



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 3, 2025

TO: THE MAYOR AND ALDERMEN OF THE CITY OF SAVANNAH

FROM: METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION

SUBJECT: Master Plan Amendment

PETITION REFERENCED:

Owner: Gary Wiggin with Highlands Park Commercial, LLC

Address: 143, 149, & 155 Shellbark Way

Alderman District: 1 – Bernetta Lanier

County Commission District: 3 – Kenneth Adams

Property Identification Number: 21016 02118, 21016 02119, & 21016 02120

Petition File Number: 25-000046-ZA

MPC ACTION:

The Planning Commission recommends **denial** of the requested Master Plan amendment to permit residential development in accordance with the standards of the RMF-2 zoning district at a density not to exceed 23 dwelling units per acre. If approved by the City Council, MPC recommends that the City Staff look at where the road sits on the priority list so that the MPO can make necessary amendments to move the project up to initiate those improvements.

MPC STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

As the requested use is generally appropriate with the existing pattern of development, MPC Staff recommends **approval** of the requested Master Plan amendment to permit residential development in accordance with the standards of the RMF-2 zoning district at a density not to exceed 23 dwelling units per acre.

MEMBERS PRESENT: 11

Traci Amick
Laureen Boles
Travis Coles – Vice Chair
Joseph Ervin
Karen Jarrett – Chairwoman
Michael Kaigler
Jeff Notrica
Stephen Plunk
Joseph Welch
Amanda Wilson
Tom Woiwode

PLANNING COMMISSION VOTE: Deny Petitioner's Request. (6-5)

APPROVAL Votes: 6	DENIAL Votes: 5	ABSENT	Abstain	Recused
Amick Boles Ervin Jarrett Kaigler Wilson	Coles Notrica Plunk Welch Woiwode	Melder Ross Stephens		



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



**Council Report
Amended Master Plan
MPC File No. 25-000046-PLAN
June 3, 2025**

To: City Council
From: Planning Commission
Date: June 3, 2025
Subject: Master Plan Amendment
Highlands Park – Master Plan Amendment #4
Godley Station PD (North)
PIN(s): 21016 02120, 21016 02119, 21016 02118
Aldermanic District 1 – Bernetta Lanier
Chatham County Commission District 3 – Kenneth Adams
Project Acres: 9.8 acres
PD (Planned Development) Zoning District
MPC File No.: 25-000046-PLAN
MPC Reference File No.: 15-000236-PLAN (M-20150224-000236-1)
Thomas and Hutton, John Giordano - Engineer
Gary Wiggin for Highlands Park Commercial, LLC, Owner

MPC Project Planner: Edward Morrow

Nature of Request

The Petitioner requests approval of an amendment to the Master Plan for Highlands Park within the Godley Station PUD. The amendment would convert a 9.8-acre tract for development in accordance with the RMF-2 zoning district with a gross density of 23 dwelling units per acre. Approval would potentially permit up to 225 dwelling units to be constructed. No concept plan has been submitted or variances requested in association with the proposal.



Master Plan Amendment #3
Current



Master Plan Amendment #4
Proposed

Background

Upon establishment in 2005, Highlands Park was conceptualized as a largely institutional and commercial development pod located at the intersection of Benton Boulevard and Highlands Boulevard within the larger Godley Station PD. The Specific Master Plan clarified and expanded

