



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: August 26, 2025

TO: THE MAYOR AND ALDERMEN OF THE CITY OF SAVANNAH

FROM: METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION

SUBJECT: Zoning Map Amendment

PETITION REFERENCED:

Petitioner: Wesley Green, PE

Owner: Rajendra Patel

Address: 5 W Gateway Blvd & 0 Fort Argyle Rd

Alderman District: Unassigned

County Commission District: 6 – Aaron "Adot" Whitely

Property Identification Number: 11034 01031 & 11034 01035

Petition File Number: 25-000359-ZA

MPC ACTION:

The Planning Commission recommends **approval** of the proposed rezoning of the subject properties from P-B-C to B-C, subject to the following conditions to address wetland preservation, stormwater management, and traffic concerns:

1. The Petitioner shall submit a General Development Plan (GDP) that includes, at a minimum:
 - a. Wetland fill, preservation, and buffer areas
 - b. Upland/developable areas
 - c. Open space
 - d. Stormwater management features
 - e. Circulation/access points
2. The Petitioner shall adhere to the corrective actions required by the Stop Work Order from the Chatham County Department of Engineering on January 2023 as listed below:
 - a. Site must be brought back into compliance with the above-listed ordinance and any applicable Federal, State and local permits must be obtained by the site owner.
 - b. Remove excavated root balls from the wetland area.
 - c. Remove the fallen trees and equipment from buffer.

- d. Install / Repair all necessary SESCO BMPs in violations.
 - i. Reinstall & repair silt fence
 - ii. Reinstall and repair tree protection.
- e. Verify land disturbance within wetland is less than 0.10 acre.
- f. Submit a corrective action clearing and grubbing plan for areas in violation of Chatham County's LDAO & SESCO
- g. Verify KMZ file is in Georgia State plane coordinates.
- h. Any disturbed soil must be stabilized in accordance with the Manual for Erosion and Sediment Control in Georgia (the Green Book) within 14 days of disturbance.

MPC STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

MPC Staff recommends **approval** of the proposed rezoning of the subject properties from P-B-C to B-C, subject to the following conditions to address wetland preservation, stormwater management, and traffic concerns:

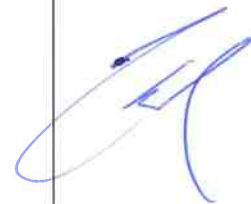
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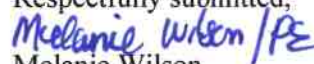
MEMBERS PRESENT: 13

Traci Amick
Laureen Boles
Travis Coles – Vice Chair, ONLINE
Karen Jarrett – Chairwoman
Michael Kaigler
Jay Melder
Jeff Notrica
Stephen Plunk
Coren Ross
Dwayne Stephens
Joseph Welch
Amanda Wilson
Tom Woiwode

PLANNING COMMISSION VOTE: Approve Staff Recommendation. (13-0)

APPROVAL Votes: 13	DENIAL Votes:	ABSENT	Abstain	Recused
Amick Boles Coles Jarrett Kaigler Melder Notrica Plunk Ross Stephens Welch Wilson Woiwode		Ervin		



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



CHATHAM COUNTY-SAVANNAH METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION

"Planning the Future, Respecting the Past"

Council Report

To: City Council

From: Planning Commission

Date: August 26, 2025

Subject: Zoning Map Amendment

Applicant/Agent: Wesley Green, PE, Coleman Company Inc.

Address: 0 Fort Argyle Rd and 5 West Gateway Blvd

PIN: 11034 01035 and 11034 01031

Area: 64.89 acres and 1.16 acres

Alderman District: Unassigned

Chatham County Commission District: 6 – Aaron "Adot" Whitely

Request: Rezone from P-B-C (Planned Community Business) under Chatham County jurisdiction to B-C (Community Business) under the City of Savannah zoning, in conjunction with annexation into the City of Savannah.

