



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: FEBRUARY 20, 2018
TO: THE MAYOR AND ALDERMEN OF THE CITY OF SAVANNAH
FROM: METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION
SUBJECT: MPC RECOMMENDATION

PETITION REFERENCED:

Text Amendment to the City of Savannah Zoning Ordinance

**Re: Amendments to the Mid-City TC-2 District Development
Standards (Ground Floor Area, Height, Rear Yard Setback)**

River East Management, LLC, Petitioner

Josh Yellin / Harold Yellin (HunterMaclean), Agents

File No. 18-000495-ZA

MPC ACTION:

Denial of the proposed text amendments to the TC-2 district to: 1) Eliminate the maximum ground floor area (building footprint) requirement of 10,000 square feet; 2) Eliminate the minimum rear yard setback requirement of 10 feet; and, 3) Extend the maximum building height from four stories/55 feet to five stories/65 feet.

MPC STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Denial of the proposed text amendments to the TC-2 district to: 1) Eliminate the maximum ground floor area (building footprint) requirement of 10,000 square feet; 2) Eliminate the minimum rear yard setback requirement of 10 feet; and, 3) Extend the maximum building height from four stories/55 feet to five stories/65 feet.

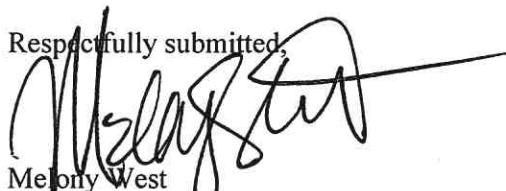
MEMBERS PRESENT: 9 + Chairman

James Overton, Chairman
Ellis Cook
Joseph Ervin
Roberto Hernandez
Karen Jarrett
Lacy Manigault
Tanya Milton
Linder Suthers
Joseph Welch
Tom Woiwode

PLANNING COMMISSION VOTE: Approve Staff Recommendation (9-1)

APPROVAL Votes: 9	DENIAL Votes: 1	ABSENT
Overton Cook Ervin Jarrett Manigault Milton Suthers Welch Woiwode	Hernandez	Branch Coleman Coles Smith

Respectfully submitted,



Melony West
Interim Executive Director

/jh

Enclosure

cc Luciana Spracher, Interim Clerk of Council
Brooks Stillwell, City Attorney
Lester B. Johnson, Assistant City Attorney
Jennifer Herman, Assistant City Attorney
Beth Barnes, Department of Inspections

am



Chatham County - Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission

February 20, 2018 Regular MPC Meeting

Title

D6 - TEXT AMENDMENT: Amend Article K (Mid-City District), Sec. 8-3216(4) (Traditional Commercial-Corridor Zoning District, Ground Floor and Rear Yard Setback Standards), Sec. 8-3216(6) (Traditional Commercial-Corridor Zoning District, Height Standard) | River East Management, LLC, Petitioner | File No. 18-000495-ZA

Description

A request to amend the Mid-City TC-2 (Traditional Commercial-Corridor) zoning district to do the following within the Martin Luther King/Montgomery Urban Redevelopment Area: 1) Eliminate the maximum ground floor area (building footprint) requirement of 10,000 square feet; 2) Eliminate the minimum rear yard setback requirement of 10 feet; and, 3) Extend the maximum building height from four stories/55 feet to five stories/65 feet.

In addition to the proposed text amendment, the petitioner also seeks a related rezoning of six parcels to the TC-2 district. The rezoning petition is scheduled for the same Planning Commission meeting as this text amendment (See File No. 18-000496-ZA).

Recommendation

Denial of the proposed text amendments to the TC-2 district to: 1) Eliminate the maximum ground floor area (building footprint) requirement of 10,000 square feet; 2) Eliminate the minimum rear yard setback requirement of 10 feet; and, 3) Extend the maximum building height from four stories/55 feet to five stories/65 feet.

Contact

Charlotte L. Moore, AICP
moorec@thempc.org | 912.651.1466

Financial Impact

n/a

Review Comments

Attachments

- 🔗 [Staff Report-18-000495-ZA-Feb 20.pdf](#)
- 🔗 [Multi-Family Examples in the Mid-City District.pdf](#)



C H A T H A M C O U N T Y - S A V A N N A H

METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION

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M E M O R A N D U M

TO: The Mayor and Aldermen of the City of Savannah

FROM: Metropolitan Planning Commission

DATE: February 20, 2018

SUBJECT: Text Amendment to the City of Savannah Zoning Ordinance
Re: Amendments to the Mid-City TC-2 District Development
Standards (Ground Floor Area, Height, Rear Yard Setback)
River East Management, LLC, Petitioner
Josh Yellin / Harold Yellin (HunterMaclean), Agents
File No. 18-000495-ZA

ISSUE:

A request to amend the Mid-City TC-2 (Traditional Commercial-Corridor) zoning district to do the following within the Martin Luther King/Montgomery Urban Redevelopment Area (URA): 1) Eliminate the maximum ground floor area (building footprint) requirement of 10,000 square feet; and, 2) Eliminate the minimum rear yard setback requirement of 10 feet. The petitioner withdrew the request to extend the maximum building height from 4 stories/55 feet to 5 stories/65 feet at the Planning Commission meeting.

