



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: June 23, 2026

TO: THE MAYOR AND ALDERMEN OF THE CITY OF SAVANNAH

FROM: METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION

SUBJECT: TEXT Amendment

PETITION REFERENCED:

Petitioner: Bridget Lidy, Agent for the Mayor and Alderman of the City of Savannah

Address: N/A

Alderman District:

County Commission District:

Property Identification Number: N/A

Petition File Number: 26-002370-ZA

MPC ACTION:

The Planning Commission recommends **APPROVAL** of the request to amend Articles 5 Base Zoning Districts, 8 Use Standards, 9 General Site Standards and 13 Abbreviations and Buffers to permit several different housing types in multiple districts.

MPC STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

MPC Staff recommends **APPROVAL** of the request to amend Articles 5 Base Zoning Districts, 8 Use Standards, 9 General Site Standards and 13 Abbreviations and Buffers to permit several different housing types in multiple districts.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

10

Joseph Ervin
Laureen Boles
Travis Coles – Chairman
Patricia Richardson
Jay Melder
Jeff Notrica
Stephen Plunk
Joseph Welch
Amanda Wilson
Tom Woiwode – Vice Chair

PLANNING COMMISSION VOTE: Approve with condition. (10-0)

APPROVAL Votes: 10	DENIAL Votes:	ABSENT	Abstain	Recused
Richardson Melder Notrica Boles Coles Wilson Plunk Welch Woiwode Ervin		Amick Ross Stephens Kaigler		

Respectfully submitted,



Melanie Wilson
Executive Director and CEO

MW/sh

Enclosure

cc Mark Massey, Clerk of Council
Lester B. Johnson, Assistant City Attorney
Jennifer Herman, Assistant City Attorney
Bridget Lidy, Department of Inspections



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METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION

"Planning the Future - Respecting the Past"

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: The Mayor and Alderman of the City of Savannah

FROM: The Planning Commission

DATE: June 23, 2026

SUBJECT: Text Amendment to the City of Savannah Zoning Ordinance
Re: Amendment to Articles 5 Base Zoning Districts, 8 Use Standards, 9 General Site Standards and 13 Abbreviations and Buffers

APPLICANT: Mayor and Aldermen of the City of Savannah
Bridget Lidy - Director of Planning and Urban Design, Agent

FILE NO: 26-002370-ZA (TEXT)

REQUEST:

The City of Savannah (City) proposes zoning text amendments to add permitted use and associated development standards to *Articles 5 Base Zoning Districts, 8 Use Standards, 9 General Site Standards and 13 Abbreviations and Buffers*, to permit several different housing types in multiple districts.

The text is proposed to be amended as follows:

Sec. 5.10 Residential Multi-family Districts

5.10.10 Additional Requirements Applicable to Residential Multi-family Districts

a. All RMF- Districts

- i. Principal use dwellings shall be a minimum of 450 square feet.
- ~~ii. With the exception of the RMF-1 district where the density does not exceed 10 dwelling units per acre, direct access to a paved roadway classified as a collector roadway or higher shall be provided.~~
- ~~ii.~~ iii. For each multi-family residential development with at least 25 units, a bus shelter shall be provided on a street adjacent to the development where there are existing or planned bus routes, upon approval of the Chatham Area Transit Authority. This requirement can be waived if a bus **stop shelter** exists within 600 feet of the main entrance of the multi-family development. Such distance may be increased to one-quarter (0.25) mile where a continuous sidewalk is available from the main entrance to the bus **stop shelter**.
- ~~iii.~~ iv. A continuous pedestrian circulation system shall be provided throughout the entire development. The system shall link all units to all developed or planned recreational open space, parking, planned or existing bus shelters, and to existing public sidewalks or public rights-of-way that are located adjacent to the development.

Sec. 5.15 Office and Institutional Districts

5.15.1 District Descriptions

The Office and Institutional (“OI”) districts are established to provide areas for offices and other low intensity commercial uses. Certain residential uses may be allowed in some districts. The OI districts are listed below.

a. Office and Institutional-Transition (OI-T)

The Office and Institutional-Transition (“OI-T”) district is established to facilitate the orderly transition of properties originally developed for ~~residential use to limited nonresidential uses.~~ These properties are **generally** located in areas **experiencing changing development patterns, increased transportation activity, or evolving land use conditions, creating the need for a transitional area that supports compatibility between surrounding residential neighborhoods and nearby nonresidential development.** ~~where increased automobile traffic, road widening or other factors have diminished residential viability, resulting in the need for a transitional area to buffer surrounding residential properties.~~

b. Office and Institutional (OI)

The Office and Institutional (“OI”) district is established to allow office uses, **compatible residential uses, and** ~~as well as~~ a limited number of other uses that are compatible with an office environment. The OI district is intended to be located in close proximity to

Nonresidential districts and may serve as a compatible ~~be used as a~~ transition between mixed-use, office, and lower density residential uses ~~such areas and Residential districts.~~

5.15.5 Development Standards for Permitted Residential Uses

Residential uses in any OI district shall meet the development standards as set forth below.

