



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

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# METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION

*"Planning the Future - Respecting the Past"*

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M E M O R A N D U M

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**DATE:** August 15, 2023  
**TO:** THE MAYOR AND ALDERMEN OF THE CITY OF SAVANNAH  
**FROM:** METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION  
**SUBJECT:** MPC RECOMMENDATION

**PETITION REFERENCED:**

**Petitioner:** Dolly Chisolm, Agent for Christian Sottile

**Owner:** Christian Sottile

**Aldermanic District:** - 2, Alderman Leggett

**County Commission District:** - 2, Commissioner Rivers

**Current Zoning District:** TN-1 (Traditional Neighborhood-1)

**Future Land Use (FLU) Category:** Traditional Commercial

**File No.** 23-003820-ZA

**Location:** 115 Bolton Street

**PIN(s):** 20044 18001

**MPC ACTION:**

**Approval** of the requested Special Use permit to establish an educational building used by a college, university, or seminary.

**MPC STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

**Approval** of the request for a Special Use permit to establish an educational building used by a college, university, or seminary.

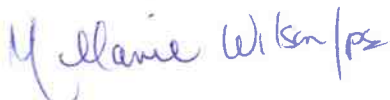
**MEMBERS PRESENT:** 10 + Chairman

Dwayne Stephens, Chairman  
Travis Coles, Vice Chairman  
Traci Amick  
Laureen Boles  
Elizabeth Epstein  
Karen Jarrett  
Wayne Noha  
Jeff Notrica  
Michael Kaigler  
Jay Melder  
Shedrick Coleman

**PLANNING COMMISSION VOTE:** Approve Staff Recommendation (11-0)

<b>APPROVAL</b> Votes: 10	<b>DENIAL</b> Votes: 0	<b>ABSENT</b>	<b>Abstained</b>
Amick Boles Coles Coleman Epstein Jarrett Kaigler Melder Noha Notrica Stephens		Ervin Woiwode 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  
Bridget Lidy, Planning, Urban & Design



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*

**To: The Metropolitan Planning Commission**

**From: MPC Staff**

**Date: August 15, 2023**

**Subject:** Special Use Request

**Petitioner:** Dolly Chisolm, Agent for Christian Sottile

**Property Owner:** Christian Sottile

**Address:** 115 West Bolton Street

**Alderman:** District 2 – Alderman Detric Leggett

**County Commission:** District 2 – Commissioner Jean Brown Rivers

**Property Identification Number:** 20044 18001

**Petition File No.:** 23-003820-ZA

**Melissa Leto, Senior Planner**

**REQUEST:** The Petitioner is requesting approval of a Special Use pursuant to Section 3.10 of the Savannah Zoning Ordinance to establish an educational building used by a college, university, or seminary. The Special Use process includes review by the Planning Commission and the Savannah City Council. Should the use be approved by the Council, a permit will be granted by the City of Savannah which will be governed by the permit enforcement criteria outlined in Article 3 of the Savannah Zoning Ordinance.



*115 West Bolton Street – Front facade*

**BACKGROUND:** The subject property is zoned TN-1 (Traditional Neighborhood-1) where an educational building used by a college, university or seminary is a special use in TN-1 zoning district. The building is a two-story historic eclectic church building that was constructed in 1911 and is a contributing building within the Savannah Victorian National Register Historic District and the local Planned–Neighborhood-Conservation district. The church was known as the Greater Friendship Baptist Church. In approximately 2015 the church was purchased, and the exterior was renovated. The property is 0.13 acres, or 5,662.8 square feet in size.

1. **Public Notice:** Mailed notice of the Planning Commission meeting was sent to all property owners within 300-feet of the subject property, signs were posted on site and required newspaper advertisements were run. The notice included instructions on how to access the meeting over the internet.

2. **Existing Development Pattern:**

The land uses and zoning districts surrounding the subject property include:

Location	Land Use	Existing Zoning
North	Single-Family & Multi-Family	TN-1
South	Single-Family & Multi-Family	TN-1
East	Multi-Family & Forsyth Park	TN-1 & CP
West	Single-Family & Speedi-Sign	TN-1

3. **General Provisions 3.10.2:**

The General Provisions for Special Uses identify the purpose of the process and are as follows:

- Special uses within each zoning district are uses that would not be appropriate generally or without restriction but which, if controlled as to number, area, location, or relation to other uses may be appropriate in a particular zoning district.
- A special use permit shall be required for all special uses (identified with an “S” designation) as set forth in the permitted use table in [Sec. 5.4, Principal Use Table](#) or as part of a use condition in [Article 8.0, Use Standards](#).
- Specific use standards may be applicable to the approved special use.