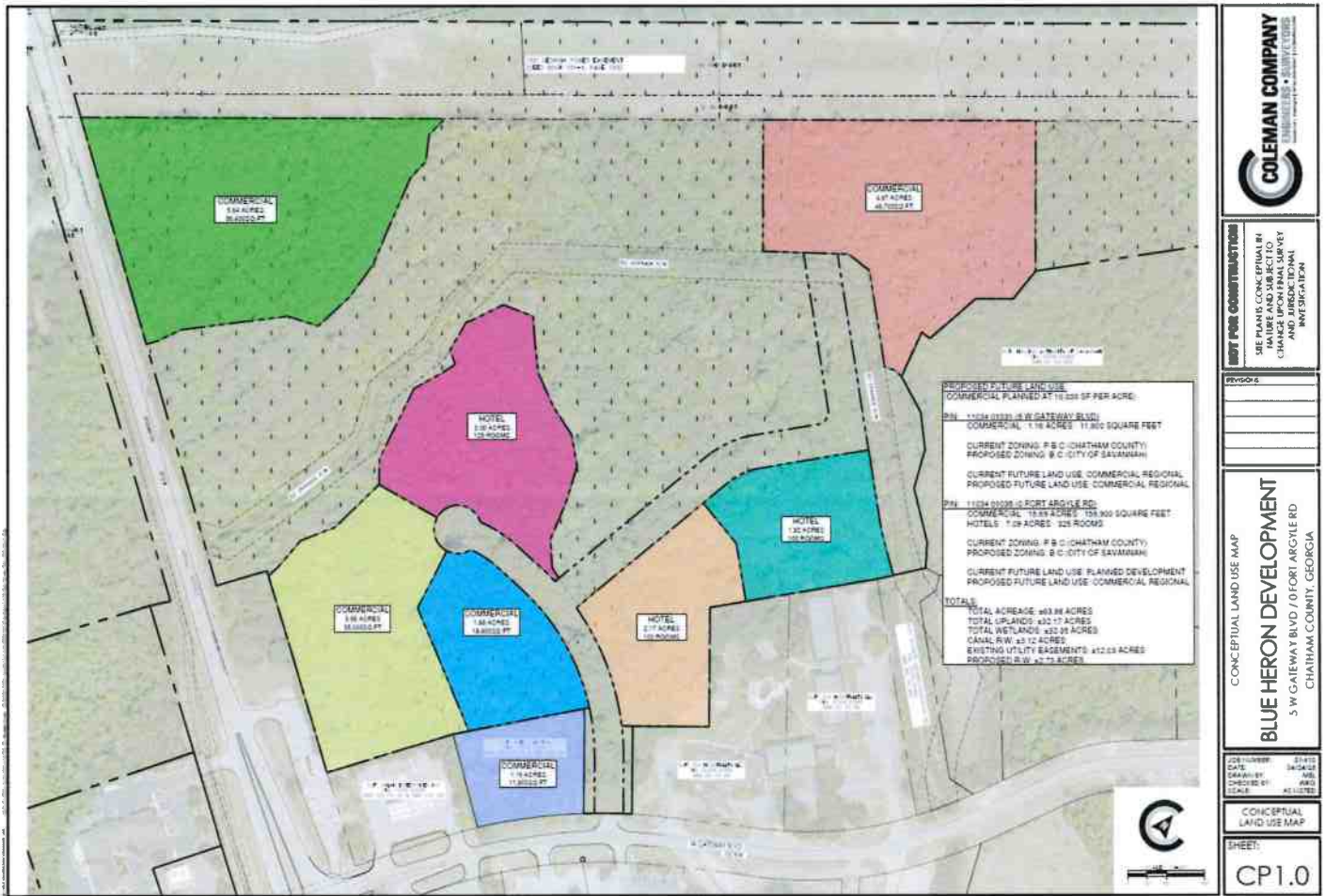
File Number: 25-000359-ZA-MAP

Request

The petitioner is requesting the Metropolitan Planning Commission's consideration of a zoning map amendment for two parcels located at 0 Fort Argyle Road and 5 West Gateway Boulevard. The request proposes to rezone the properties from P-B-C (Planned Community Business) under Chatham County jurisdiction to B-C (Community Business) under the City of Savannah zoning ordinance, in coordination with the proposed annexation into the City.

The 5 West Gateway Boulevard parcel currently has a Future Land Use Map (FLUM) designation of Commercial-Regional, while the 0 Fort Argyle Road parcel is designated Planned Development. A concurrent FLUM amendment has been submitted for the 0 Fort Argyle Road parcel to change its designation to Commercial-Regional, aligning with the proposed rezoning and intended development.

