



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: December 19, 2024
TO: THE MAYOR AND ALDERMEN OF THE CITY OF SAVANNAH
FROM: METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION
SUBJECT: FLUM Amendment

PETITION REFERENCED:

Petitioner: Jeff Jepson

Agent: Mohsen Yaraghi, 76 Highlands BLVD LLC and 1950 Benton BLVD LLC, Officer

Address: 1950 Benton Boulevard, 76 Highlands Boulevard

Alderman: District – 1- Bernetta B. Lanier

County Commission: District – 8- Kenneth A. Adams

Property Identification Number: 21016 02066, 21016 02067, 21016 01017

Petition File No.: 24-002877-ZA-FLUM

MPC ACTION:

The Planning Commission recommends **approval** of the request to amend the FLUM from a designation of Commercial-Suburban and Residential-General to Planned Development.

MPC STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

The MPC Staff recommends **approval** of the request to amend the FLUM from a designation of Commercial-Suburban and Residential-General to Planned Development

MEMBERS PRESENT: 11

Michael Kaigler Traci Amick
Dwayne Stephens Jay Melder
Joseph Welch Travis Coles
Tom Woiwode Jeff Notrica
Laureen Boles
Amanda Wilson
Karen Jarrett – Chairwoman

PLANNING COMMISSION VOTE: Approve Staff Recommendation.
(10-1)

APPROVAL Votes: 10	DENIAL Votes: 1	ABSENT	Abstain	Recused	Online
Jarrett Boles Woiwode Amick Kaigler Melder Coles Notrica Stephens Welch	Wilson	Ervin Ross Plunk			



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: The Planning Commission

From: Brad Clement – Development Services Senior Planner
Edward Morrow – Director of Development Services

Date: December 17, 2024

Subject: Comprehensive Plan - Future Land Use Map Amendment

Applicant/Agent: Jeff Jepson

Address: 1950 Benton Boulevard, 76 Highlands Boulevard

PIN's: 21016 02066, 21016 02067, 21016 01017

Site Area: +/- 226.61 acres

Aldermanic District: 1 – Bernetta B. Lanier

Chatham County Commission District: 8 – Kenneth A. Adams

File Number: 24-002877-ZA-FLUM

Request:

The Petitioner requests amendment of the Future Land Use Map from *Commercial-Suburban and Residential General* to *Planned Development*. The request is made concurrently with a request to amend and augment the Godley Station PD Map and Text, which were originally adopted in 1999. The change will align this particular undeveloped portion of the PD with the policy scheme and approach established with *Plan 2040* and *NewZO*.

