



**METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION**

*"Planning the Future - Respecting the Past"*

M E M O R A N D U M

**DATE:** AUGUST 16, 2022  
**TO:** THE MAYOR AND ALDERMEN OF THE CITY OF SAVANNAH  
**FROM:** METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION  
**SUBJECT:** MPC RECOMMENDATION

**PETITION REFERENCED:**

**Petitioner:** Robert L. McCorkle, III, Agent

**Owner:** Riverview President Street, LLC

**Aldermanic District:** 2, Leggett

**County Commission District:** 2, Rivers

**Neighborhood/Subdivision:** Hitch Village / Fred Wessels Homes

**Current Zoning District:** I-L (Light Industrial)

**Future Land Use (FLU) Category:** Downtown - Expansion

**File No.** 22-002294-ZA

**Location:** 925 & 1301 East President Street 925 and a portion of the former Tybee Depot property

**PIN:** 20014 04001, 20006 04001A, and 20006 04001 **Acreage:** 19.77 (+/-)

**MPC ACTION:**

**Denial** of the petitioner's request to rezone the property to D-CBD and **Approval** to rezone the property to the D-C (Downtown Commercial) zoning district with the following conditions: (1) No building taller than Five ((5) stories or Fifty (50) feet in height shall be constructed within 100 feet of a property line shared with a residential or institutional use existing at the date of zoning adoption. (2) Allowed uses shall include permitted uses in the D-C zoning district and Large Hotel, Continuing Care Facility and Event Venue. (3) A general Master Plan, which may be done in phases, shall be required to come back to the MPC prior to a site development plan approval. The MPC shall approve the Master Plan upon a finding that the use is permitted and that the project conforms to the applicable development standards.



**MPC STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

**Denial** of the request as submitted and alternatively recommends an **Approval** to rezone the property to the D-C (Downtown Commercial) zoning district with the following conditions: (1) Approval by the Planning Commission, prior to adoption of a zoning change, of a General Master Plan as defined in Ordinance Sec 6.1.17 and (2) No building taller than Five ((5) stories or Fifty (50) feet in height shall be constructed within 100 feet of a property line shared with a residential or institutional use existing at the date of zoning adoption. This area shall also serve as a buffer consistent with Sec. 9.5 of the Savannah Zoning Ordinance, Screening and Buffers to include screening of mechanical areas.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** 9 + Chairman

Joseph Welch, Chairman  
Laureen Boles  
Travis Coles  
Shedrick Coleman  
Joseph Ervin  
Karen Jarrett

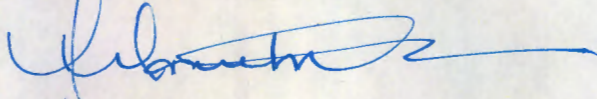
Jay Melder  
Wayne Noha  
Jeff Notrica  
Dwayne Stephens

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

<b>APPROVAL</b> Votes: 10	<b>DENIAL</b> Votes: 0	<b>ABSENT</b>
Welch Boles Coles Coleman Ervin Jarrett Melder Noha Notrica Stephens		Epstein Kaigler Watkins Woiwode



Respectfully submitted,



Melanie Wilson  
Executive Director

/ca

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





# CHATHAM COUNTY-SAVANNAH METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION

*“Planning the Future, Respecting the Past”*

## STAFF REPORT

File No. 22-002294-ZA

Location: 925 and 1301 East President Street and a portion of the former Tybee Depot property.

PINs: 20014 04001, 20006 04001A, and 20006 04001

Acreage: +/- 19.77 Acres

Prepared by Marcus Lotson, Development Services Director



Figure 1 Location Map

**Petitioner:** Robert L. McCorkle, III, Agent

**Owner:** Riverview President Street, LLC

**Aldermanic District:** 2, Leggett

**County Commission District:** 2, Rivers

**Neighborhood/Subdivision:** Hitch Village / Fred Wessels Homes

**Current Zoning District:** I-L (Light Industrial)

**Future Land Use (FLU) Category:** Downtown - Expansion

### Request

The petitioner is requesting to rezone the subject parcels from I-L (Light Industrial) to the D-CBD (Downtown Central Business) zoning classification for the purpose of establishing a yet to be determined mixed-use development.

### Background

The hearing was continued from the June 24<sup>th</sup> meeting to allow staff and the applicant to discuss alternatives to the proposed rezoning to the D-CBD (Downtown Central Business District) zoning classification. Staff recommended to the applicant that due to the size, location, and prominence of the subject property, a Master Plan be created to guide the development of this important gateway. The petitioner indicated that the uncertainty around how the development will build out prohibits them from doing so, but offered to limit height on a portion of the property and to include the following as potential language to be included as a condition of approval: “A general



master plan, which may be done in phases, shall be required to come back to the Metropolitan Planning Commission prior to a site development plan approval. The MPC shall approve the master plan upon a finding that the use is permitted and that the project conforms to the applicable development standards.” Staff finds that this language is inadequate to address the primary issues, which are that the property is not within the Downtown Core, and because the property is outside the Historic District as well, the development standards of the Historic Overlay do not apply, leaving many unknowns about how the site will develop.