5.15.5 Development Standards for Permitted Residential Uses			
Standards	OI-T	OI	OI-E
Lot Dimensions (min)			
<u>Single-family Detached</u>			
Lot area per unit (sq ft)	5,000	--	<u>1,740</u> --
Lot width (ft)	50	--	--
<u>Townhouse/Stacked Townhouse</u>			
<u>Site area per unit (sq ft)</u>	<u>2,400</u>	<u>2,100</u>	<u>1,750</u>
<u>Lot width per unit (ft)</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>18</u>
<u>Three- & Four-family/Apartments</u>			
<u>Lot area per unit (sq ft)</u>	<u>2,000</u>	<u>1,750</u>	<u>1,500</u>
<u>Lot width (ft)</u>	<u>60</u>	<u>60</u>	<u>50</u>
<u>Upper Story Residential</u>			
<u>Lot area per unit (sq ft)</u>	<u>1,250</u>	<u>1,050</u>	<u>900</u>
<u>Lot width (ft)</u>	<u>50</u>	<u>50</u>	<u>30</u>
Building (max)			
Building Coverage	40% <u>50%</u>	<u>60%</u>	75%
Height (ft)	36 <u>40</u>	40 <u>45</u> [1]	60 [1]
Building Setback (min ft) ^(b)			
Front yard	20 <u>15</u>	15	15
Side (street) yard	15 <u>10</u>	10	10
Side (interior) yard	5	10	10
Rear yard	20	20	20
From access easement	5	5	5
Building separation	See Fire Code	See Fire Code	See Fire Code
Accessory Structure Setback	See Sec. 8.7	See Sec. 8.7	See Sec. 8.7
Parking Area Setback (min ft)			
From collector or arterial street rights-of-way	15	15	15
From local street rights-of-way	10	10	10
Abutting lane, property line or access easement	5	5	5

5.15.5 Development Standards for Permitted Residential Uses			
Standards	OI-T	OI	OI-E
(--)= Not applicable			
[1] Buildings proposed within 50 feet of a Residential zoning district shall be subject to the height restrictions established in such district. The height may increase one (1) foot for every one (1) foot of distance from the Residential zoning district. For example, the portion of the building that is 65 feet from a Residential zoning district with a 36 foot height limit cannot exceed 51 feet in height. This provision does not apply when there is an adjacent non-residential <u>use</u> in the Residential zoning district. <u>[2] Front and rear setbacks for townhouses may be measured from a site boundary, vehicular access easement, or right-of-way boundary instead of the boundary of the lot containing the unit. A use buffer or street yard buffer may be placed in a front or rear setback where it overlaps with a common area lot. No side setback is required for interior lot lines of adjoining townhouses.</u>			

5.15.6 Development Standards for Permitted Nonresidential Uses

Nonresidential uses in any OI district shall meet the development standards as set forth below.

5.15.6 Development Standards for Permitted Nonresidential Uses			
Standards [2]	OI-T	OI	OI-E
Lot Dimensions (min)			
<u>Lot area per unit for Upper Story</u>	-	-	-
<u>Residential use (sq ft)</u>	--	2,170	1,740
Lot area for all other uses	--	--	--
Lot width (ft)	--	--	--
Building (max)			
Building Coverage	50%	80%	80%
Height (ft)	36	40	75 [1]
Ground floor area (sq ft)	3,000	--	--
Building Setback (min ft)			
Front yard	20	15	15
Side (street) yard	15	15	15
Side (interior) yard	5	10	10
Rear yard	20	--	--
Rear Yard (adjacent to street/lane)	20	15	15
From access easement	5	5	5
Building separation	See Fire Code	See Fire Code	See Fire Code
Accessory Structure Setback	See Sec. 8.7	See Sec. 8.7	See Sec. 8.7
Parking Area Setback (min ft)			
From collector or arterial street rights-of-way	15	15	15
From local street rights-of-way	10	10	10
From lane, property line or access easement	5	5	5