In addition to the proposed text amendment, the petitioner also seeks a related rezoning of six parcels to the TC-2 district. The rezoning petition is scheduled for the same City Council meeting as this text amendment (See File No. 18-000496-ZA). If the related rezoning is approved, the boundary description of the Mid-City District will have to be updated.

BACKGROUND:

The requested TC-2 zoning district exists only within the Mid-City district. The TC-2 district is one of four zoning districts that was established as part of a rezoning study for the Thomas Square neighborhood and portions of the Metropolitan and Baldwin Park neighborhoods. Collectively, this area is known as "Mid-City" for zoning purposes. Mid-City zoning is specific to this area and was adopted by the Mayor and Aldermen in 2005 as part of an extensive study that included input from residents, business owners and other property owners.

The purpose of the TC-2 district is to "ensure the vibrancy of historic mixed-use neighborhoods with traditional development patterns characteristic of Savannah from 1890 to 1930 during the streetcar

and early automobile era. The district provides for arterial commercial corridors that traverse historic neighborhoods and serve through traffic, as well as local markets.”

Initially, the Victory Drive parcels presently zoned TC-2 were proposed to be TC-1 (Traditional Commercial-Neighborhood). However, the TC-2 district was created when some property owners on Victory Drive wanted additional uses that were not proposed for the TC-1 district and, also, a larger building footprint than 5,500 square foot maximum. This led to the creation of TC-2 district.

Within Mid-City, there are few properties that have been zoned TC-2. Until January 2018, the TC-2 properties, 21 in total, existed only on Victory Drive. In January, two parcels at Montgomery Street and West 31st Street were zoned TC-2. Both are located within the Urban Redevelopment Area. The URA boundaries also coincide the boundaries of the MLK-Montgomery Street Enterprise Zone (see attached Map 1). According to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs website, the Enterprise Zone program is intended to “improve geographic areas within cities and counties that are suffering from disinvestment, underdevelopment, and economic decline, encouraging private businesses to reinvest and rehabilitate such areas.” Incentives include property tax exemption/abatement for a period of 10 years, as well as the exemption/abatement of other taxes and fees (e.g., occupational taxes, permit fees).

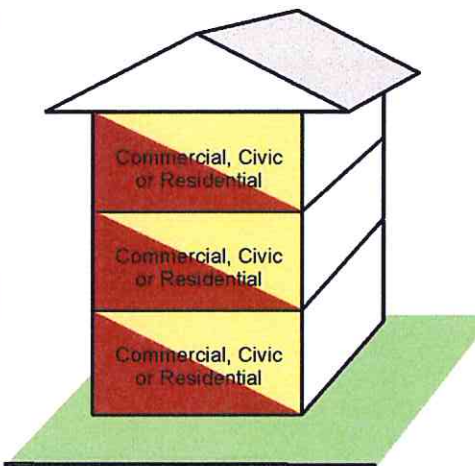
The two properties that were rezoned to TC-2 on January 4, 2018 were done so concurrent with a text amendment to the TC-2 district that: 1) eliminated the density requirement for properties within the URA (but required a 300-square foot minimum floor area per dwelling unit); and, 2) increased the maximum building height from three (3) stories/45 feet maximum to four (4) stories/55 feet maximum, also within the URA. These changes were made to help spur new development within the URA but with consideration to also protect Mid-City’s late-19th century and early-20th century development and architectural character. The Mid-City District is within the Thomas Square Streetcar National Register Historic District and is a local historic district.

The petitioner seeks to develop a multi-family apartment building within the Martin Luther King, Jr./Montgomery Urban Redevelopment Area. The property, six parcels, is zoned B-C (Community Business) and B-G (General Business). Since zoning was adopted by the City of Savannah in 1960, the B-C and B-G districts appear to be the original zoning for the property. If rezoned to TC-2, any of the uses permitted in the TC-2 district could be developed.

FINDINGS:

1. **Ground Floor Area:** Within the TC-2 district, the maximum permitted ground area or footprint for any building is 10,000 square feet (approximately 0.23 acres). It is possible to have multiple buildings on the same lot that exceed a combined total of 10,000 or more square feet; however, individually, a building cannot have more than 10,000 square feet unless: 1) variance approval is obtained from the Zoning Board of Appeals; or, 2) a text amendment is approved to change this requirement. The petitioner seeks the latter approach.

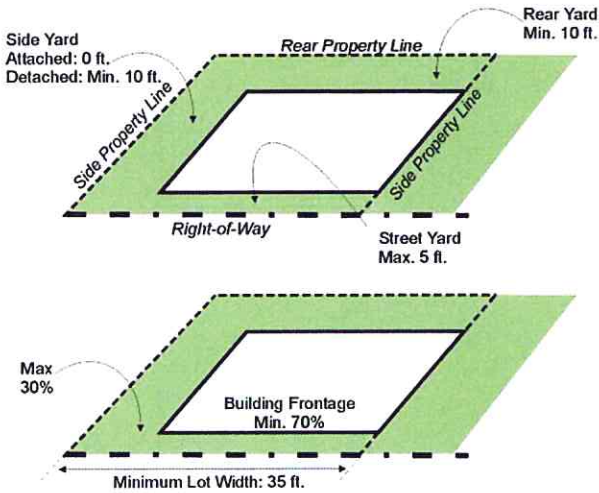
The petitioner's proposed amendment is shown highlighted in yellow.