The proposed development includes approximately eight commercial lots comprising around 168,500 square feet of commercial space, along with three hotels totaling approximately 325 rooms. The initial request by the City involves rezoning and annexation to support the proposed development.



Concept Plan of 0 Fort Argyle Road and 5 West Gateway Blvd

PROPOSED FUTURE LAND USE: (COMMERCIAL PLANNED AT 10,000 SF PER ACRE)	
PIN: 11034 01031 (5 W GATEWAY BLVD) COMMERCIAL - 1.16 ACRES - 11,600 SQUARE FEET	
CURRENT ZONING: P-B-C (CHATHAM COUNTY) PROPOSED ZONING: B-C (CITY OF SAVANNAH)	
CURRENT FUTURE LAND USE: COMMERCIAL-REGIONAL PROPOSED FUTURE LAND USE: COMMERCIAL-REGIONAL	
PIN: 11034 01035 (0 FORT ARGYLE RD) COMMERCIAL - 15.69 ACRES - 156,900 SQUARE FEET HOTELS - 7.09 ACRES - 325 ROOMS	
CURRENT ZONING: P-B-C (CHATHAM COUNTY) PROPOSED ZONING: B-C (CITY OF SAVANNAH)	
CURRENT FUTURE LAND USE: PLANNED DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED FUTURE LAND USE: COMMERCIAL-REGIONAL	

Proposed Development Summary

Community Engagement

Public Notice

A request for evaluation of a Development of Regional Impact (DRI - 4485) was submitted to the Coastal Regional Commission and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs on June 2, 2025. The DRI review process included the distribution of project data to adjacent local governments and affected stakeholders to allow for review and comment on potential regional impacts. Comments from the Ogeechee Riverkeeper are included in the final report.

As with all zoning actions, prior to the MPC public hearing, an advertisement was run in the Savannah Morning News, signs were posted on site and mailed notices were sent to adjoining property owners in accordance with notification procedures established in the Zoning Ordinance. Subsequent notice will occur prior to City Council hearings rezoning.

Neighborhood Meetings

MPC staff have not been made aware of any formal neighborhood meeting held in relation to this request.

Background

Site

The subject site encompasses a total area of approximately 63.88 acres, which includes ± 32.17 acres of uplands and ± 32.35 acres of wetlands. Additionally, the site contains ± 3.12 acres of canal right-of-way (R/W), ± 12.03 acres within existing utility easements, and a proposed right-of-way of ± 2.73 acres.

The parcel at 0 Fort Argyle Road features over 1,800 feet of frontage along Fort Argyle Road and nearly 100 feet of frontage on West Gateway Boulevard. The second parcel, 5 West Gateway Boulevard, has over 215 feet of frontage on Gateway Boulevard but does not have frontage or access to Fort Argyle Road.



Aerial view of the site

Zoning

Zoning History

The property owner plans to annex the subject properties to the City of Savannah from Chatham County, contingent upon the approval of both the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) amendment and the Zoning Map amendment.

Therefore, the applicant is requesting that the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) designation for the 0 Fort Argyle property be amended from Planned Development to Regional-Commercial, and that both properties be rezoned from P-B-C to B-C under the City of Savannah zoning ordinance. Applying the City's B-C zoning ensures that any future development meets Savannah's design standards and infrastructure requirements, aligning with the character of nearby City-zoned areas.

The County's P-B-C (Planned Community Business) and the City's B-C (Planned Development) zoning classifications are generally comparable, as both allow a variety of commercial uses.

Zoning districts with a "P-" prefix indicate a Planned District designation within Chatham County. This designation applies to the properties that borders a collector or arterial street, as identified on the Chatham County Street Classification Map, must comply with Planned District provisions and property explicitly designated as a Planned District on the official Chatham County Zoning Map.

In March 2022, the Chatham County Department of Engineering issued an Initial Clearing Approval (ENG-0112-0083) authorizing only the removal of trees, shrubs, and stumps. Grading activities were expressly prohibited under this approval.