5.15.6 Development Standards for Permitted Nonresidential Uses			
Standards <u>[2]</u>	OI-T	OI	OI-E
(--) = Not permitted or not applicable [1] Buildings proposed within 50 feet of a Residential zoning district shall be subject to the height restrictions established in such Residential zoning district and then may increase in height one (1) foot for every one (1) foot of distance from the Residential zoning district. For example, the portion of the building that is 65 feet from a Residential zoning district with a 36 foot height limit cannot exceed 51 feet in height. <u>[2] Where Upper Story Residential is included in a building, the residential standards shall apply.</u>			

Sec. 5.16 Business Districts

5.16.1 District Descriptions

The Business (“B-”) districts are established to allow nonresidential uses and ~~limited~~ residential uses. The intensity of uses allowed is indicated by the suffix following the district name, with the B-L being the most limited district and B-C the most intense. The B- districts are listed below.

a. Limited Business (B-L)

The B-L district is established to accommodate a variety of residential uses and a limited range of small-scale, neighborhood-oriented commercial and nonresidential uses together within the same district. This district is intended to be used in conjunction with nearby or adjacent Residential districts to create sustainable **mixed-use** neighborhoods with convenient access to neighborhood-serving commercial uses.

b. Neighborhood Business (B-N)

The B-N district is established to permit small-scale, neighborhood-oriented nonresidential uses and **residential uses** ~~upper story residences~~. This district is intended to provide for limited commercial opportunities in a walkable environment **while supporting compatibility with** ~~and to reduce or prevent impacts on~~ adjacent or nearby residential uses. Uses in this district are intended to be located primarily on collector or arterial streets within convenient traveling distance from neighborhoods which they will serve.

c. Community Business (B-C)

The B-C district is established to accommodate a range of nonresidential uses that serve a community-wide market area and **residential uses** ~~upper story residences~~. Uses in this district are intended to be located primarily on collector or arterial streets.

5.16.5 Development Standards for Permitted Residential Uses

Residential uses in any B- district shall meet the development standards as set forth below.

5.16.5 Development Standards for Permitted Residential Uses			
Standards	B-L	<u>B-N</u>	<u>B-C</u>
Lot Dimensions (min)			
Single-family Detached			
Lot area (sq ft)	<u>5,000</u>	--	--

5.16.5 Development Standards for Permitted Residential Uses			
Standards	B-L	B-N	B-C
Lot width (ft)	<u>50</u>	--	--
Single-family Attached & Two-family			
Lot area per unit (sq ft)	<u>3,000</u>	--	--
Lot width per unit (ft)	30	--	--
Three- & Four-Family, Townhomes and Apartments			
Lot area per unit (sq ft)	2,170	<u>2,170</u>	--
Lot width (ft)	20	<u>30</u>	--
Townhomes/Stacked Townhomes			
<u>Site area per unit (sq ft)</u>	<u>2,100</u>	<u>1,750</u>	<u>1,500</u>
<u>Lot width per unit (ft)</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>18</u>
Apartments			
<u>Lot area per unit (sq ft)</u>	<u>1,750</u>	<u>1,500</u>	<u>1,250</u>
<u>Lot width (ft)</u>	<u>60</u>	<u>60</u>	<u>50</u>
Upper Story Residential			
<u>Lot area per unit (sq ft)</u>	<u>1,050</u>	<u>900</u>	<u>750</u>
<u>Lot width (ft)</u>	<u>50</u>	<u>50</u>	<u>30</u>
Building (max)			
Building Coverage	80% <u>60%</u>	<u>70%</u>	<u>70%</u>
Height (ft)	36 <u>40</u>	<u>45</u> [1]	<u>60</u> [1]
Building Setback (min ft) ¹³			
Front yard	15	<u>15</u>	<u>15</u>
Side (street) yard	15	<u>15</u>	<u>15</u>
Side (interior) yard	5	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>
Rear yard	10	<u>10</u>	<u>10</u>
Rear Yard (adjacent to street/lane)	10	<u>10</u>	<u>10</u>
From access easement	5	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>
Building separation	See Fire Code	<u>See Fire Code</u>	<u>See Fire Code</u>
Accessory Structure Setback	See Sec. 8.7	See Sec. 8.7	See Sec. 8.7
Parking Area Setback (min ft)			
From collector and arterial street rights-of-way	15	<u>15</u>	<u>15</u>
From local street rights-of-way	10	<u>10</u>	<u>10</u>
Abutting lane or access easement	5	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>
[1] Buildings proposed within 50 feet of a Residential zoning district shall be subject to the height restrictions established in such Residential zoning district and then may increase in height one (1) foot for every one (1) foot of distance from the Residential zoning district. For example, the portion of the building that is 65 feet from a Residential zoning district with a 36-foot height limit cannot exceed 51 feet in height.			

