



MEMORANDUM

TO: The Mayor and Aldermen of the City of Savannah
FROM: Bridget Lidy, Director
DATE: May 14, 2020
SUBJECT: Revisions to the City's Zoning Ordinance
File No. 20-001809-ZA

Petitioner's Request

Petition of Bridget Lidy on behalf of the Mayor and Aldermen to amend the following sections of the Zoning Ordinance (File No. 20-001809-ZA):

- A. Correct variance process for Historic Preservation Commission and Savannah Downtown Historic District Board of Review (Articles 2 and 3);
- B. Correct language for Historic Preservation Commission to address implementation of review authority (Article 2);
- C. Revise reference number (Article 3);
- D. Revise Streetcar Historic District Design Standards (Article 7);
- E. Revise Victorian Historic District Design Standards (Article 7);
- F. Correct boundaries of Cuyler-Brownville Historic District Contributing Resources Map (Article 7);
- G. Revise Cuyler-Brownville Historic District Design Standards (Article 7);
- H. Correct Streetcar Historic District Boundaries (Article 7);
- I. Add period of significance for Streetcar Historic District (Article 7);
- J. Revise Off-Street Parking Requirements (Article 9).

Background Information

The proposed revisions would amend the Zoning Ordinance to correct various scrivener's errors, address inconsistencies within the local historic district overlays and permit the Savannah Downtown Historic District Board of Review and Historic Preservation Commission to grant special exceptions rather than variances.


Specific revisions impact the following:

- Savannah Downtown Historic District Board of Review and Historic Preservation Commission would no longer have the ability to grant variances. Rather, these two review authorities would be able to grant special exceptions for many preservation and design standards to include:

- Increasing the maximum building footprint where the footprint is limited in Article 5 or Secs. 8.1 thru 8.8;
- Adjusting Preservation and Design Standards for local historic districts as follows:
 - Secs. 7.8.8, 7.9.8, 7.10.8, and 7.11.8 Secretary of the Interior’s Standards and Guidelines for Rehabilitation.
 - Secs. 7.8.10, 7.9.10, 7.10.10, and 7.11.10 Design Standards.
- Adjusting side, front, and rear yard setback requirements where limited in Article 5.0 Base Zoning Districts as follows:
 - Up to a one (1) foot adjustment may be approved by the Planning Director in all local historic districts.
 - More than one (1) foot up to a two (2) foot adjustment may be approved by the Historic Preservation Commission or Historic District Board of Review.

These revisions limit the amount of authority the Savannah Downtown Historic District Board of Review and Historic Preservation Commission have to specific cases. The Planning Director would have additional authority to permit minor adjustments. Variances—as with other review authorities—would be granted through the Zoning Board of Appeals which is the appropriate quasi-judicial body to make such decisions.

- The language on the implementation of the Historic Preservation Commission would be removed since the review body has been appointed.
- Within the Streetcar Historic District, the “Period of Significance” would be added to provide consistency with other historic districts. The Streetcar Boundary Map and Contributing Buildings Map would be updated to reflect the current boundaries found on the City of Savannah Zoning Map.
- Within the Cuyler Brownville District, the boundaries of the Contributing Buildings Map would be revised to reflect the current boundaries found on the City of Savannah Zoning Map.
- Within the Victorian, Streetcar and Cuyler Brownville historic districts, the proposed language would clarify that the front, rear and side yard setbacks are measured from the principal building for the designated based zoning district. Any new accessory structures would have to be located in the rear yard and include a five foot lane setback with a minimum of a three foot side yard setback. Fences would be no more than eight feet in height. Additionally, within these districts and the Savannah Downtown Historic District, a minimum of five feet between the fence and building when parallel would have to be required.

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- Off-street parking standards would remove the requirement for hostels since the use is not permitted. Additionally, it would update the parking standard for “Indoor Recreation. Arena; Convention Center” from 1 space for 3 persons to the same standard under “Outdoor Recreation. Stadium or arena, commercial amphitheater, outdoor sports facility” of 1 space for 5 persons.

The Metropolitan Planning Commission and City staff have vetted these revisions and shared them with community stakeholders for comment.