In January 2023, the Chatham County Department of Engineering issued a Stop Work Order after determining that the land clearing activities violated the Land Disturbing Activities Ordinance (LDAO) and the Soil Erosion & Sedimentation Control Ordinance (SESCO). The property owner was directed to comply with the following corrective actions:

- Site must be brought back into compliance with the above-listed ordinance and any applicable Federal, State and local permits must be obtained by the site owner.
- Remove excavated root balls from the wetland area.
- Remove the fallen trees and equipment from buffer.
- Install / Repair all necessary SESKO BMPs in violations.
 - Reinstall & repair silt fence
 - Reinstall and repair tree protection.
- Verify land disturbance within wetland is less than 0.10 acre.
- Submit a corrective action clearing and grubbing plan for areas in violation of Chatham County's LDAO & SESKO
- Verify KMZ file is in Georgia State plane coordinates.
- Any disturbed soil must be stabilized in accordance with the Manual for Erosion and Sediment Control in Georgia (the Green Book) within 14 days of disturbance.

Existing Zoning and Development Pattern

Intent of the P-B-C Zoning District:

The purpose of the existing P-B-C zoning district is to accommodate community-scale commercial centers that offer a diverse mix of retail, service, and office uses. These centers are intended to serve a market area of approximately 35,000 to 70,000 residents.

Allowed Uses:

The uses allowed in the zoning district appear in a chart appended to the end of this report.

Development Standards:

The development standards of the P-B-C zoning district appear in a chart appended to the end of this report.

Proposed Zoning

Intent of the B-C Zoning District:

The requested B-C (Community-Business) zoning district is designed to support a broad mix of nonresidential uses that serve the needs of a community-scale market area, while also allowing for upper-story residential uses. These uses are typically located along collector or arterial streets to ensure accessibility and minimize impacts on lower-density residential areas. The district encourages development patterns that promote economic activity, efficient land use, and compatibility with surrounding neighborhoods.

Allowed Uses:

The uses allowed in the zoning district appear in a chart appended to the end of this report.

Development Standards:

The development standards of the B-C zoning district appear in a chart appended to the end of this report.

Surrounding zoning and land use is given in the table below

Location	Land Use	Existing Zoning
North	Planned Development	I-L
South	Residential Suburban Single Family, Parks and Recreation and Commercial Regional	B-C
East	Planned Development and Commercial Regional (Apartments, Hotel, Gas station)	RMF-2-10, B-C and P-B-C

West	Planned Development and Residential Suburban Single Family	I-L-T and R-A
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Comprehensive Plan/FLUM Consistency

The 5 West Gateway Boulevard parcel currently has a FLUM designation of Commercial-Regional, while the 0 Fort Argyle Road parcel is designated Planned Development. A concurrent FLUM amendment has been submitted for the 0 Fort Argyle Road parcel to change its designation to Commercial-Regional, aligning with the proposed rezoning and intended development

The Planned Development FLUM areas are described as “Master planned areas accommodating cluster development, neotraditional development, or mixed residential, commercial, or civic uses. Such developments are characterized by internal or external linkages among residential, commercial, institutional, or recreational use components. This category includes Amenity Communities, Village Centers, Town Centers, and existing PUDs.”

The Commercial-Regional FLUM designated areas are “business areas supporting most retail, service, office, and institutional uses. Largescale commercial uses such as shopping malls and lifestyle centers are appropriate. These destinations are typically only accessible by vehicle.”

Development Pattern and Suitability

The Comprehensive Plan designates the subject site within the Suburban Residential Character Area, which is typically defined by lower-density, automobile-oriented development. These areas generally feature detached single-family homes, although attached single-family and smaller multi-family residences are also common. Commercial and office uses are often concentrated along major roads and highway interchanges, characterized by large surface parking lots and separation from residential areas. As locations like unincorporated West Chatham continue to experience growth, development in Suburban Character Areas is expected to emphasize public realm improvements, efficient infrastructure use, and better connectivity with adjacent uses.

Given the site’s proximity to I-95 Exit 94 and frontage on Fort Argyle Road, a principal thoroughfare, the location is well suited for commercial or multi-family residential development.

Notably, a 95-room hotel currently operates at 9 W Gateway Boulevard, and a 120-room hotel is under construction at 11 W Gateway Boulevard, together occupying 5.08 acres.