5.16.5 Development Standards for Permitted Residential Uses			
Standards	B-L	B-N	B-C
[2] Front and rear setbacks for townhouses may be measured from a site boundary, vehicular access easement, or right-of-way boundary instead of the boundary of the lot containing the unit. A use buffer or street yard buffer may be placed in a front or rear setback where it overlaps with a common area lot. No side setback is required for interior lot lines of adjoining townhouses.			

5.16.6 Development Standards for Permitted Nonresidential Uses				
Standards	B-L	B-N	B-C	B-M
Lot Dimensions (min)				
Lot width (ft)	--	--	--	--
Lot area per unit for Upper Story	=	=	=	=
Residential use (sq ft)	2,170	1,815	1,815	--
Lot area (sq ft)	--	--	--	--
Building (max)				
Building Coverage	--	--	--	--
Height (ft)	36	40	75 [1]	36
Ground floor area (sq ft)	10,000	50,000	--	--
Building Setback (min ft)				
Front yard	15	15	15	15
Side (street) yard	15	15	15	15
Side (interior) yard	--	--	--	--
Rear yard	--	--	--	--
Rear Yard (adjacent to street/lane)	15	15	15	15
From access easement	5	5	5	5
Building separation	See Fire Code	See Fire Code	See Fire Code	See Fire Code
Accessory Structure Setback	See Sec. 8.7	See Sec. 8.7	See Sec. 8.7	See Sec. 8.7
Parking Area Setback (min ft)				
From collector and arterial street rights-of-way	15	15	15	15
From local street rights-of-way	10	10	10	10
Abutting lane or access easement	5	5	5	5
[1] Buildings proposed within 50 feet of a Residential zoning district shall be subject to the height restrictions established in such Residential zoning district and then may increase in height one (1) foot for every one (1) foot of distance from the Residential zoning district. For example, the portion of the building that is 65 feet from a Residential zoning district with a 36-foot height limit cannot exceed 51 feet in height.				

ARTICLE 8.0 USE STANDARDS

Sec. 8.1 Residential Use Standards for Limited and Special Uses

8.1.9 Townhouses, Stacked Townhouses, and Apartments

- a. Buildings containing dwelling units shall be setback no less than 100 feet from the following as measured from nearest point of the building to the property line of the applicable use listed below:
 - i. An Interstate/Limited Access Street as defined in Appendix A-1;
 - ii. A railroad right-of-way or spur; or
 - iii. A Class 6 use as defined in Sec. 9.5.4.e Use Buffers.
- b. If any of the facilities or uses listed in subsection a. are introduced after a residential development is established, the residential use shall not be considered nonconforming.
- c. The minimum front and side street setbacks may be reduced to 10 feet when surface parking is located on the interior side or rear of the building.
- d. Maximum building height may be increased by 15 feet when one of the items below is provided in the subject building. This bonus may only be applied once per building. Footnote 1 in Tables 5.15.6 and 5.16.5 shall apply to any height increase allowed by this standard.
 - i. Nonresidential principal uses that have exterior pedestrian entrances occupy at least 50% of the finished floor area of the ground floor;
 - ii. Affordable housing, as defined and quantified by the City of Savannah, is provided within the development and so certified by the City Manager.
- e. Vehicle parking requirements for residential units may be reduced by 5% per 1,000 square feet of nonresidential principal uses in a mixed-use building containing at least 10 dwelling units.
- f. Facades facing a public street shall incorporate at least two of the following:
 - i. An exterior material shall not cover more than 16 continuous horizontal feet of façade before changing to a different material;
 - ii. Facades shall have horizontal articulation not less than 12 inches in depth for every 16 feet of horizontal length;
 - iii. A dormer or functional balcony or stoop shall be provided for every 32 feet of façade length;
 - iv. No less than 15% of the area of the façade shall be masonry or a similar-quality material. No more than 10% of the façade, including roof gables, shall be EIFS, vinyl, or composite;
 - v. Ground floor facades shall contain no less than 25% transparency; or
 - vi. The first 20 feet of the building extending horizontally from the street facing façade shall be constructed with either a roof with pitch not less than 4/12 or a parapet wall with a cornice or similar architectural detail.

