District as follows:

c. Foundations

i. Alterations to contributing resources

1. Foundations shall be repaired with in-kind materials rather than replaced, provided however, if the degree of degradation does not allow repair, the degradation shall be photographically documented and verified by the Planning Director and the new foundation shall be of the same materials and configuration as the original foundation.
2. If the original foundation material and/or configuration is unknown, the new foundation material and configuration shall be based on historic context.
3. The space between piers may be filled with heavy gauge wood lattice with at least one-half (0.5) inch thick lattice boards, horizontal boards, brick, or true stucco over concrete block. Infill material shall be recessed a minimum of three inches behind the front edge of the pier so that the piers are clearly visible and differentiated.

ii. New construction, alterations to non-contributing resources and additions

1. Configuration

Beneath a wood frame building, the foundation shall be recessed and not project forward of the building plane.

2. Materials

- a. Foundations piers shall be constructed of brick, stone, or true stucco over concrete block piers.
- b. The space between piers may be filled with wood lattice, horizontal boards, brick, or true stucco over concrete block. Infill material shall be recessed a minimum of three (3) inches behind the front edge of the pier so that the piers are clearly visible and differentiated.

d. Exterior Walls

i. Alterations to contributing resources

1. Materials

- a. Exterior walls shall be repaired with in-kind materials rather than replaced, provided however, if the degree of degradation does not allow repair, the degradation shall be photographically documented and verified by the Planning Director, and the replacement materials and configuration shall be of the same materials and configuration as the original wall.
- b. Prohibited
 - i. Materials that cause damage, obscure, or change the appearance to the underlying historic fabric are prohibited.
 - ii. Vinyl siding, aluminum siding, rolled asphalt, precast concrete panels, fiber cement wood simulated horizontal lap siding, fiber cement panels, EIFS, T-111, ceramic-based coatings and sealers on siding.

2. Finishes and Treatments

- a. Color changes to contributing resources shall be historically appropriate.
- b. Ceramic based coatings and sealers on wood siding shall not be permitted.
- c. Cleaning, when undertaken, shall be so as not to damage historic fabric. Sandblasting and disk sanding shall not be permitted.

ii. New construction, alterations to non-contributing resources and additions

1. Configuration

On lots less than 60 feet in width the front face shall be constructed so as to form a continuous plane parallel to the street. Bays and porches attached to such elevation may project streetward of the plane.

2. Materials

- a. Permitted materials
 - i. Residential exterior walls shall be finished in brick, wood or fiber cement siding with a smooth, ~~or finish~~ or true stucco. Commercial exterior walls shall be finished in brick, true stucco, concrete formed or assembled as stone, precast concrete panels with finish to simulate stucco texture, polished stone and glazed brick or tile where similar historic examples exist along the same block front.
 - ii. Wood or fiber cement siding shall be permitted on townhouses only in wards where wood-sided townhouses already exist or where more than 75%

of the lot frontage in the ward contains wood-sided buildings. Where wood siding has been determined to be appropriate, smooth finish fiber cement siding may be used.

- b. Prohibited materials: Vinyl siding, aluminum siding, rolled asphalt, EIFS, one-part stucco over insulation and/or wood or metal-framing, T-111, corrugated metal, unpainted exposed CMU blocks, fiber cement panels, ceramic-based coatings and sealers on siding.

3. Finishes and Treatments

Colors, stains, and finishes shall be visually compatible with contributing resources within the block. If none exist, the color shall be compatible with contributing resources within the ward.

Amend Section 7.9 Victorian Historic Overlay District as follows:

iii. Foundation

The intent of these standards is to ensure that foundations match the traditional pattern of construction in height and materials and complement the craftsmanship of contributing buildings.

1. Alterations to contributing resources

- a. Foundations shall be repaired rather than replaced, provided however, if the degree of degradation does not allow repair, the degradation shall be photographically documented and verified by the Planning Director and the new foundation shall be of the same materials and configuration as the original foundation.
- b. If the original foundation material and/or configuration is unknown, the new foundation material and configuration shall be based on historic context.
- c. The space between piers may be filled with heavy gauge wood lattice with at least one-half (0.5) inch thick lattice boards, horizontal boards, brick or true stucco over concrete block. Infill material shall be recessed a minimum of three inches behind the front edge of the pier so that the piers are clearly visible and differentiated.