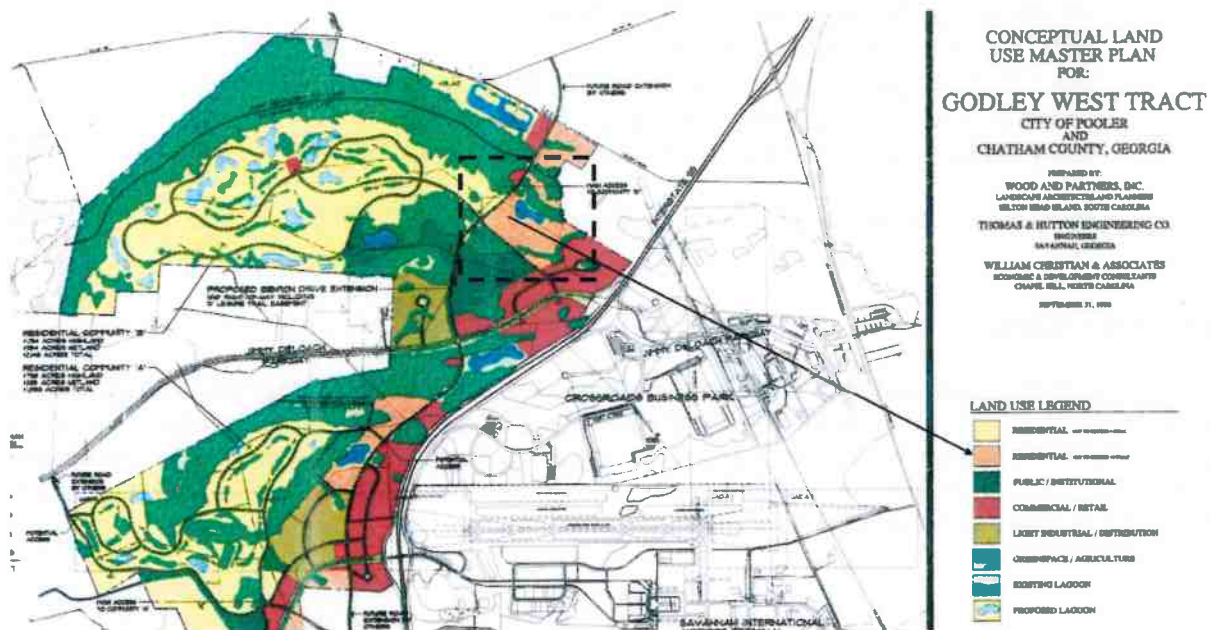


**Highlands Park
Amended Master Plan
MPC File No. 25-000046-PLAN
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uses previously established in a Godley Station global amendment approved in 2003. It is worthwhile to note, however, that the original land use designation for this tract was multifamily per the 1996 Godley Station PD. It is unclear that the originally anticipated dwelling unit yields were ever meaningfully reconciled to reflect changes to the Master Plan.

The Specific Master Plan in question has undergone 2 previous revisions following its initial adoption in 2005. The first amendment (2015) saw the reallocation of parcels adjoining the subject parcels to multifamily use. A second revision (2024) clarified and updated development standards associated with proposed commercial land already designated.

Per the petitioner, low demand for commercial land at this location has prompted the present request to further reallocate commercial land for residential use.



1996 Godley Station Master Plan

Public Notice

As required by the Zoning Ordinance, all property owners within 300 feet of the subject property were sent notices of the proposed amendment. Public notice was also posted on site and a legal ad posted in the Savannah Morning News.

Meetings were held with the leadership of the Highlands Neighborhood Association on multiple occasions to discuss the need for the proposed changes and to understand resident concerns. MPC Staff was present for at least one meeting which occurred on March 19, 2025.

Existing Development

The subject parcels were subdivided and infrastructure installed in or about 2007; however, they have remained undeveloped since that time. Adjoining parcels to the south and west reallocated



for multifamily use in 2015 have since been developed and are presently occupied.

Findings

1. **Purpose:** The primary purpose of the proposed amendment is to reallocate 9.8 acres currently designated for commercial uses for residential development.
2. **Zoning District/Proposed Uses:** The proposed development would be consistent with the City of Savannah RMF-2 zoning district at a maximum density of 23 dwelling units per acre. This would permit a maximum potential gross density of 225 dwelling units for the 9.8 acre site.
3. **Site:** The total site acreage is 9.8 acres. It is bordered to the north and east by wetlands, to the south by multifamily, 'neighborhood center,' and public/institutional uses, and to the west by Benton Blvd.
4. **Access/Traffic:** While no conceptual site plan has been submitted, access to the proposed apartment development is expected via Shellbark Way from either Highlands or Benton Boulevards.