Sec. 8.7 Accessory Structures and Uses

8.7.3 Accessory Structures

c. Setbacks

- i. An accessory building or structure shall ~~be located within~~ have a minimum rear setback of five (5) feet ~~of the rear property line~~ or meet the same rear setback requirement as the principal structure, whichever is less. An accessory building or structure shall meet the same side-yard setback requirement as the principal structure or five (5) feet, whichever is less.
- ii. Docks shall be exempt from any setback requirement.
- iii. Any building that is used to house vehicles or watercraft, and that is accessed from a lane, shall be located at least five (5) feet from such right-of-way. The City Manager or his or her designee may reduce the setback to three (3) feet.
- iv. Where Residential property is located adjacent to a river or marsh, accessory buildings and structures may be permitted in the front yard if all of the following requirements can be met:
 1. The accessory building or structure is set back a minimum of 50 feet from any vehicular right-of-way and is at least 10 feet from adjoining property lines;
 2. The footprint of the accessory building or structure does not exceed 1,200 square feet or 40% of the footprint of the principal building, whichever is less; and
 3. The accessory building or structure is constructed of the same or compatible material and color as the principal building, as approved by the City Manager or his or her designee.

ARTICLE 9.0 GENERAL SITE STANDARDS

Sec. 9.3 Off-Street Parking and Loading

9.3.4 Off-Street Parking Requirements

a. Calculation

i. Measurements

1. The area of the use shall be measured in gross square feet, unless otherwise specified.
2. In hospitals, bassinets shall not count as beds.
3. See Sec. 4.1.13 to determine how to calculate the number of seats for uses that do not use chairs or stools.
4. The number of employees shall be computed based on the work shift with the greatest number of employees.

ii. Fractional Measurements

When units or measurements determining number of required off-street parking spaces result in the requirement of a fractional space, then such fraction equal to or greater than one-half (0.5) shall require a full off-street parking space. However, when the units or measurements determining the reduction of the number of off-street parking spaces results in a fractional space, the fractional space shall not be counted.

iii. **Minimum Space Requirements for Uses Not Identified**

Where the need for parking of a particular use is uncertain due to unknown/unusual operating characteristics or where the use is not specifically identified in Sec. 9.3.4(d), the City Manager or his or her designee shall determine the parking requirement. The applicable uses are identified in Sec. 9.3.4(d). In making such a determination, the City Manager or his or her designee shall be guided by the number of persons to be employed in such building or by such use; the number of persons expected to reside in, visit or patronize such building or use; the anticipated percentage of residents, visitors or patrons driving vehicles; the need for safe and convenient loading space for visitors or patrons and goods, and/or applicant submitted parking data. Such data may include, but is not limited to, site studies from similar uses, generally accepted engineering standards (e.g., Institute of Transportation Engineers trip and parking operation rates), or independent engineering calculations based on the nature of the proposed use.

iv. **Credit for Legally Nonconforming Parking Areas (Grandfathered Spaces)**

This provision shall not apply if the building space is increased by 40% or more.

In determining the off-street parking requirement for a use which is located (or will be located) within an existing building, the required amount of parking is determined by first calculating the number of spaces which would be required if the use were to be located within a new building under this Ordinance. Then, credit is given against that requirement for any number of spaces which would have been required under this Ordinance for the prior uses in the existing building, but which were not provided because such building was occupied prior to the passage of the ordinance applied when the development occurred which required parking spaces.

v. **Transit and Multimodal Pedestrian and Bicycle Network Access**

1. **Where a use is within 1,320 feet (1/4 mile) of a public transit stop or City of Savannah multimodal pedestrian and bicycle network and is connected by an accessible pedestrian route, the required off-street parking for Residential uses may be reduced by 25 percent, as approved by the City Manager or his or her designee.**
2. **The reduction may be applied in combination with other parking reductions and credits and shall be applied to the total parking requirement prior to the calculation of additional reductions or credits.**
3. **Reductions in parking requirements allowed by this section which result in a reduction of a fraction of a space shall round up to the next whole space when the fraction is 0.5 or greater.**

Sec. 9.5 Screening and Buffers

Sec. 9.5.4 Buffers

a. Use Buffers

1. Class 2

- a. Three-Four Family, Townhomes; attached residential ~~under 5 units per building~~ with 25 or fewer total units on site;
- b. Children's home;
- c. Personal care home, group;
- d. Rooming house;
- e. Residential Amenity Area, Clubhouse (accessory to a residential use);
- f. Bed & Breakfast, Inn; Short-term Vacation Rental Unit; and
- g. Vacant land within the following zoning districts: RMHP, RMF-1, D-R, D-N.

