



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: November 19, 2024
TO: THE MAYOR AND ALDERMEN OF THE CITY OF SAVANNAH
FROM: METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION
SUBJECT: Future Land Use Map Amendment

PETITION REFERENCED:

Petitioner: Jeff Jepson

Agent: Michael Garcia

Address: 1001 and 1015 Whitaker Street, and 120 and 124 West Park Street

Alderman: District - 2 – Detric Leggett

County Commission: District - 2– Malinda Scott Hodge

Property Identification Number: 20044- 25001, 25002, 24003, 24002

Petition File No.: 24-005816-ZA

MPC ACTION:

The Planning Commission recommends **approval** of a Future Land Use Map amendment from Traditional Neighborhood to Traditional Commercial, consistent with long standing uses on the subject parcels and adjacency to a minor arterial.

MPC STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

MPC Staff recommends **approval** of a Future Land Use Map amendment from Traditional Neighborhood to Traditional Commercial, consistent with long standing uses on the subject parcels and adjacency to a minor arterial.

MEMBERS PRESENT: 8

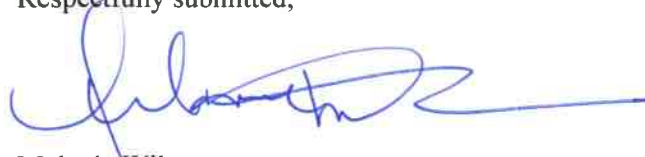
Michael Kaigler
Dwayne Stephens
Coren Ross
Tom Woiwode
Laureen Boles
Amanda Wilson
Karen Jarrett – Chairwoman
Joseph Ervin



PLANNING COMMISSION VOTE: Approve Staff Recommendation.
(7-0)

APPROVAL Votes: 7	DENIAL Votes:	ABSENT	Abstain	Recused	Online
Jarrett Boles Woiwode Ervin Wilson Kaigler Melder		Welch Notrica Amick Coles Ross Plunk			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, Planning and Urban Design



CHATHAM COUNTY-SAVANNAH METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION

"Planning the Future, Respecting the Past"

Council Report

To: City Council
From: The Planning Commission
Date: November 19, 2024
Subject: Comprehensive Plan - Future Land Use Map Amendment

Applicant/Agent: Jeff Jepson, Evans General Contractors

Michael Garcia, LS3P Associates, Ltd.

Address: 1001 and 1015 Whitaker Street, and 120 and 124 West Park Street

PIN's: 20044- 25001, 25002, 24003, 24002

Site Area: 0.97 acres

Aldermanic District: 2 - Detric Leggett

Chatham County Commission District: 2 - Malinda Scott Hodge

File Number: 24-005816-ZA-FLUM

Request:

The Petitioner requests amendment of the Future Land Use Map from *Traditional Neighborhood* to *Traditional Commercial* in association with a proposed office building and underground parking facility. The request is made concurrently with a request to rezone the subject property.

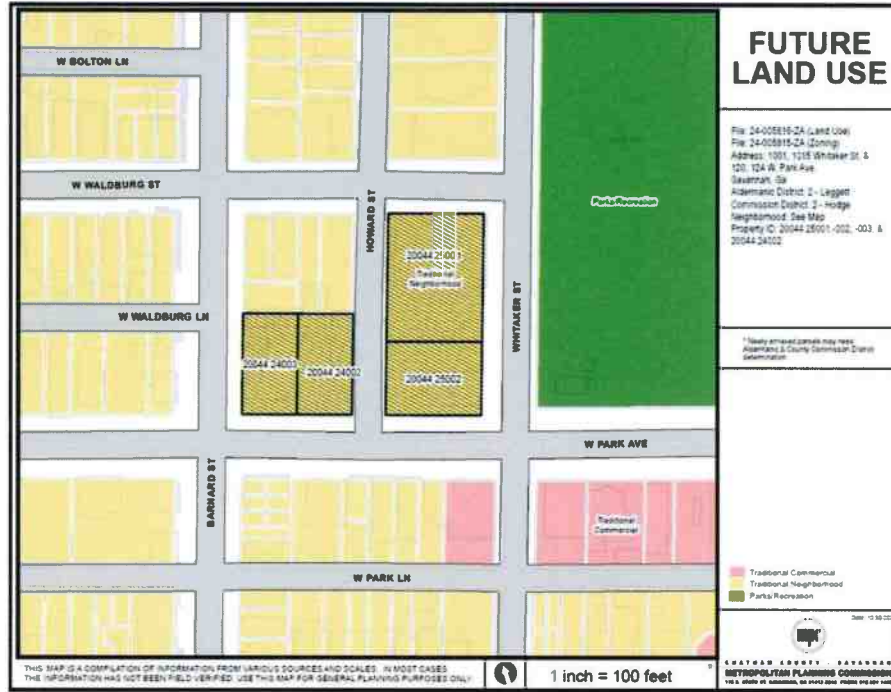
Background:

The amendment is requested in connection with a proposed development that will utilize four parcels to construct 3 office buildings with an accessory underground parking facility that is intended to serve both the proposed structures and the general public for off-street parking needs in the vicinity of Historic Forsyth Park.