### **Site**

The properties are on the south side of President Street between Randolph Street and the Bilbo Canal. The easternmost property is vacant but had most recently been developed with a congregate living facility which was demolished in 2015. The center parcel, and largest of the three, had been used as an industrial site but is now also vacant. The westernmost parcel is a portion of the former Tybee Depot property which was owned by the City of Savannah. The applicant recently entered into a development agreement with the City of Savannah (attached) in which a portion of the westernmost property would be involved in a property exchange, so that the City could gain property on the easternmost site for the purposes of canal improvements important to the Bilbo drainage basin. They would also then have perpetual access for maintenance of the improved canal. In addition to the land swap, the agreement ends litigation between the parties related to condemnation and blight on the subject property.

### **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. Public notice was posted on site. Per the City of Savannah database, there is no active neighborhood association in the vicinity.

### **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	President Street / Eastern Wharf	PD*
East	Church / Residential	PD
South	Residential / Undeveloped	PD / RMF**
West	Undeveloped	C***

\*Planned Development

\*\*Multifamily Residential

\*\*\*Conservation

The development pattern north of the subject property is defined by the Eastern Wharf Planned Development. That development includes multifamily residential, townhomes, a 12-story hotel and restaurants. As it continues to build out, it is likely to include additional residential and nonresidential uses along with public open space. Adjacent to the subject properties to the south



is land that was recently rezoned to accommodate multifamily residential. That project is in the planning stages of development. The View at Oglethorpe, a residential development operated by the Housing Authority of Savannah, is also adjacent. Second Ebenezer Missionary Baptist Church is East of the subject property at 800 Colbert Street.

### **Impact and Suitability**

#### **Public Utilities**

The area has access to the City's public water, sewer, and stormwater systems. Infrastructure improvements, including retention, would need to be provided to support development of the property.

#### **Transportation and Transit**

Transit is available near the intersection of East Broad Street and Oglethorpe Avenue. Currently, there are no stops along East President Street. However, should the property be built out as a mixed-use development, transit stops should be considered in a location convenient to this site.

#### **Community Development**

The proposed zoning will allow a development pattern that is similar to the pattern seen in the Landmark district. It would allow a mix of residential and nonresidential uses to include retail, restaurants, apartments, lodging facilities and entertainment. The D-CBD zoning district was created upon the adoption of the Zoning Ordinance in 2019. The stated description of the district is as follows: ***"The D-CBD district is established to reinforce downtown Savannah's position as the commercial hub of the metropolitan region. The district is intended to ensure harmonious development, redevelopment, and rehabilitation of uses in the historic downtown core by integrating an appropriate mix of retail, office, entertainment, civic and residential uses."*** The subject properties are not within the historic downtown core and are not contiguous with the traditional Central Business district. However, the uses allowed in the D-CBD district are allowed in other Downtown districts and may be appropriate at this site.

### **Future Land Use**

The Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map designates the subject property as Downtown Expansion and for the property adjacent to the Bilbo Canal, Civic Institutional. The Civic Institutional designation was likely established due to the previous use as a congregate transitional residence.

### **Existing Light - Industrial (I-L) District**

- ***Intent of the I-L District:*** "The IL district is established to provide for a wide range of research and development, light manufacturing and assembly, warehousing, and wholesaling activities as well as some support services. These uses are subject to standards intended to ensure such development is compatible with adjacent and nearby non-industrial areas. Development must be operated in a clean and quiet manner, with most activities occurring indoors, and should not be a nuisance to nearby non-industrial uses."



- **Allowed Uses:** Allowed uses in the I-L district are listed in the attached table.
- **Development Standards:** The development standards are listed in the attached table.

**Proposed Downtown Central Business District:**

- **Intent of the D-CBD District:** “The D-CBD district is established to reinforce downtown Savannah’s position as the commercial hub of the metropolitan region. The district is intended to ensure harmonious development, redevelopment, and rehabilitation of uses in the historic downtown core by integrating an appropriate mix of retail, office, entertainment, civic and residential uses.”
- **Allowed Uses:** Allowed uses in the D-CBD district are listed in the attached table.
- **Development Standards:** The development standards are listed in the attached table.

**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

- i. 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 permitted under the current Light Industrial zoning are not compatible with the surrounding properties or with the development pattern in the immediate area. Portions of the site had been blighted for many years, partially due to illegal dumping. The proposed zoning allows a broad array of uses typically found in a downtown core. However, due to the location of the subject property outside of the downtown core, other Downtown districts are likely more fitting. Due to the size, location, and nature of the property as a gateway, a Master Plan would provide the community the type of predictability needed for a development of this scale.

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

**MPC Comment:** The proposed zoning does not necessarily address a specific need. This area does, however, serve as the eastern gateway into downtown so a mixed-use district is appropriate.