The Regional Land Use Map analyzes current development patterns in terms of urbanization. Three categories are used to represent these patterns: *conservation*, *rural*, *developing*, and *developed*. According to the DRI report the project area is designated as *Rural* in the Regional Plan. *Rural* areas are not expected to urbanize or require urban services in the next 20 years. These areas are characterized by sparsely developed non-

urban areas where the land is primarily used for farming, forestry, and very low density residential or open space uses. The proposed development utilizes existing infrastructure and aligns with corridor-focused commercial growth.

Transportation Network and Transit

The subject property lies in the northwest quadrant of the Fort Argyle Road (SR 204) and Interstate 95 interchange. Access to the site is provided via West Gateway Boulevard, which extends northward from SR 204, approximately 640 feet west of the southbound I-95 off-ramp. The intersection of West Gateway Boulevard and SR 204 is a full-access, unsignalized intersection. Additionally, Bush Road intersects Fort Argyle Road roughly two miles to the west of the site.

The concept plan indicates that all ingress and egress will occur via the existing access point on West Gateway Boulevard. Final determination of the traffic circulation plan will be made during the site permitting process, subject to review and approval by Traffic Engineering and the Fire Department. Chatham Area Transit (CAT) Service is not presently available to serve the subject properties.

According to the applicant Peak hour traffic generation per ITE 11th edition will be approximately 650 trips.

Public Services and Facilities

City of Savannah water and sewer lines are present in W Gateway Boulevard along the property's frontage. Water and sewer lines are also present in Fort Argyle Road along the frontage of 0 Fort Argyle Road. The portion of 0 Fort Argyle Road west of the wetlands may need to be served by a separate gravity sewer which does not have a clear functional path to existing service lines. After annexation, the property will be served by the Savannah Police Department, Savannah Fire Rescue, and by the City of Savannah water and sanitary sewer. An electric power utility easement is present along the entire northwest boundary of 0 Fort Argyle Road. The easement ranges in width from 150 to 170 feet.

Military Zone, Installation or Airport Zone

The property is located in the Airport, Airfield Overlay District and the Military Zone. The property is not within any Height Limitation, Airport Noise, Runway Protection, Accident Potential, Clear Zone, Noise Zone, or Helicopter Transition Route areas for which specific development standards are provided by the overlay district. The property is subject to general restrictions on electrical interference and excessive lighting that apply throughout the overlay and are described in Sec. 7.2.5.d. According to City staff, Hunter Army Airfield has not reported any objections to the annexation of the subject property.

Natural Environment

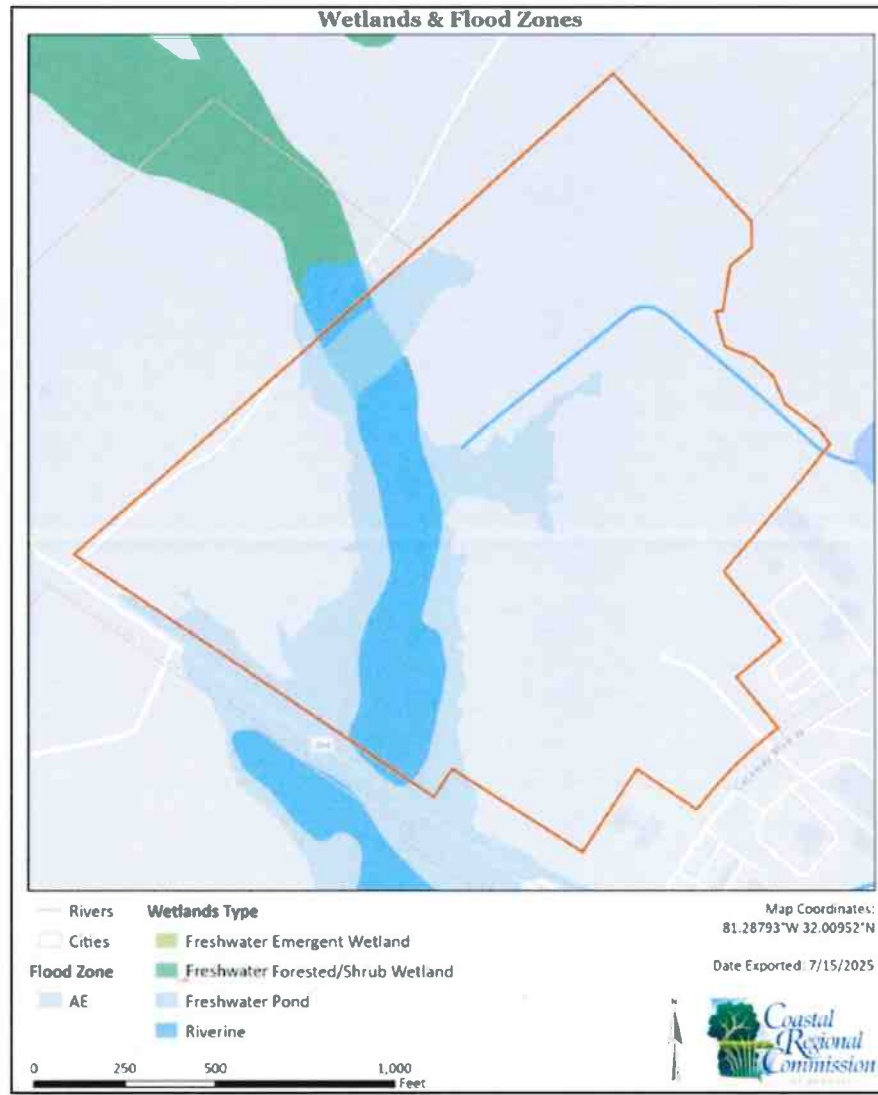
A 100-year floodplain is located on the west-central portion of the 0 Fort Argyle Road property in a north-south direction. The central channel of this floodplain is also identified as a wetland in the National Wetland Inventory, measuring approximately 200 feet in width. According to the flood zone and wetlands map, parts of the site lie within FEMA Flood Zone AE and are classified as Freshwater Emergent and Forested/Shrub Wetlands.

