



Proposed Text Amendment: Application Intake & Public Notification

Council Workshop
Thursday, August 27, 2026



1

Agenda

- **1. Process Clarity & Updates**
(Recommended by MPC/Broad agreement)
- **2. Comp Plan Amendments**
(Not-recommended by MPC/disagreement)



City of Savannah / Department Name / Title of Presentation

2

Purpose & Key Outcomes

Purpose of Changes:

- Improve processes
- Clarify roles between MPC & City's Planning & Urban Design
- Align with Savannah GPS Strategic Plan
- Strengthen collaboration & accountability

Expected Outcomes:

- Better service delivery for applicants & the public
- Reduced overlap & confusion
- Clear roles without changing approval and recommendation authority



3

GPS Alignment

Goal 6: Always Be a High Performing Government

1. Ensure every dollar of public funds is spent wisely, transparently and to the maximum benefit of our community.
3. Save Money to the taxpayer by implementing operational efficiencies, eliminating redundancy and waste, and optimizing partnerships to leverage shared services.



4

Current Services - MPC

- MPC serves as the City professional planning agency providing these services:
 - **Development Services**
 - Reviews subdivisions & provides final administrative authority to approve minor subdivisions that do not require variances
 - **Discretionary Review Processes**
 - Supports the Planning Commission & Zoning Board of Appeals in review of Comprehensive Plan, rezoning, & text amendments
 - Completes staff report for petitions, special use permits, special exceptions, variances, appeals, and annexation petitions
 - Holds pre-application conferences for zoning actions
 - Recommends updates/corrections to Zoning Ordinance
 - **Advance Planning**
 - Develops & updates the Comprehensive Plan to ensure consistency with long-term community goals



5

Current Services – MPC cont'd

- **Historic Preservation**
 - Application intake and processing
 - Meets with applicants to advise on proposed projects prior to applying
 - Provides technical assistance to the public regarding preservation projects in the overlay districts
 - Writes Staff reports to make recommendations and presentations to HDBR, HPC, HSMC
 - Reviews and approves minor preservation work at the staff level in the Downtown Historic District
 - Supports development of Citywide preservation program to cover areas outside of the established overlay districts



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6

Current Services - City

- Centralizes & strengthens urban planning, preservation, & design services by advancing City planning goals while promoting progressive urban design & safeguarding Savannah's architectural & historic resources, through these services:
 - **Ordinance interpretation & development**
 - Updates/corrects Zoning Ordinance; interprets Zoning Ordinance by issuing of zoning confirmation letters
 - Advances policy directives with Zoning Ordinance revisions (affordable housing, hotel overlay, etc.)
 - **Construction permit review**
 - Reviews building permits/site plans to ensure compliance with zoning standards
 - Reviews permits for demolition, signs, swimming pools, antennas (cell towers)
 - Solar panels



7

Current Services - City

- **Application intake & public notification**
 - Receives, processes, & determines completeness for applications for Comp Plan amendments, rezoning, planned developments, text amendments, special use permits, variances, special exceptions, appeals, & local historic district & property designations
 - Processes annexation petitions
- **Small area plans & special projects**
 - Leads neighborhood & small area planning initiatives (e.g., Canal District Master Plan, Southside Retrofit, Eastside Plan, Hudson Hill, CNU Studies)
 - Supports special projects & corridor plans (e.g., Fairgrounds, River Street, Civic Legacy, Railroad District, 1-16 Flyover)
 - Develops citywide preservation program outside of established districts.



8

Proposed Changes - MPC

MPC would now be responsible for:

- Application intake & processing (Sec. 3.1)
- Public notification (Sec. 3.2)

Applies to these zoning actions:

- Comprehensive Plan amendments (Sec. 3.4)
- Rezoning (Sec. 3.5)
- Planned Developments (Sec. 3.6)
- Text amendments (Sec. 3.7)
- Special Use Permits (Sec. 3.10)
- Special Exceptions (Sec. 3.12)
- Variances (Sec. 3.21)
- Appeals (Sec. 3.23)
- Local historic district & property designations (Sec. 3.16, & 3.17)

Applies to these zoning actions:

- Change references of "Planning Director" to "MPC Director"



9

Proposed Changes - City

City will continue to lead:

- Policy development
- Zoning Ordinance interpretation
- Special projects & planning initiatives
- Required City participation in pre-app meetings

City Council will retain final decision-making authority over zoning actions.



10

What Stays the Same?

- No change to approval authority
- City retains permit review
- MPC retains Board support & review/recommendation roles
- City retains authority to initiate rezoning & text amendments, with Planning Commission review and recommendation only when directed by City Council

What Changes for the Public?

- Applications & fees (with exception of checks) are submitted now with MPC
- More streamlined & predictable processes
- Clearer points of contact



11

Process Updates Next Steps

August 27

- 2nd Reading of Text Amendment

September-November

- Continue training between MPC and City staff
- Inform and educate the community about upcoming changes
- Update applications and websites
- Continue coordinating with IT
- Address payments for applications

December 1

- Implementation

September – January

- Support Transition



12

Proposed Changes – Comp Plan Amendments

- **Proposed new language for Comprehensive Plan Amendments**
 - **City:** Amendments initiated by or on behalf of the Mayor and Aldermen are not required to go to the Planning Commission unless requested by the City Manager or designee
 - **MPC:** Does not agree with City's proposal; but proposing a 30-day notice prior to the City's public hearing for City-initiated changes if approved
- **Existing language for Rezoning and Text Amendments**
 - **Existing Zoning Ordinance:** any rezoning or text amendment initiated by the Mayor and Aldermen shall not be submitted to or considered by the Planning Commission unless specifically requested by the Mayor and Aldermen
 - **MPC:** Does not agree with City's proposal; but proposing a 30-day notice prior to the City's public hearing for City-initiated changes if approved



13

Questions & Discussion

Thank you



14