2. New construction, alterations to non-contributing resources, and additions

a. Materials

- i. Foundations shall be constructed of brick, stone or true stucco over concrete block piers.
- ii. The space between piers may be filled with heavy gauge wood lattice with at least one-half (0.5) inch thick lattice boards, horizontal boards, brick, or true stucco over concrete block. Infill material shall be recessed a minimum of three (3) inches behind the front edge of the pier so that the piers are clearly visible and differentiated.
- iii. Slab-on-grade foundations shall be allowed where the slab has been built up to a minimum of 30 inches.

b. Configuration

- i. In single-family detached, single-family attached, two-family attached, three-family/four-family and townhouse dwellings, foundations shall be the average height of foundations on contributing buildings on the block face, or if no

contributing buildings exist, shall have a minimum finished floor height of 30 inches above grade.

- ii. Front porches shall have expressed piers.
- iii. Beneath a wood frame building, the foundation shall be recessed and not project forward of the building plane.

iv. Exterior Walls

The intent of these standards is to ensure that exterior building walls reflect and complement the traditional materials and construction techniques of the district's architecture.

1. Alterations to contributing resources

- a. Exterior walls shall be repaired rather than replaced, provided however, if the degree of degradation does not allow repair, the degradation shall be photographically documented and verified by the Planning Director, and the new wall shall be of the same materials and configuration as the original wall.
- b. If the original wall material and/or configuration is unknown, the new wall material and configuration shall be based on historic context.
- c. Prohibited materials: Vinyl siding, aluminum siding, rolled asphalt, precast concrete panels, fiber cement wood siding, EIFS, [one-part stucco over insulation and/or wood or metal-framing](#), and T-111.

2. New construction, alterations to non-contributing resources, and additions

- a. Permitted materials: Brick, stone, wood, true stucco, ~~and smooth fiber-cement horizontal lap siding~~ and [wood or fiber cement siding](#).
- b. Prohibited materials: Vinyl siding, aluminum siding, rolled asphalt, precast concrete panels, EIFS, [one-part stucco over insulation and/or wood or metal-framing](#), T-111, corrugated metal, unpainted exposed CMU blocks, fiber cement panels, and metal panels.

Amend Section 7.10 Cuyler-Brownville Historic Overlay District as follows:

iii. Foundation

The intent of these standards is to ensure that foundations match the traditional pattern of construction in height and materials and complement the craftsmanship of contributing buildings.

3. Alterations to contributing resources

- a. Foundations shall be repaired rather than replaced, provided however, if the degree of degradation does not allow repair, the degradation shall be photographically documented and verified by the Planning Director and the new foundation shall be of the same materials and configuration as the original foundation.
- b. If the original foundation material and/or configuration is unknown, the new foundation material and configuration shall be based on historic context.
- c. The space between piers may be filled with heavy gauge wood lattice with at least one-half (0.5) inch thick lattice boards, horizontal boards, brick or [true](#) stucco over concrete block. Infill material shall be recessed a minimum of three inches behind the front edge of the pier so that the piers are clearly visible and differentiated.

4. **New construction, alterations to non-contributing resources, and additions**

a. **Materials**

- i. Foundations shall be constructed of brick, stone or [true](#) stucco over concrete block piers.
- ii. The space between piers may be filled with heavy gauge wood lattice with at least one-half (0.5) inch thick lattice boards, horizontal boards, brick, or [true](#) stucco over concrete block. Infill material shall be recessed a minimum of three (3) inches behind the front edge of the pier so that the piers are clearly visible and differentiated.
- iii. Slab-on-grade foundations shall be allowed where the slab has been built up to a minimum of 30 inches.

b. **Configuration**

- i. In single-family detached, single-family attached, two-family attached, three-family/four-family and townhouse dwellings, foundations shall be the average height of foundations on contributing buildings on the block face, or if no contributing buildings exist, shall have a minimum finished floor height of 30 inches above grade.
- ii. Front porches shall have expressed piers.
- iii. Beneath a wood frame building, the foundation shall be recessed and not project forward of the building plane.

iv. **Exterior Walls**

The intent of these standards is to ensure that exterior building walls reflect and complement the traditional materials and construction techniques of the district's architecture.