The proposed development anticipates covering approximately 40% of the site with impervious surfaces. To address stormwater runoff, the project includes the construction of detention ponds to meet regulatory stormwater management requirements.

Additionally, the subject area is within an Area Requiring Special Attention (ARSA) overlay according to the DRI report. According to the ARSA Map, the location is identified as an *Area of Significant Natural Resources*. These are regionally important resources (green infrastructure, groundwater recharge areas, wetlands, priority forests, floodplains, and conservation areas) that are likely to be threatened by development.

The Ogeechee Riverkeeper (ORK) has submitted comments on the DRI analysis emphasizing the environmental sensitivity of the site and urging stronger protective measures. Their recommendations include avoiding construction within the floodplain, exceeding minimum stormwater and flood prevention standards to ensure long-term site resilience, and requiring a clear wetlands mitigation plan. ORK urges the MPC and City of Savannah to incorporate all necessary conditions to ensure the site's safety amid increasing flood and storm risks. Their specific recommendations are as follows:

- No structures are built within the 100-year floodplain (Zone AE), and that a condition is added that creates a buffer from the existing floodplain in anticipation of future floodplain expansion;
- Post-construction stormwater runoff is reduced compared to pre-construction numbers, whether through reductions in impervious surface coverage or any other method; and
- Stormwater retention/detention ponds' minimum capacity is increased beyond the current minimums.
- Wetlands preservation, mitigation, and protection receives more detailed analysis;
- No preparatory action or construction activities occur until all required permits are obtained;
- A robust wetlands plan clearly lays out and justifies where, why, and how many acres of wetlands are being proposed to be filled; and
- Mitigation projects are required either onsite or as close to the site as possible.



Effective Flood Zone and Wetlands

Impact and Suitability

The site's proximity to a major interstate interchange (Exit 94) and major thoroughfare Fort Argle Road make it suitable for regional-serving commercial development and multi-family development. The project aligns with the City of Savannah's goals for economic development and annexation strategy, particularly in growth-prone areas of unincorporated West Chatham.

The location within a Commercial-Regional FLUM category supports large-scale commercial uses, which are typically accessible by vehicle and serve a broader market area. With two existing or approved hotels nearby, the area is already showing a pattern of hospitality development. Additionally, beyond the hospitality developments, it would be beneficial to encourage developments that serve the surrounding neighborhoods through neighborhood-friendly commercial uses and much-needed housing options.