- Any use or activity on the property not specifically permitted by [Article 5.0, Base Zoning Districts](#), or the special use permit as modified, shall be deemed unlawful and subject to [Article 12.0](#).

4. **Review Criteria for Special Use Permits Section 3.10.8:**

When reviewing a Special Use permit request, the reviewing authority shall consider the following criteria:

- a) Whether the special use is consistent with the intent, goals, strategies, policies, guiding principles and programs of the Comprehensive Plan and other adopted plans;

**Staff Comment:** The Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map designates the subject property as Traditional Neighborhood. The TN-1 (Traditional Neighborhood-1) zoning district is consistent with the Traditional Neighborhood Future Land Use designation which allows for residential areas near downtown or in outlying historically settled areas. This category includes non-residential uses that are compatible with the residential character of neighborhoods.

- b) Whether specific use standards for the special use, if any, as provided in Article 8.0, Use Standards, can be achieved;

**Staff Comment:** The specific standards for Special Use have been met.

- c) Whether the Special Use is detrimental to the public interest, health, safety, welfare, function, and appearance of the adjacent uses or general vicinity by reason of any one or more of the following: the number, area, location, height, orientation, intensity (such as traffic, noise, odor, hours of operation), or relation to the neighborhood or other adjacent uses;

**Staff Comment:** The Petitioner is proposing to establish an educational building used by a college, university, or seminary. Ralston College is a small university based in Savannah, Georgia that provides a Master of Arts in Humanities. The college operates several buildings in downtown Savannah. In the Spring of 2023 18 students graduated. Seminars, lectures, and a library with offices would be in this subject building.

The college itself has operational hours from Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. till 5:00 p.m. The subject property does not currently have any specific hours of operation but will most likely stay open within the university's hours of operation as offices, classrooms, lecture hall and a library for the registered students.

- d) Whether the subject property is adequate in shape and size to accommodate the Special Use;

**Staff Comment:** The proposed educational building for Ralston College sits on property that has no off-street parking available. The Applicant received a Zoning Confirmation Letter in response to the minimum parking requirements. Based on the Zoning Confirmation letter states. "The total floor area of the building is 6,624 square feet, according to the property tax card. The proposed use is "Educational building used by a college, university or seminary". This use requires 1 vehicle parking space per 250 square feet of classroom and office area. The Applicant has provided a floor plan indicating that 3,830 square feet of the building will be used for classrooms and offices. This site is in the Victorian and Streetcar Parking District. The first 3,000 square feet of nonresidential use does not require parking. The remaining 830 square feet of office and classroom floor area requires 3.32 parking spaces, which rounds to 4 spaces. "College" uses are allowed a 25% parking reduction in the Victorian and Streetcar Parking District. The number of required spaces after this reduction is 3 spaces. The proposed use requires 7 parking spaces before any Credit for Nonconforming Parking Areas Sec. 9.3.4.a.iv is granted." There is no minimum parking requirement.

- e) Whether adequate public facilities are available to serve the proposed use, including, but not limited to: water; sanitary sewer; stormwater drainage facilities; public safety and emergency facilities; roadway capacity; vehicular ingress and egress; or, that the applicant will provide adequately for such services and for placement in an appropriate location.

**Staff Comment:** Adequate public facilities are available to support the proposed use.

- f) Whether the Special Use will result in the destruction, loss, or damage of any feature determined by the review authority to be of natural, cultural, scenic, or historic importance.

**Staff Comment:** There will be no loss, destruction, or damage to any item of historic importance.

**POLICY ANALYSIS:**

The Special Use provisions of the Savannah Zoning Ordinance are designed to allow the Reviewing authorities to consider the establishment of uses in zoning districts, where the use may be appropriate but should not be allowed by right. The review criteria outlined in Section 3.10.8 are the standards for considering a Special Use. In review of the standards, the subject property and proposed use meet the requirements.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

1. Approve the Petitioner's request as presented or with conditions.
2. Deny the Petitioner's request.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Based upon the compatibility with the Comprehensive Plan, and the ability to meet the criteria for a Special Use permit, The Planning Commission recommended **approval** of the request to establish an educational building used by a college, university, or seminary.