Compatibility

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

**MPC Comment:** The proposed zoning will allow relatively dense residential development and commercial destinations that will change the character of the



President Street corridor. Nearby properties that may be affected are the Housing Authority property and the adjacent church. Managing height and vehicle circulation are the primary concerns as it relates to these properties. The applicant has not submitted a development plan, but it should be noted that the D-CBD zoning district, if adopted at this location, would not have a height maximum due to the fact that height, in the existing D-CBD area, is governed by the Historic Height Map. This property is not within the Historic District; therefore, the Height Map does not apply.

- iii. 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 requested zoning district only exists in the downtown core between Bay Street and Liberty Street and from Lincoln Street to Warner Street (*see attached exhibit*). The described area is approximately 0.5 square miles. This zoning was established at the time of the ordinance update and no additional properties have been rezoned to the D-CBD district since that time. In terms of compatibility, some of the adjacent and nearby properties are zoned in a way that allow similar uses as the requested district, to include multifamily residential and mixed-use commercial.

- iv. 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:** The specific conditions related to the use and development of the property are primarily related to the blight mitigation and the property agreements between the applicant and the City of Savannah. In addition, a Capital Improvement Project is currently underway related to water service.

b. 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:** The current Comprehensive Plan designations do not conform with the existing zoning. The Light Industrial zoning designation does not allow the type of development desired at this location. The proposed zoning is compatible with the Future Land Use Map designation, but the intent of the district is to be within the downtown core.

c. Reasonable Use

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

**MPC Comment:** The property has reasonable use for the owner under the current zoning. The uses allowed in the district, however, are inconsistent with the growing development pattern in the area and will not support the desired type of growth.



d. 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**

The D-CBD zoning district allows, either by right or through the special use process, all the uses that are common in the downtown core. These include single and multifamily residential, hotels, retail, restaurants, offices, and entertainment. These uses can be appropriate at this location and compliment the uses on the north side of President Street. Because the D-CBD district was established in the existing downtown, and is intended to exist within the core, alternative districts that allow similar uses and development patterns should be considered. The Downtown districts do not include some of the typical development standards such as height, building coverage and setbacks because they are typically governed by the historic overlay. The lack of development standards for properties outside the overlay creates concern. The applicant may not be the developer of the property and the entire property may not be developed as one project. No site plan or master plan has been submitted; therefore, staff cannot comment on the potential development with any level of detail.

As previously mentioned, if impacts to adjacent properties are created through the development of the site, they are likely to be on the adjacent church and existing residential uses. Because of the lack of standards in the Downtown districts when located outside of the historic overlay, staff has recommended potential limitations to protect adjacent properties. In review of the permitted uses in the Downtown districts, staff found that uses that are potentially problematic, such as nightclubs, bars and retail alcohol establishments, are already restricted by separation from residential and church properties, hours of operation and the Special Use process. The conditions recommended by staff are related to the development process and building height. Staff finds that these are potentially the most problematic issue for adjacent properties. The maximum height permitted in the adjacent, residentially zoned property is 50 feet. Staff finds that there should be a transition between adjacent properties and the subject property. In the event a much taller structure is proposed, such as a hotel or high-rise apartment building, this transition will provide additional protection to adjacent developed properties. Staff further finds that because the subject properties are outside the downtown core, the D-C (Downtown Commercial) district is more appropriate. The permitted uses are essentially identical, and the intent of the D-C district is to "...accommodate commercial, residential, and mixed-use development in areas of the downtown that have a business focus but are outside of the Central Business District and Waterfront areas."

Staff further finds that due to the importance of the property as a gateway, A Master Plan, consistent with the requirements of Ordinance Sec. 6.1.17 *Items to be Provided on a General Master Plan*, should be approved by the Planning Commission prior to the adoption of a zoning change.



## **Recommendation**

Based upon the review criteria and land use pattern, the Planning Commission recommends **denial** of the rezoning as submitted and alternatively recommends **approval** to rezone the property to the D-C (Downtown-Commercial) zoning district with the following condition:

1. A general master plan, which may be done in phases, shall be required to come back to the Metropolitan Planning Commission prior to a site development plan approval. The MPC shall approve the master plan upon a finding that the uses are permitted and that the project conforms to the applicable development standards.
2. No building taller than Five ((5) stories or Fifty (50) feet in height shall be constructed within 100 feet of a property line shared with a residential or institutional use existing at the date of zoning adoption.
3. Large Hotels, Event Space and Continuing Care Facility as defined in the Zoning Ordinance shall be permitted by right.



**Table 1: Comparison of Development Standards for the Existing I-L and Proposed D-CBD Zoning Districts**

	<b>Existing District</b>	<b>Proposed District</b>
	<b>I-L District</b>	<b>D-CBD District</b>
<b>Minimum Lot Area (Each unit unless otherwise specified)</b>	n/a	n/a
<b>Minimum Lot Width</b>	n/a	20 ft (nonresidential)
<b>Front Yard Setback</b>	25 ft	n/a
<b>Minimum Side Yard Setback</b>	30 ft adjacent to street 20 ft interior	n/a
<b>Minimum Rear Yard Setback</b>	20 ft	n/a
<b>Maximum Height</b>	50 ft adjacent to residential	n/a
<b>Maximum Building Coverage</b>	80 %	100%
<b>Maximum Density</b>	n/a	n/a