However, the environmental constraints on-site are significant and must be addressed during the permitting phase. Approximately half the site lies within wetlands or floodplain areas, including FEMA-designated Flood Zone AE and National Wetland Inventory features. Although only ~40% of the site is planned for impervious surface coverage, long-term flood resilience and wetland protection will require rigorous design standards and mitigation.

Additionally, traffic impacts will need to be evaluated more fully during site development, particularly given the proposed single access point via W Gateway Boulevard. Coordination with Traffic Engineering and Fire Services will be crucial to determine safe and sufficient ingress/egress and emergency response access.

Zoning Ordinance Review

A. Rezoning Standards Applicable (Sec 3.5.8)

a. Suitability and Community Need

- i. Whether the range of uses permitted by the proposed zoning district is more suitable than the range of uses that is permitted by the current zoning district.

MPC Comment: The range of uses permitted under the proposed B-C zoning district is generally similar to those allowed under the existing P-B-C zoning district, making it an appropriate transition that aligns with the site's intended commercial function and supports consistency within the City of Savannah's zoning framework.

- ii. Whether the proposed zoning district addresses a specific need in the county or City.

MPC Comment: The proposed zoning supports a targeted annexation that enables the City to extend infrastructure and guide growth along the I-95 corridor.

b. Compatibility

- i. Whether the zoning proposal will adversely affect the existing use or usability of adjacent or nearby property;

MPC Comment: The zoning proposal is likely to have a substantial impact on the usability of nearby properties due to increased traffic, potential wetland disturbance, and development within or near a 100-year floodplain. Without clear mitigation plans for stormwater, flood risk, and infrastructure strain, the proposal raises serious concerns for surrounding land uses.

- ii. Whether the zoning proposal is compatible with the present zoning pattern and conforming uses of nearby property and the character of the surrounding area.

MPC Comment: The development proposal is compatible with the pattern seen in the subject area.

- iii. Whether there are other existing or changing conditions affecting the use and development of the property which give supporting grounds for either approval or disapproval of the zoning proposal.

MPC Comment: The proposed zoning reflects ongoing regional growth and annexation trends in West Chatham, where the City of Savannah is expanding infrastructure and jurisdiction to accommodate future development. However, environmental sensitivity due to wetlands and floodplain areas, combined with traffic impacts near the I-95 interchange, present significant challenges that require careful consideration.

- c. Consistency

Whether the zoning proposal is in conformity with the policy and intent of the Comprehensive Plan and other adopted plans, such as a redevelopment plan or small area plan.

MPC Comment: While the proposal aligns with the Comprehensive Plan and FLUM, the current Planned Development designation may offer better flexibility to address flooding, traffic, and infrastructure needs, provided a detailed site plan is tied to the Planned Development.

- d. Reasonable Use

Whether the property to be affected by the zoning proposal has a reasonable use as currently zoned.

MPC Comment: Yes, the property has reasonable use under current zoning; however, development is constrained without City infrastructure. Annexation and rezoning enable application of City standards, supporting more coordinated and efficient development.