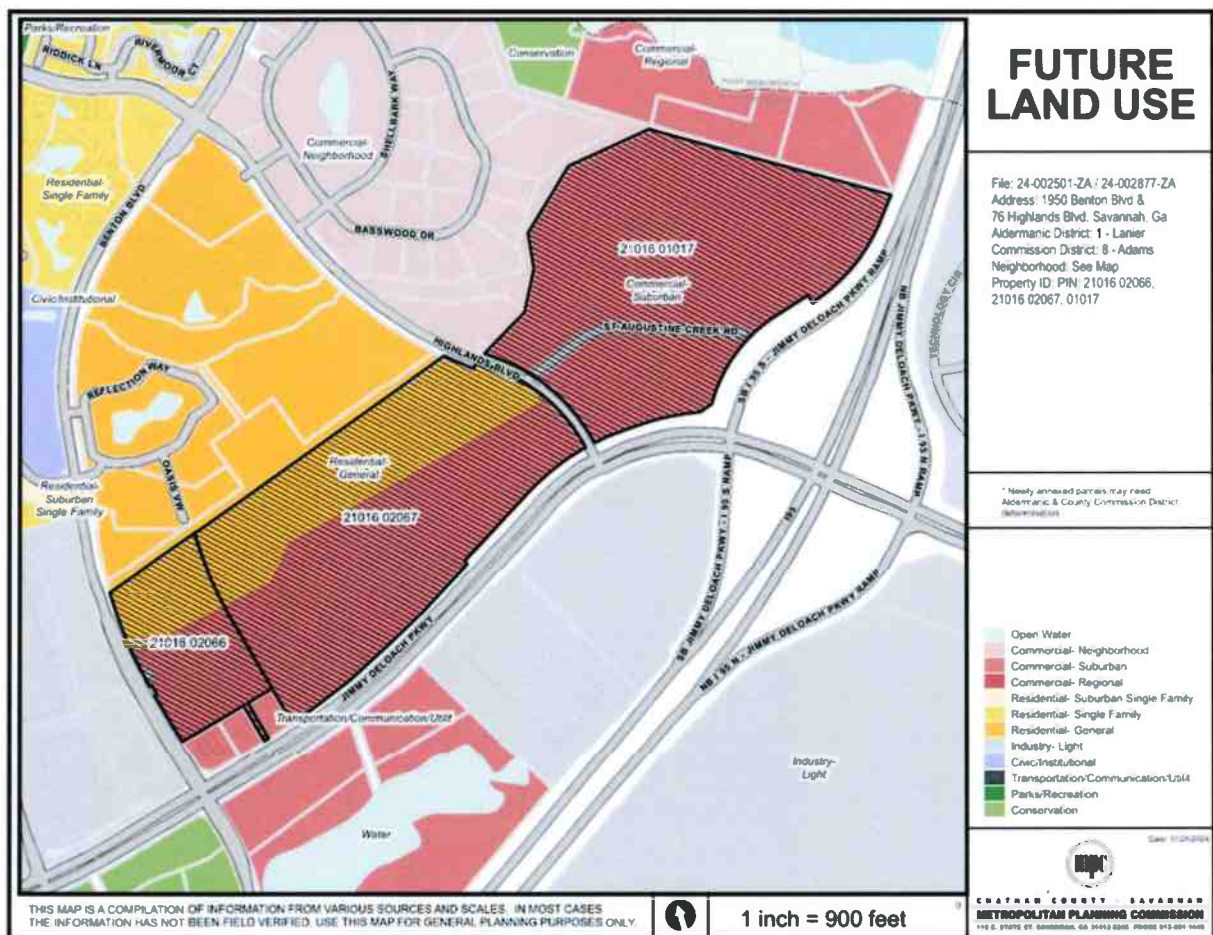
The Planned Development designation will indicate that future development on the site is dictated by associated (subsequently adopted) Master Plans and/or General Development Plans aligned to the proposed PD standards.

Background:

The PD amendment is requested in connection with a proposed development that will utilize 3 existing parcels to create new commercial, industrial and residential/mix-used pods of development that more closely reflect current market demand.

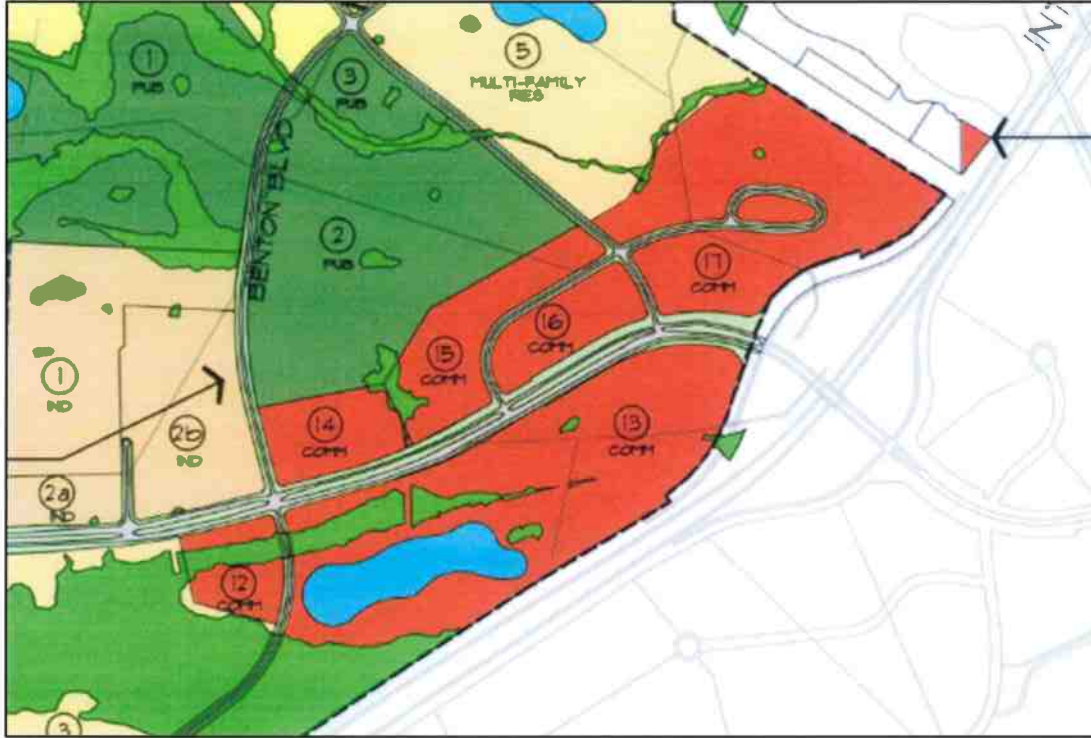
Among the proposed mix are a food retail anchor, +/- 940,000 square feet of warehouse, and a mixed-use commercial/residential pod with a range of housing types and both community and neighborhood-scale non-residential uses with the potential for a neo-traditional configuration.