On [March 28, 2024](#) Savannah's City Council endorsed a development agreement with *Forsyth Park Commons, LLC* for an underground public parking garage. Per the agreement, the partnership would result in the construction of a 2-story underground parking garage with 450 spaces to support the estimated 115,000 square foot office use. One hundred of the spaces are

Comprehensive Plan - Future Land Use Map Amendment
 1001 and 1015 Whitaker Street, and 120 and 124 West Park Street
 Jeff Jepson and Michael Garcia
 24-005816-ZA-FLUM

to be made available to the public during business hours and all spaces made available to the public after business hours and on the weekend.




Future Land Use Map




Subject Parcels

URBAN CORE

The Urban Core character area contains the local and National Register Victorian and Streetcar Historic Districts, as well as the Eastside neighborhoods in the city of Savannah. This area is characterized by a mix of detached and attached single-family homes, mid-size multi-family buildings, and smaller-scale, neighborhood commercial. Urban Core areas are walkable with a well-connected sidewalk network and street grid. Lot sizes are larger and building heights lower (around 2-4 stories) than in the Urban Downtown. Infill and redevelopment opportunities are more widely available in the Urban Core; any future development should maintain the walkable densities and be compatible with the community character. A range of housing options should be encouraged in the Urban Core to accommodate workers, students, small families, seniors, and others.



PRIMARY USES	Attached & detached Residential, Multi-Family
SECONDARY USES	Commercial, mixed-use, civic & institutional, short-term rental
DENSITY	Medium-high; 6-20 units per acre
TRANSPORTATION	Interconnected street grid, multi-modal transportation
ROAD FUNCT. CLASS	Local roads, collector, arterial, expressway
PARKING	On-street, off-street, limited surface, private driveways
UTILITIES	Supported by existing municipal utilities
OPEN SPACE	Municipal parks, squares, cemeteries, waterfront



'Urban Core' – Plan 2040 Character Area Designation of the Subject Properties

Evaluation:

Within the City of Savannah, the Zoning Ordinance requires amendments to the zoning map to be consistent with the FLUM. In essence, amendment of the FLUM very technically signals appropriateness of only specifically identified zoning districts. *NewZO* requires a Future Land Use designation of 'Traditional Commercial' for property to be rezoned to a Traditional Commercial (1 or 2) zoning district.

Consideration of the following points may serve to elucidate whether the proposed amendment meets the intent of published policy documents:

1. The relationship of the proposed amendment to the existing and future land uses depicted in the Future Land Use Map.

MPC Comment: The Future Land Use map presently designates the subject parcels for 'Traditional Neighborhood' use. By definition, these include *"Residential areas in close proximity to downtown or in outlying historically settled areas. This category includes non-residential uses that are compatible with the residential character of neighborhoods."*

The requested 'Traditional Commercial' designation is intended for *"Business areas in close proximity to downtown or in outlying historically settled areas. This category includes commercial uses that should be compatible with the character and scale of adjacent neighborhoods, most often found along collectors and arterials. Characteristics include walkability, limited or on-street parking, and multi-tenant retail."*

Each of the subject parcels presently contains principal use nonresidential structures: two mid-century office buildings and a mortuary formed from the merging of two historic residences. According to the [District Resource Map](#), none of the structures in question were designated as 'contributing' to the character of the District. Demolition of all three structures is proposed contingent upon approval of a COA for the proposed office building. The structures to be demolished are not characteristic of the District's period of significance, neither are they conforming with regard to the current development standards of the District, which were adopted well after their construction.

The proposal would not introduce new or inconsistent principal uses but would introduce structures larger in scale and increased in intensity. Existing offices range in size from approximately 2,800 square feet in gross area to approximately 8,000 square feet. Proposed are structures closer to 10,000 square feet in floor area with multiple stories. Aside from the specific development proposed, however, it should be noted that the requested amendment is arguably more akin to a correction of the future land use map to reflect uses in place for several decades than introduction of something wholly new. The requested FLUM designation more closely represents the *Plan 2040* Character Area designation of existing and proposed uses of the arterial-fronting site.

2. The relationship of the proposed amendment to any applicable goals, objectives, policies, criteria, and standards adopted in the Comprehensive Plan.

MPC Comment: The requested 'Traditional Commercial' FLUM designation more closely represents the *Plan 2040* Character Area designation of the site as well as the nature of its current and future uses.

The “Traditional” character areas (and associated zoning districts) are closely related by design and cumulative in nature, with each higher classification representing a slight increase in density or use intensity. Regardless of the use the intent of the District is that development be compact and walkable in its form, contributing to the relatively dense, historic urban context in which it is situated.

The specifically proposed development seeks to enhance District character through restoration of the traditional development pattern where it has been lost and construction of architecturally significant structures on the subject parcels.

- Other professional planning principles, standards, information and more detailed plans and studies considered relevant.

