



METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION

"Planning the Future - Respecting the Past"

M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: November 21, 2023
TO: THE MAYOR AND ALDERMEN OF THE CITY OF SAVANNAH
FROM: METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION
SUBJECT: MPC RECOMMENDATION

PETITION REFERENCED:

Petitioner: Bridget Lidy, City of Savannah
Owner: Historic Savannah Foundation, Inc.
Aldermanic District: 1 - Bernetta Lanier
County Commission District: 2 - Commissioner Malinda Hodge
Neighborhood/Subdivision: Cuyler-Brownville Historic District
Current Zoning District: TR-1 (Traditional Residential-1)
Future Land Use (FLU) Category: Traditional Neighborhood (TN)
File No. 23-005400-ZA-FLUM
Location: 505 West 36th Street
PINs: 20066 48011
Acreage: 0.11 acres

MPC ACTION:

Approval of the request to amend the Future Land Use Map from the designation of Traditional Neighborhood to the designation of Traditional Commercial.

MPC STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Approval of the request to amend the Future Land Use Map from the designation of Traditional Neighborhood to the designation of Traditional Commercial.

MEMBERS PRESENT: 12 + Chairwoman

Dwayne Stephens
Lauren Boles Jay Melder
Karen Jarrett Joseph Welch
Wayne Noha
Jeff Notrica
Michael Kaigler
Elizabeth Epstein
Shedrick Coleman
Travis Coles
Shedrick Coleman
Traci Amick

PLANNING COMMISSION VOTE: Approval staff recommendation (13-0)

APPROVAL Votes: 11	DENIAL Votes: 0	ABSENT
Stephens Coles Boles Noha Kaigler Epstein Woiwode Notrica Jarrett Amick Coleman Melder Welch		Ervin

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, Planning of Urban & Design



CHATHAM COUNTY-SAVANNAH METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION

"Planning the Future, Respecting the Past"

STAFF REPORT

To: The Savannah City Council

From: The Planning Commission

Date: November 21, 2023

Subject: Comprehensive Plan – Future Land Use Map Amendment

Owner: Historic Savannah Foundation, Inc.

Agent: Bridget Lidy, City of Savannah

Address: 505 West 36th Street, Savannah, GA

PIN: 20066 48011

Site Area: 0.11 acres

Alderman District: 1 - Bernetta Lanier

Chatham County Commission District: 2 - Malinda Hodge

File Number: 23-005400-ZA

Request

The Petitioner requests amendment of the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) for the property at 505 West 36th Street from a Traditional Neighborhood (TN) designation to Traditional Commercial (TC) in association with a proposed use as a museum. The property, 0.11 acres, will be restored as an African American historic and cultural arts museum with a renovated carriage house.

The subject parcel consists of 0.11 acres (4,792 sf) and contains the Kiah House, a residential building constructed in 1910, the residence of Dr. Calvin L. Kiah and Virginia Kiah and one of the first African American museums in Savannah. The museum was opened by Virginia Kiah in 1959 and closed in 2001 once she passed. Both the main building and carriage house have been unoccupied and deteriorating since the closure. The parcel is in the Cuyler-Brownville Historic District, established in 1997, and it is one of Savannah's oldest African American neighborhoods.

Current Character Area

The Traditional Neighborhood land use category is envisioned as containing 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. This designation corresponds with the Traditional Neighborhood -1, -2 and -3 zoning districts.

Proposed Character Area

The Traditional Commercial land use category is appropriate for business areas in close proximity to Downtown Savannah 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. This designation corresponds with the Traditional Commercial -1 and -2 zoning districts.

Analysis

New ZO requires a Future Land Use designation of Traditional Commercial for property to be rezoned to a Traditional Commercial-1 (TC-1) 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 parcel to be restored as a cultural and arts African American museum in the transition of Traditional Commercial to Traditional Residential. 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 residential use. The historic civic use of the property has a significant impact on the need to change the future land use map.

NewZO does not offer specific criteria, however, the following may provide guidance for evaluation of the merits of the present FLUM amendment request.

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

- The proposed amendment represents an effort to realign the future use of the parcel with its historic use. The property was a residential building used as a museum from 1959-2001, yet the FLUM currently designates it for residential development. The property is adjacent to commercial buildings with a Traditional Commercial designation. The property is located just off Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, a minor arterial road.

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

The following goals and strategies of Plan 2040 are relevant to the present request:

- Quality of Life:
 - Historic Resources: HP.3.3
 - Promote and support reinvestment in older and historic places as a key component of community resiliency.

The Kiah House and carriage house are contributing historic structures to the Cuyler-Brownville Historic District and is identified as a significant part of Savannah's cultural and architectural legacy. 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.



*The Kiah House in the 1960s (left) vs. now (right),
Images from the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation*

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

- The subject property is within the Cuyler-Brownville Historic Overlay District. Per Sec. 7.10.1 of New ZO, the purpose is to promote the educational, cultural and economic and welfare of Savannah through the preservation of historic resources and to ensure that new construction, alterations and additions are visually compatible with the existing resources within the district.

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

- MPC Staff did not receive any public comments about the proposed FLUM amendment and associated rezoning.

- The Petitioner's agent reported meeting with the executive committee of the Cuyler Brownville Neighborhood Association over the phone and a general acceptance of plans to re-zone and FLUM amendment to restore the Kiah House.

MPC Recommendation

MPC recommends approval of the requested FLUM amendment to Traditional Commercial.