On August 5, 2024 the MPC Development Services Staff initiated a Development of Regional Impact (DRI) [application](#). On October 29, 2024 the Coastal Regional Commission issued a [final report](#) with comments from the City of Savannah and the Georgia Department of Transportation.



Future Land Use Map (Existing)

Comprehensive Plan - Future Land Use Map Amendment
 1950 Benton Boulevard, 76 Highlands Boulevard
 Jason Chambless and Ryan Thompson
 24-002877-ZA-FLUM



Godley Station Master Plan - 1999



Future Land Use Map (Proposed)

The subject parcels are located in an area identified by Plan 2040 for *Suburban Residential* Character Area.

SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL

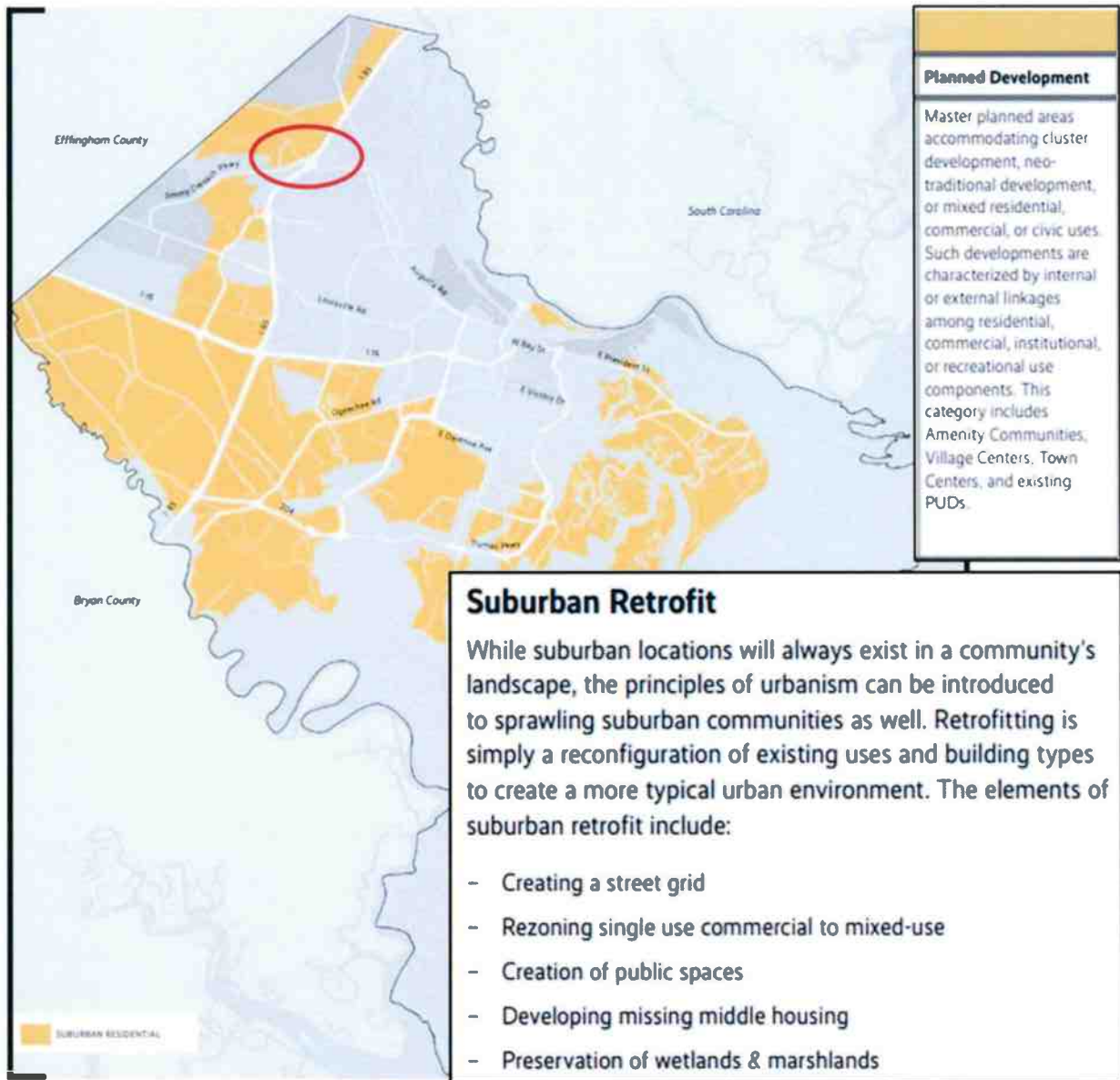
Suburban Residential character areas include low and medium density developments; generally, this character area features either single-family structures on large lots or medium-lot residential subdivisions with relatively uniform housing types and densities. However, multi-family apartments and attached single-family residential subdivisions are also prevalent in this area. Local streets are laid out in curvilinear patterns, with occasional cul-de-sacs and limited sidewalks. Suburban Residential areas adjacent to Suburban Commercial character areas should, to the extent possible, be designed as cohesive, connected neighborhoods. Alternative types of housing options should be encouraged in suburban areas to accommodate multi-generational households, seniors, and others.