MPC Comment: The "[Parking Matters](#)" study, conducted in 2015 and 2016 by CORE MPO and the City of Savannah, addresses parking challenges in downtown and other dense areas. The report proposes strategies to improve parking and mobility, such as encouraging a "park once" behavior to reduce auto trips and parking demand. The report also recommends the creation of small area plans to facilitate the strategic establishment of new structures in redevelopment areas likely to experience significant future parking demand.

3.1 Plan for future parking garages and expansions to supply through coordination with development and land use planning

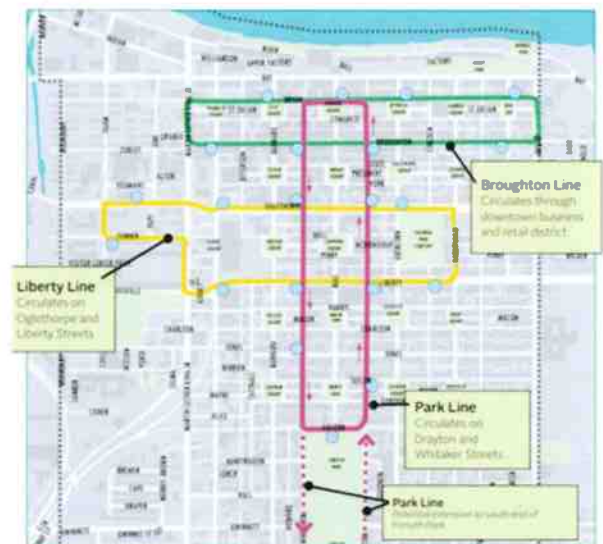
Key Action Steps

- Identify areas of development potential. The Parking Matters study explored two of these, the Indian Street-West River Street district and an area east of East Broad Street and south of Liberty Street. Other potential redevelopment areas should be identified with a general assessment of development potential and likely parking demand.
- Develop small area plans. The City and MPC should develop master plans for potential redevelopment areas to better understand appropriate development scale and potential, sites for large facilities such as parking structures, and opportunity for connecting these areas to other parts of downtown and its transportation system.
- Determine financial feasibility of structures. FPM should perform due diligence studies on potential sites to determine overall feasibility and efficiency of structures, and submit plan for these structures to be larger than what immediate development potential might suggest. The intent of this is to allow any new investments in parking to support private development, especially through changes to zoning and development regulations defined further in this section, but also to continue to increase public parking supply for the greater downtown area. These spaces might be remotely located relative to high-demand locations, though when connected to downtown with a larger system of mobility options they are natural candidates for lower-

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE	
Priority Time Frame	Long Term (3-5 Years)
Target Time Frame	Determined as needed or based on opportunity
Up-Front Cost	No cost to adoption of policy; structure costs based on garage location and determined need
Annual Costs	Based on garage location and determined need
Partner Agencies	MPC
Strategies to be implemented prior to beginning	None
Related Recommendations	3.2, 3.3 (Zoning changes), 3.5 (In-Hou payment option)
Additional Actions	Ongoing evaluation with affected stakeholders and organizations

priced parking to absorb demand and preserve availability in higher-demand, higher-priced locations.

Figure 4.3. Recommended routes for downtown circulator service



Recommended service uses the same number of revenue service hours and assigns them to a network of corridor-based routes, with suggested names identified in the diagram above. These feature evenly-spaced stops allowing visitors to reach a stop in either direction of a route's top alignment with a walk of no more than five minutes, and current route alignments should allow 10 to 15-minute frequencies for the same operating cost as current shuttle services, leading to an overall zero-net addition of passenger-wait time. Riders use transfer stops between corridors. More detailed route planning will be necessary to identify particular alignments, turn restrictions and other operating factors.

Additionally, the [Forsyth Park Master Plan](#), while intended to be a guide, contemplates additions and modifications to the Park which could benefit from the provision of additional parking in close proximity.



The final Forsyth Park design proposed by Friends of Forsyth. The plan includes new restroom facilities, additional gardens, gathering spaces and a bike path around the perimeter of the park. Nelson Byrd Woitz Landscape Architects

4. Written comments, evidence, and testimony of the public.

MPC Comment: MPC Staff has received mixed feedback regarding the proposal, with greater acceptance of the present iteration than the previous concept. The Petitioner's consideration of and response to community concerns resulted in an initial withdrawal to permit creation of the modified concept for the FLUM and rezoning requests presently under consideration.

Public comments have included concern for: an incompatible scale of development, impacts to the structural integrity of historic homes in the vicinity during construction, destruction of mature trees, increased traffic on Howard Street, and the omission of archaeological study of the site.

Staff has received written opposition to the project, favoring maintenance of the more so aspirational 'Traditional Neighborhood' designation the site presently carries.

Recommendation

The Planning Commission recommends **approval** of the request to amend the FLUM from a designation of Traditional Neighborhood to Traditional Commercial, consistent with long standing uses on the subject parcels and adjacency to a minor arterial.