2. Class 3

- a. Attached residential ~~5 units or more per building~~ and apartments with greater than 25 total units on site;
- b. Group Living Uses (unless specifically listed in another Land Use Class);
- c. Campground, Recreational Vehicle Park;
- d. Agricultural Uses (Agriculture, general shall not be required to buffer against Agriculture, restricted); See Sec. 8.2.2 for Surface Mine/Borrow Pit buffer standards;
- e. All Civic Uses (unless specifically listed in another Land Use Class);
- f. Riding academy; equestrian center; horse stable, commercial;
- g. Uses as permitted (meeting the conditions of) in the OI-T zoning district;
- h. Class 1(a) Composting Facility; and
- i. Vacant land within the following zoning districts: RMF-2, RMF-3, A-1, OI-T, TN-, TC-, D-C, D-CBD, D-W, D-X.

ARTICLE 11.0 NONCONFORMITIES

Sec. 11.5 Nonconforming Lots of Record

11.5.3 Development on Nonconforming Lots

Development on nonconforming lots is subject to the following exceptions and modifications:

a. Adjoining Lots

- i. When two or more adjoining lots with continuous frontage are in one ownership at any time after the adoption of this Ordinance and such lots, individually, are less than 5,000 square feet in area or less than 50 feet in width, such group of lots shall be considered as a single lot or several lots of minimum permitted width and area for the district in which located.

- ii. However, when such combination of lots would create a single lot having a width of ~~90~~ 80 feet or more and an area of ~~9,000~~ 7,500 square feet or more, such lot may be divided into two lots of equal width and area; provided, each of the two lots shall be served by public water and public sewers.
- iii. Provided however, in order to reflect the area's prevailing historic lot size pattern, such adjoining substandard lots may be replatted for single-family residential development to a minimum area of 3,000 square feet and minimum width of ~~40~~ 30 feet where the cumulative majority (greater than 50 percent) of all residential lots in the same block face are of equal or lesser area of width than the proposed replatted lots.
- iv. When at least one of the nonconforming lots of record in a continuous frontage is developed as affordable housing, as quantified by the City of Savannah and so certified by the City Manager, then all lots in the continuous frontage, up to a maximum of four lots of record, shall be considered legal building sites.

ARTICLE 13.0 ABBREVIATIONS AND DEFINITIONS

Sec. 13.2 Abbreviations and Definitions

Site Area: Site area is the total area of land included in a development plan exclusive of existing or proposed public rights-of-way, wetlands under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and marsh as defined by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources.

BACKGROUND:

A goal in several City initiatives and plans is to remove barriers to housing and implement strategies that permit a wider range of housing that is affordable. This proposal seeks to alleviate barriers related to zoning and development standards to permit housing in more districts at appropriate levels.

Currently within the City of Savannah, multifamily is usually only permitted on properties designated as RMF (Residential Multi-Family) outside of the historic urban core of the city. Typically, developments on properties carrying that zoning designation are larger in scope and scale. What is not as permitted throughout the City is what is commonly referred to as “Missing Middle.” These are types of multifamily, whether a 3- or 4-unit walkup or apartment building, that fill the gap, “middle,” of a housing need. These are typically not as dense as most typical multifamily buildings, but still offer a reasonable option in a scale and scope that may fit in more in a neighborhood context.

Within the urban core of the City, the “Traditional” districts do permit more varied housing types, and potential mixed-use opportunities, but do not exist outside of the historical context of that urban core. Once outside of a certain range, the composition of commercial districts transitions to a combination of the Office and Institutional Districts and the Business Districts. This is one step to provide options and variety for the development of needed housing.

FACTS AND FINDINGS:

1. Several different “missing middle” housing uses are being added to 6 districts that did not previously permit these uses. The proposed text amendment identifies the districts these uses are proposed be add to as permitted uses, and the standards to which they should be developed to. It also adds different design criteria and tools to address parking and mixed use.
2. This amendment supports several goals of the City’s GPS and Housing Savannah Action Plan: GPS Goal 2 and Goal 3, and Housing Savanah Action Plan Strategy 5.
3. The OI and B districts are currently underutilized districts that could better serve the community by adding housing and initiating activity in currently vacant or faltering commercial areas.
4. The uses are being added as a mixture of by right and limited, potentially limiting barriers to development, while also proposing *Sec 8.1.9 Townhouses, Stacked Townhouses, and Apartments* to give criteria for design, and alleviate other standards to facilitate design.
5. MPC Staff has also added points to this amendment shown in Green.