2. **Alterations to contributing resources**

- c. Exterior walls shall be repaired rather than replaced, provided however, if the degree of degradation does not allow repair, the degradation shall be photographically documented and verified by the Planning Director, and the new wall shall be of the same materials and configuration as the original wall.
- d. If the original wall material and/or configuration is unknown, the new wall material and configuration shall be based on historic context.
- e. Prohibited materials: Vinyl siding, aluminum siding, rolled asphalt, precast concrete panels, fiber cement wood siding, EIFS, [one-part stucco over insulation and/or wood or metal-framing](#), and T-111.

3. **New construction, alterations to non-contributing resources, and additions**

- a. Permitted materials: Brick, stone, wood, true stucco, ~~and smooth fiber cement horizontal lap siding~~ and wood or fiber cement siding.
- b. Prohibited materials: Vinyl siding, aluminum siding, rolled asphalt, precast concrete panels, EIFS, [one-part stucco over insulation and/or wood or metal-framing](#), T-111, corrugated metal, and unpainted exposed CMU blocks.

Amend Section 7.11 Streetcar Historic Overlay District as follows:

iii. **Foundation**

The intent of these standards is to ensure that foundations match the traditional pattern of construction in height and materials and complement the craftsmanship of contributing

buildings.

5. Alterations to contributing resources

- a. Foundations shall be repaired rather than replaced, provided however, if the degree of degradation does not allow repair, the degradation shall be photographically documented and verified by the Planning Director and the new foundation shall be of the same materials and configuration as the original foundation.
- b. If the original foundation material and/or configuration is unknown, the new foundation material and configuration shall be based on historic context.
- c. The space between piers may be filled with heavy gauge wood lattice with at least one-half (0.5) inch thick lattice boards, horizontal boards, brick or [true](#) stucco over concrete block. Infill material shall be recessed a minimum of three inches behind the front edge of the pier so that the piers are clearly visible and differentiated.

6. New construction, alterations to non-contributing resources, and additions

a. Materials

- i. Foundations shall be constructed of brick, stone or [true](#) stucco over concrete block piers.
- ii. The space between piers may be filled with heavy gauge wood lattice with at least one-half (0.5) inch thick lattice boards, horizontal boards, brick, or [true](#) stucco over concrete block. Infill material shall be recessed a minimum of three (3) inches behind the front edge of the pier so that the piers are clearly visible and differentiated.
- iii. Slab-on-grade foundations shall be allowed where the slab has been built up to a minimum of 30 inches.

b. Configuration

- i. In single-family detached, single-family attached, two-family attached, three-family/four-family and townhouse dwellings, foundations shall be the average height of foundations on contributing buildings on the block face, or if no contributing buildings exist, shall have a minimum finished floor height of 30 inches above grade.
- ii. Front porches shall have expressed piers.
- iii. Beneath a wood frame building, the foundation shall be recessed and not project forward of the building plane.

iv. Exterior Walls

The intent of these standards is to ensure that exterior building walls reflect and complement the traditional materials and construction techniques of the district's architecture.

3. Alterations to contributing resources

- c. Exterior walls shall be repaired rather than replaced, provided however, if the degree of degradation does not allow repair, the degradation shall be photographically documented and verified by the Planning Director, and the new wall shall be of the same materials and configuration as the original wall.
- d. If the original wall material and/or configuration is unknown, the new wall material and configuration shall be based on historic context.
- e. Prohibited materials: Vinyl siding, aluminum siding, rolled asphalt, precast concrete panels, fiber cement wood siding, EIFS, [one-part stucco over insulation and/or wood](#)

or metal-framing, and T-111.

4. New construction, alterations to non-contributing resources, and additions

- a. Permitted materials: Brick, stone, wood, true stucco, ~~and smooth fiber cement horizontal lap siding~~ and wood or fiber cement siding.
- b. Prohibited materials: Vinyl siding, aluminum siding, rolled asphalt, precast concrete panels, EIFS, one-part stucco over insulation and/or wood or metal-framing, T-111, corrugated metal, and unpainted exposed CMU blocks.

POLICY ANALYSIS:

The proposed text amendments are consistent with the intent of the ordinance to construct new buildings that are “appropriate” within the historic districts and to protect the integrity of the contributing resources within the district. These amendments will also help ensure the long-term success of the historic overlay standards and the buildings constructed using these standards.

MPC RECOMMENDATION:

Approval for text amendments to the Savannah Zoning Ordinance to revise the definitions of “stucco” and “true stucco” and clarify “true stucco” within the four (4) historic district overlays.