



**METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION**

*"Planning the Future - Respecting the Past"*

M E M O R A N D U M

**DATE:** October 25, 2023  
**TO:** THE MAYOR AND ALDERMEN OF THE CITY OF SAVANNAH  
**FROM:** METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION  
**SUBJECT:** MPC RECOMMENDATION

**PETITION REFERENCED:**

**Petitioner:** Joshua Yellin, Agent  
**Owner:** Gould Cottage, LLC  
**Aldermanic District:** 4, Nick Palumbo  
**County Commission District:** 1, Helen Stone  
**Neighborhood/Subdivision:** Ardmore, Gould Estates, Olin Heights  
**Current Zoning District:** Residential-Single-family – 6  
**Future Land Use (FLU) Category:** Residential-Suburban Single Family  
**File No.** 23-004628-ZA-FLUM  
**Location:** 505 East 54<sup>th</sup> Street  
**PIN:** 20086 27004  
**Acreage:** 1.37

**MPC ACTION:**

**Approval** of the request to amend the Future Land Use Map from a designation of Residential – Suburban Single-family to a designation of Residential – General.

**MPC STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

**Approval** of the request to amend the Future Land Use Map from a designation of Residential – Suburban Single-family to a designation of Residential – General.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** 10 + Chairman

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

**PLANNING COMMISSION VOTE:** Approval staff recommendation (11-0)

<b>APPROVAL</b> Votes: 11	<b>DENIAL</b> Votes: 0	<b>ABSENT</b>
Stephens Coles Boles Noha Kaigler Epstein Woiwode Notrica Jarrett Amick Coleman		Ervin Melder 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, Department of Planning and Urban Design



CHATHAM COUNTY-SAVANNAH  
METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION  
*"Planning the Future, Respecting the Past"*

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## STAFF REPORT

**To:** The Savannah City Council  
**From:** The Planning Commission  
**Date:** October 9, 2023  
**Subject:** Comprehensive Plan – Future Land Use Map Amendment

**Owner:** Gould Cottage, LLC  
**Agent:** Joshua Yellin  
**Address:** 505 East 54<sup>th</sup> Street, Savannah, GA  
**PIN:** 20086 27004  
**Site Area:** 1.37 ac  
**Alderman District:** 5 – Nick Palumbo  
**Chatham County Commission District:** 1 – Helen Stone  
**File Number:** 23-004628-ZA-FLUM

### Request

The Petitioner requests amendment of the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) for the property at 505 East 54<sup>th</sup> Street from a designation of Residential – Suburban Single-family to Residential – General. The amendment is requested in association with a proposal to develop the historic children's home on the property as a multi-family housing development along with three smaller (new construction) multi-family buildings on the eastern (rear) portion of the property.

The site is within the Ardmore Conservation District, the purpose of which is to preserve the character of Savannah's older and historic neighborhoods which lack the protection of a local historic district overlay. The proposal would preserve both the historic principal structure and a carriage house at the rear of the property.

## **Current Character Area**

The subject parcel is currently designated Residential – Suburban Single-family. This character area is identified by the Comprehensive Plan for single-family detached residential dwellings at a density not to exceed five (5) gross dwelling units per acre. This category permits certain non-residential uses that are compatible with the residential character and scale of the neighborhood on a very limited basis.

## **Proposed Character Area**

The Residential – General character area is envisioned as suitable for areas with a wide range of residential uses including multi-family dwellings, attached dwellings, small lot single-family dwellings, and mixed-use with upper story residential at densities greater than ten (10) units per gross acre. This category includes non-residential uses that are compatible with the residential character and scale of the neighborhood.

## **Analysis**

New ZO requires a Future Land Use designation of Residential – General for property to be rezoned to a Residential Multi-family (RMF) zoning district. For this reason, the requested designation is the minimum required for the associated rezoning request and proposed development. The requested FLUM designation is also likely the best option for the site as it would allow this relatively large parcel to be developed as multi-family housing or another use appropriate and desirable within the context of a predominately residential area. Such uses would include child and adult caring facilities, libraries, community centers and places of worship. As presently designated, the parcel can only be developed for single-family residential use or a use permitted by grant of a Special Use Permit within the RSF-6 zoning district by City Council.

As a point of reference, based on the current FLUM, the neighborhood is broadly designated for single-family residential use at a maximum density of 5 units per acre. However, the predominate zoning in the area is currently RSF-6 (Residential Single-family – 6), which permits a gross density of 7.26 dwelling units per acre. While there are minor variations in parcel size – lot widths ranging from 60 to approximately 105 feet and lot depths ranging from approximately 95 feet to 120 feet – the neighborhood's parcel fabric is very consistent, with even existing multi-family structures situated in a manner that is largely undetectable amongst single-family dwellings. Of the 467 parcels in the Ardmore District, the average parcel size is approximately 7,183 sf (0.1649 acres). The subject parcel and nearby 535 East 54<sup>th</sup> Street are the largest parcels in the district at 1.37 acres each.

Aside from the historic institutional use of the property, its adjacency to rhomboid-shaped Hull Park has a significant impact on the future redevelopment prospects of this parcel. The angular edges have been successfully developed as single-family homes in some instances, but few meet current development standards and most have a less than ideal configuration for maximal use of land area. Preservation and reuse of the existing structure or a planned development thoughtfully utilizing the larger parcel is more likely to support maintenance of historic character than future redevelopment as single-family homes on individual parcels. Zoning in association



The Gould Cottage is likely a contributing historic structure and is identified as a significant part of Savannah's cultural and architectural legacy. The structure has been maintained and repurposed over the course of its lifetime and has likely reached an age where renovation and maintenance by most small institutional uses is financially infeasible. The requested proposal offers the opportunity to restore the historic structure and enhance the site in a manner consistent with the character and vibrancy of the historic district in which it is situated.



*Edwin Gould Cottage – 1933*

(3) Other professional Planning principles, standards, information and more detailed plans and studies considered relevant:

- The subject property is within the Ardmore Conservation Overlay district. Per Sec. 7.15.1 of New ZO. The purpose and intent of the Conservation Overlay District (CD) is to preserve the character of Savannah's older and historic neighborhoods which lack the protection of a local historic district overlay. The CD establishes a public process and standards to evaluate demolition of contributing buildings in order to ensure historic buildings are preserved and the character of the district is maintained. The present proposal would support preservation of the historic structure in furtherance of the intent of the Conservation District.

(4) Written comments, evidence, and testimony of the public:

- MPC Staff has received several public comments in opposition to the proposed FLUM amendment and associated rezoning. Most comments center on the historically single-family character of the area and express a desire to see the property developed in this manner. Pursuit of another institutional user of the existing facility with no further

expansion was also mentioned as a perceived option, citing concerns that approval of multi-family use at 505 E 54<sup>th</sup> would encourage a similar petition at nearby 535 E 54<sup>th</sup> Street.

- The Petitioner's agent reported a successful open house on-site on October 5 with approximately 50 guests in attendance. The Petitioner's Agent stated that the overall sentiment for the project was positive after rumors and misinformation were addressed.

### **MPC Recommendation**

MPC recommends **approval** of the requested FLUM amendment to Residential – General.