Analysis

The present discussion bears great similarity to that had during 2015 reallocation from institutional to residential use for adjoining parcels in Highlands Park ([15-000236-PLAN](#)). Residents are displeased with the lack of commercial and service offerings in North Godley, forcing them to travel to Pooler Parkway. Schools are overcrowded with facilities planning unable to keep pace. Additionally, dwellings are continually added to already overburdened roadways. These are key Staff takeaways from the neighborhood meeting and email correspondence regarding the proposed amendment and other development petitions in Godley over the course of the last 2 years.

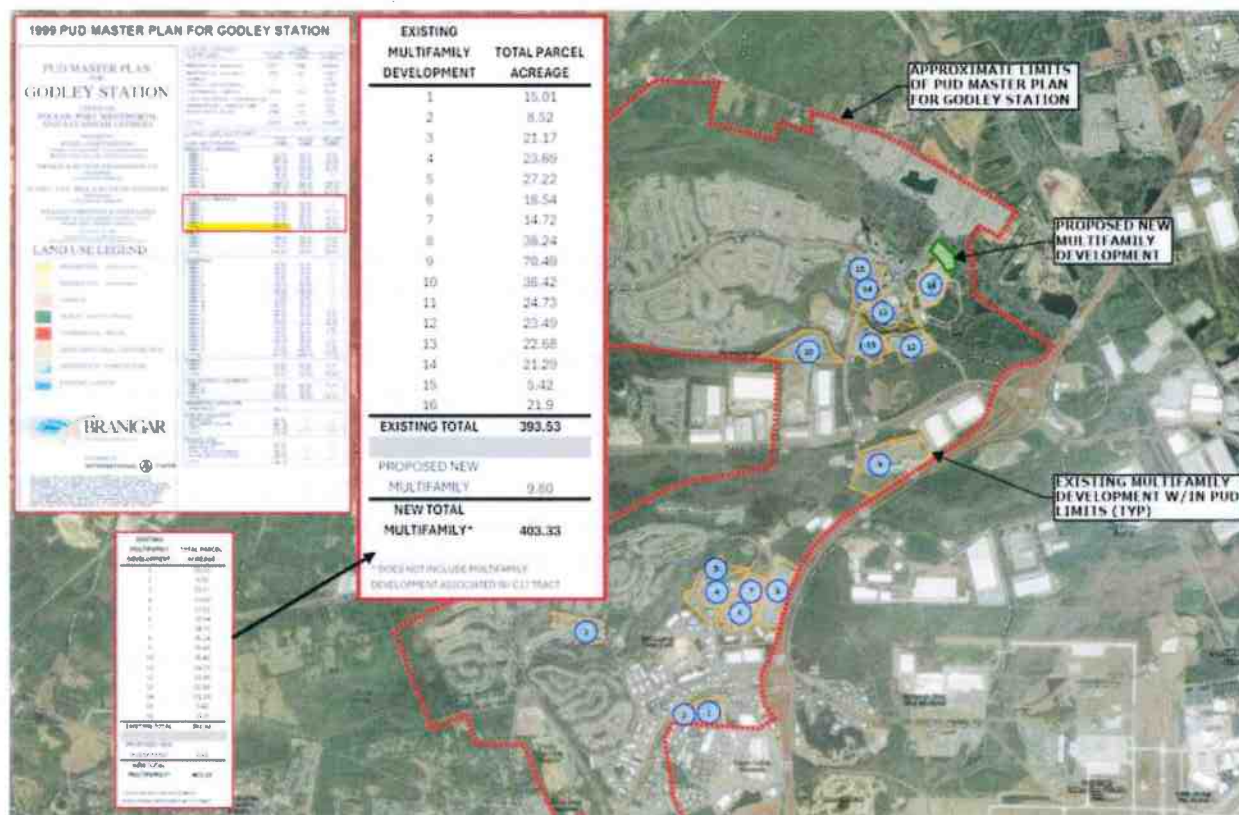
At the request of Staff, the Petitioner provided an exhibit identifying multifamily developments and reconciling them with data from an approved Master Plan in an effort to substantiate that the requested dwelling units would not exceed the anticipated allocations approved by Council at the establishment of the PD or in subsequent global revisions. Based upon the analysis, the Petitioner asserts that the reallocation would result in 403.33 gross acres of multifamily development where +/- 507 gross acres have been authorized.