Use		<p>Ground Floor Commercial or civic (see use table in 8-3216(2)(a))</p> <p>Upper Floors Residential, civic or commercial (see use table in 8-3216(2)(a)). No residential use allowed below a commercial use.</p> <p>Ground Floor Area 10,000 square feet maximum <i>For parcels within the MLK/Montgomery Urban Redevelopment Area, no maximum shall apply.</i></p> <p>Residential Density 30 units per gross acre maximum 36 units per gross acre maximum for designated affordable housing For parcels within the MLK/Montgomery Urban Redevelopment Area, see Sec. 8-3216(4)(a).</p>

Of the four zoning districts within Mid-City, the TC-2 district allows for the largest building footprint other than the CIV (Civic & Institutional) District. The CIV district is intended for civic and institutional uses “that serve a large area or produce intensive activities not readily assimilated into other districts.” Because this district includes existing educational and religious institutions, buildings that must be large for their purpose, a maximum building footprint is not required.

Multi-family buildings (with three or more residential units) exist throughout the Mid-City area and typically have footprints smaller than 10,000 square feet. The attachment entitled “Examples of Multi-family Development within Mid-City” shows various multi-family buildings that have been constructed in the Thomas Square neighborhood over the past century. While most of the buildings are pre-World War II era, a more recent development constructed in 2016 is provided to show how new construction can be context sensitive. Located at the northeast corner of Habersham Street and East 34th Street, this development has 17 residential units within four separate buildings. Collectively, the total ground floor area of the buildings is 10,200 square feet; individually, the largest building—with 11 dwelling units—has an area of 4,700 square feet and is 3 stories/41’4” at its highest point.

2. **Rear Yard Setback:** Within the TC-2 district, the minimum rear yard setback is 10 feet. A rear yard setback is provided to prevent a building from being too close to another building on an adjacent lot, or where adjacent to lane, from being too close to overhead utilities and other structures and activities within the right-of-way of a lane. It also allows for an area for sanitation and recycling containers to be stored, and for driveway aprons to be located for access to off-street parking.

<div data-bbox="147 516 188 594">Site</div> 	<p>Lot Area: 2,200 SF minimum for attached residential. 3,000 SF minimum for all other uses.</p> <p>Lot Width: 35 feet minimum</p> <p>Building Frontage: 70% of lot width minimum</p> <p>Street Yard Average street yard for all contributing structures on the block face; Blocks without contributing structures, 5 feet maximum</p> <p>Rear Yard: 10 feet minimum; <i>For parcels within the MLK/Montgomery Urban Redevelopment Area, no rear yard shall be required.</i></p> <p>Side Yard: 0 feet on any attached side or abutting TC-1 or TC-2 zoning; all other sides, 10 feet minimum</p>
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POLICY ANALYSIS:

If the ground floor area and rear yard setback are eliminated, the 0.76 acre parcel could be developed in its entirety (or close to it), with a building upwards to 33,000 square feet.

An alternative to a text amendment is to seek a variance for the development standards sought to be amended. The standards—maximum building footprint and minimum rear yard setback—are dimensional standards; a variance could be sought to eliminate or reduce the requirements. An approved variance would apply only to the petitioner's property. An approved text amendment, as requested, would apply to any parcels within the TC-2 district that are located within the MLK/Montgomery Urban Redevelopment Area.

The amendments made in January 2018 were amendments that the Planning Commission could support with some conditions. Yet, these amendments are already being requested to change. Text amendments should not be project specific. Rather, they should be in keeping with the intent of a particular zoning district to support its purpose, as well its development standards that are intended protect existing development patterns and support compatible infill development. At times, changes are necessary, but those changes should be considered comprehensively for the affected neighborhood, not on a limited parcel basis.

Seeking balance between redevelopment and protection of historic neighborhoods that contribute to the history, culture, architecture and economy of Savannah is critical. A vision for redevelopment should be established to ensure that future development of the MLK-Montgomery corridor is consistent with traditional development patterns while accommodating 21st century needs.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Recommend approval of the text amendments as provided by the applicant.
2. Recommend alternate text amendments.
3. Recommend denial of the text amendments.

RECOMMENDATION: **Denial** of the proposed text amendments to the TC-2 district to: 1) Eliminate the maximum ground floor area (building footprint) requirement of 10,000 square feet; and, 2) Eliminate the minimum rear yard setback requirement of 10 feet. If the property is rezoned to TC-2, **Approval** of the revised boundary description to include the subject property in the Mid-City District (boundary description to be provided next meeting).

Habersham Street