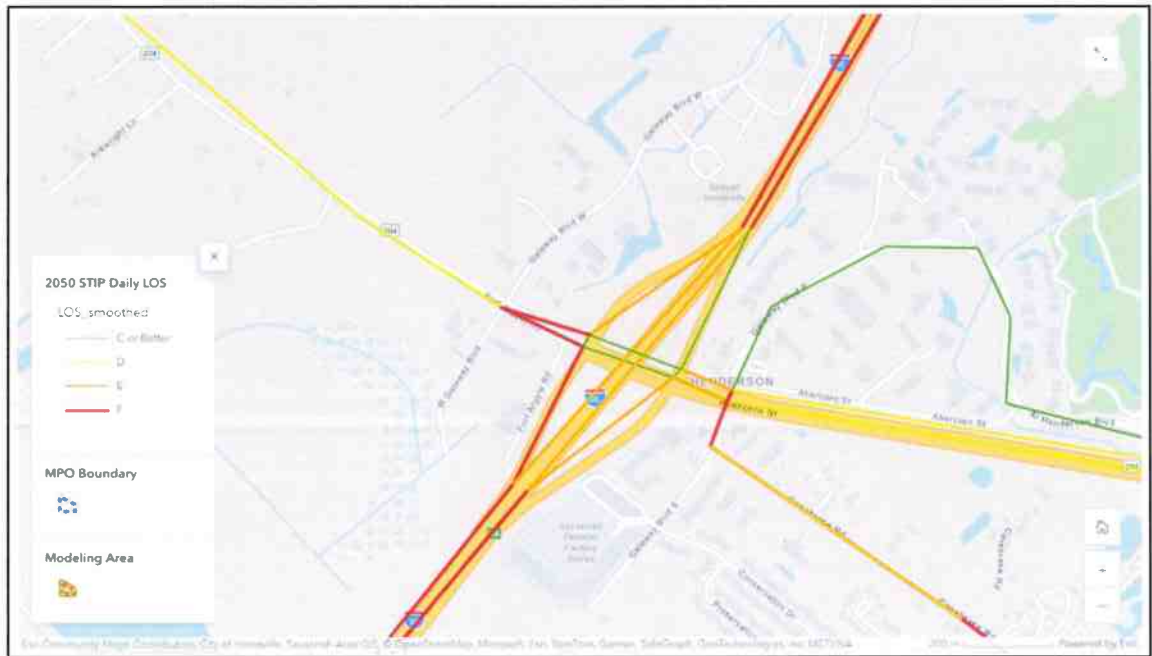
- e. Adequate Public facilities

Whether adequate school, public safety and emergency facilities, road, ingress and egress, parks, wastewater treatment, water supply and stormwater drainage facilities are available for the uses and densities that are permitted in the proposed zoning district.

MPC Comment: Adequacy of water, sewer and stormwater utilities or required system improvements will be determined at the time development permits are sought.

Preliminary 2050 STIP data currently evaluates the daily level of service (LOS) for the segment of Fort Argyle Road from I-95 overfly to Gateway Blvd as 'F'. and the segment of Fort Argyle Road towards west from Gateway Blvd as 'D'. Facilities with LOS A through C were identified as minimally congested; LOS D as acceptable; while LOS E as moderately congested; and LOS F as heavily congested. For CORE MPO MPA purposes, anything below LOS D is unacceptable and needs to be mitigated. These levels of congestion were identified by the MPO and GDOT Travel Demand model. Continued interjurisdictional efforts should be encouraged to promote coordination in

development phasing and upgrade of our transportation network. The potential for Chatham Area Transit service should also be explored.



2050 STIP Daily LOS Data

f. Proximity to a Military Base, Installation or Airport

MPC Comment: The subject property is within the Airport/Airfield overlay, and is within the military zone of Fort Stewart.

B. Compatibility

The rezoning proposal will be constructed, arranged and operated so as to be compatible with the immediate vicinity and not to interfere with the development and use of adjacent property in accordance with the applicable district regulations.

MPC Comment: The rezoning proposal introduces large-scale commercial and hotel development that may be incompatible with adjacent lower-density suburban and undeveloped areas. Concerns related to traffic impact, environmental disruption, and lack of detailed site design could interfere with the orderly development of surrounding properties. Compatibility will depend heavily on future site planning, infrastructure improvements, and environmental mitigation measures.

C. Resource Protection

The rezoning proposal will not result in the destruction, loss, or damage of any resource determined by the Mayor and Aldermen to be of significant natural, scenic or historic importance. Such historic resource shall be listed or eligible to be listed on the local or National Register of Historic Places.

MPC Comment: The subject parcels contain significant wetlands which must be protected through buffering in accordance with local, state and federal regulations. It is recommended that the developer clarify anticipated the extent of wetlands impacts anticipated, and, if necessary, to recommend conditions for minimum wetland preservation and enhanced stormwater management.

D. Design Review

The rezoning proposal will be compatible or complimentary with the adjacent properties. The architectural style, materials, other treatments, etc., to be utilized within a Planned Development shall be considered by the Planning Commission and Mayor and Aldermen as part of the overall review process.

MPC Comment: The subject properties are not within or in proximity of any nationally or locally designated historic district or identified assets of historic significance.

Recommendation

The Planning Commission recommends **approval** of the proposed rezoning of the subject properties from P-B-C to B-C, subject to the following conditions to address wetland preservation, stormwater management, and traffic concerns:

1. The Petitioner shall submit a General Development Plan (GDP) that includes, at a minimum:
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