That residents currently experience distress from traffic and lack of access to amenities has been well established. However, given the history of amendment of both Godley Station and the Highlands Master Plan, appropriateness of either the present use or that requested is likely beyond question. More pertinent is the question of timing. Arguably, 9.8 acres developed as a commercial use is likely to generate a greater peak travel demand than 225 apartments on the same parcel. Moreover, the remaining 12.2 acres indicated for 'neighborhood center' use have yet to be developed, but are also likely to have a greater-than-anticipated impact.

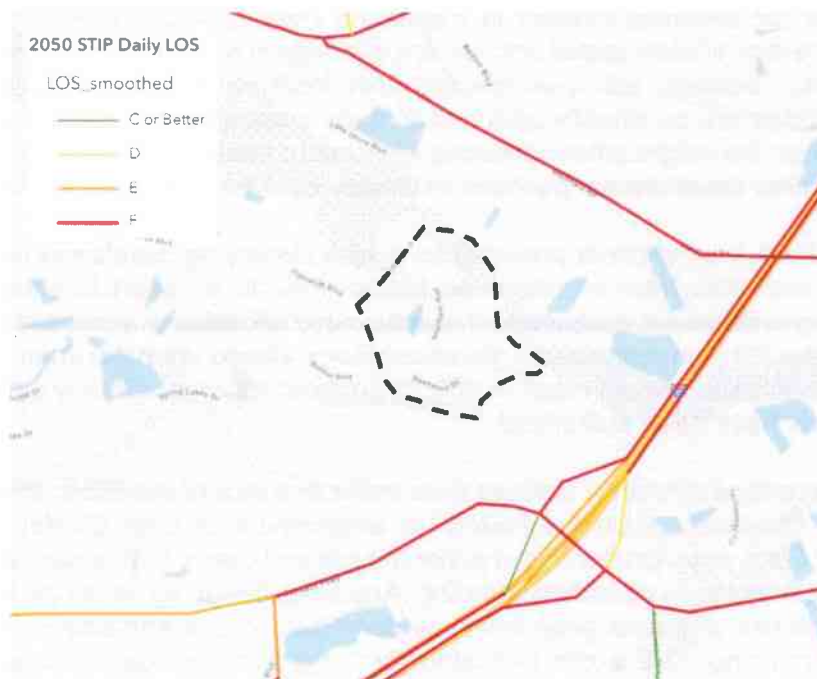
In the interest of leaving adequate land area for future small-scale retail and service establishments, future amendments of the Master Plan to reallocate land uses should likely be avoided.



Highlands Park
Amended Master Plan
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Multifamily Development Exhibit



Preliminary MTP 2050 Daily Level of Service Data



Recommendation

The Planning Commission recommends **denial** of the requested Master Plan amendment to permit residential development in accordance with the standards of the RMF-2 zoning district at a density not to exceed 23 dwelling units per acre. If approved by the City Council, MPC recommends that the City Staff look at where the road sits on the priority list so that the MPO can make necessary amendments to move the project up to initiate those improvements.

History of Highlands Park Master Plan Amendments



Master Plan Amendment #3
Current - 2024



Master Plan Amendment #4
Proposed - 2025



Master Plan Amendment #2
2015



Original - Specific Master Plan
2005