ORDINANCE ANALYSIS:

Per section 3.7.7 of Article 3, Savannah’s Zoning Ordinance offers four (4) review criteria for proposed text amendments:

- a. **Consistency** – The extent to which the proposed text amendment is consistent with the

remainder of the Zoning Ordinance, including any purpose and intent statements.

MPC Staff Comment: *The amendment is consistent with the purpose of the Ordinance to permit a mix of residential and nonresidential uses.*

- b. **New or Changing Circumstances** – The extent to which the proposed text amendment represents a new idea not considered in the existing Zoning Ordinance, or represents a revision necessitated by changing circumstances over time.

MPC Staff Comment: *The amendment removes barriers to introducing housing that is affordable. The City's commitment to diversify housing opportunities fulfills several goals of the City.*

- c. **Error or Inappropriate Standard** – Whether or not the proposed text amendment corrects an error in the Zoning Ordinance, or otherwise improves upon existing requirements or standards.

MPC Staff Comment: *The amendment adds existing uses to more districts, with some additional standards, and is not necessarily a correction of the ordinance.*

- d. **Compliance with Higher Law** – Whether or not the proposed text amendment revises the Zoning Ordinance to comply with state or federal statutes.

MPC Staff Comment: *Several federal and state acts have been enacted that touch upon this subject, however the City is also complying with it's own goals and strategies.*

POLICY ANALYSIS:

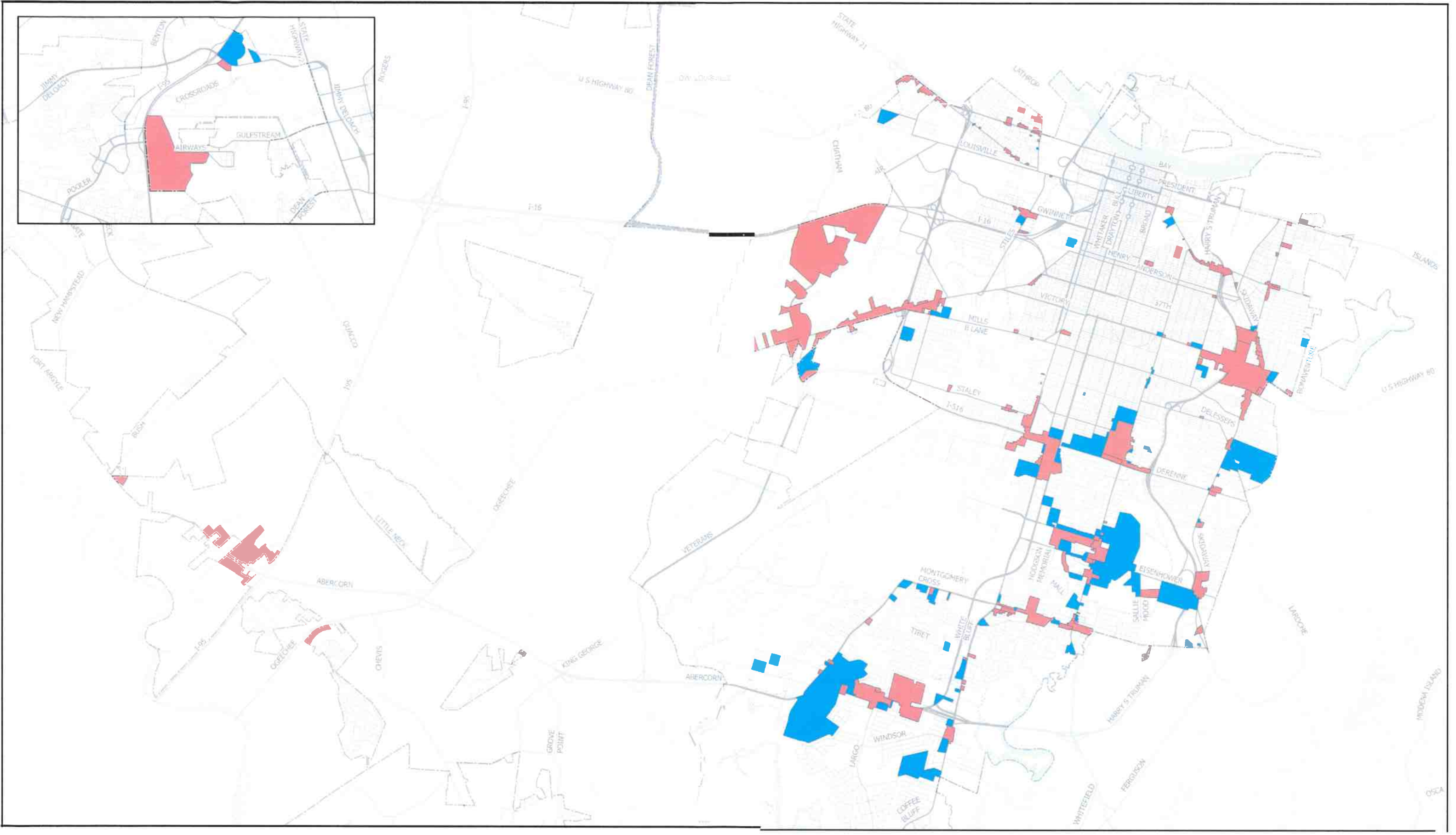
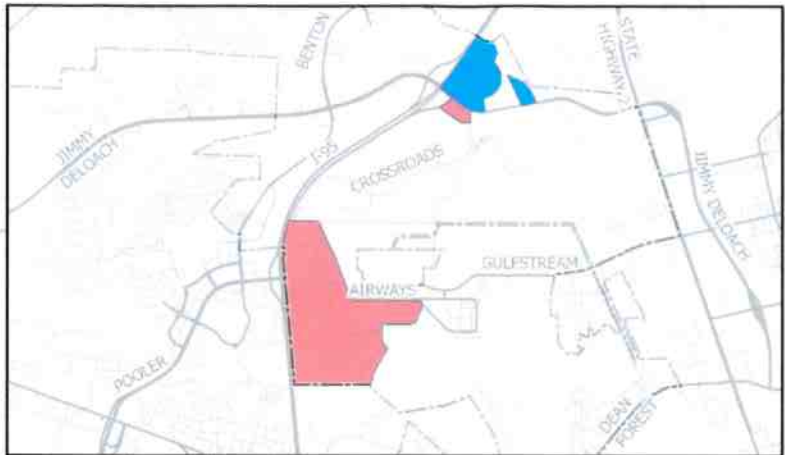
The proposed text amendments support *Savannah GPS Goal 2*, Invest in Equitable Community Development and Resiliency, by implementing programs and partner with organizations to build, retain and improve affordable and workforce housing options for individuals and families, and updating housing policies and ordinances to remove barriers and offer incentives that encourage the development of affordable housing. The text amendment would establish new development standards for several types of housing uses in several different districts, while also giving flexibility to design.

The proposed text amendments also support *Savannah GPS Goal 3*, Expand Economic Access, Opportunity and Vitality for All by collaborating with partners and local businesses to foster economic opportunity by implementing effective economic development incentive programs, streamlining permit and license processes and building needed infrastructure to support local economic growth. The text amendment also promotes the development of housing and commercial spaces near transit hubs.

A concern that has been at the forefront for many recent development applications is parking, specifically the lack thereof. While the reductions potentially granted by proximity to transit, and by allowing mixed use, are aspirational and reasonable in a vacuum at this time they are contrary to public concern.

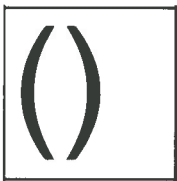
The Planning Commission RECOMMENDATION:

The Planning Commission recommends **APPROVAL** of the request to amend Articles 5 Base Zoning Districts, 8 Use Standards, 9 General Site Standards and 13 Abbreviations and Buffers to permit several different housing types in multiple districts.



CHATHAM COUNTY • SAVANNAH
METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION
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THIS MAP IS A COMPILATION OF INFORMATION FROM VARIOUS SOURCES WHO SCALE. IN MOST CASES THE INFORMATION HAS NOT BEEN FIELD VERIFIED. USE THIS MAP FOR GENERAL PLANNING PURPOSES ONLY.



-  "OFFICE" ZONINGS (O1, OH, O1-T)
-  "BUSINESS" ZONINGS (B-C, B-I, B-N)

Business & Office/Institutional Type Zoning Districts within the City of Savannah

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