PRIMARY USES	Single-family (detached & attached) Residential
SECONDARY USES	Small scale commercial & apartment buildings, civic & institutional facilities, neighborhood parks
DENSITY	Low, 3-5 units per acre
TRANSPORTATION	Automobile-oriented; limited public transit
ROAD FUNCT. CLASS	Local roads, collectors, arterials
PARKING	Off-street parking, private driveways, garages
UTILITIES	Supported by existing municipal utilities, some individual/community utility systems
OPEN SPACE	Community & regional parks, neighborhood greenspaces, waterways, golf courses



'Suburban Commercial' – Plan 2040 Character Area Designation of the Subject Properties



Map 4.11-Suburban Residential Character Area, Chatham County

Recognizing challenges presented by mounting traffic and housing affordability, Plan 2040's Land Use Element offers several recommended strategies for incorporating new growth. One strategy is that of *suburban retrofitting* (p. 161). If adequately conditioned, the present effort could be seen as an opportunity to create a compact, mixed-use amenity benefitting the largely residential northern portion of Godley and reducing distant automobile trips to meet basic retail and service needs.

Evaluation:

Within the City of Savannah, the Zoning Ordinance requires amendments to the zoning map to be consistent with the FLUM. Previously, portions of the Godley Station Master Planned Development attempted to align proposed uses within the PD with specific Future Land Use

Categories. The proposed amendment will align this portion of the development with the policy scheme and approach established with *NewZO* and *Plan 2040*, identify the subject parcels as *Planned Development*.

The Planned Development designation will indicate that future development on the site is dictated by associated (subsequently adopted) Master Plans and/or General Development Plans aligned to the proposed PD standards.

Planned Development areas are described as follows:

“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.”

Consideration of the following points may serve to clarify 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 ‘Commercial Suburban’ and ‘Residential General’ use. By definition, the proposed mixed uses speak to the ‘Amenity Community’ areas identified by the Chatham County-Savannah Tricentennial Plan or more closely align with the requested ‘Planned Development’ designation in the Plan 2040 document. These areas *“often require smaller developers to build for specific market segments, while larger developers produce planned communities with a wider variety of elements. The result is often a larger scale of planned development, integrating more planned commercial development tied to specific residential projects, increased development near Interstate and other freeway interchanges, and greater orientation to amenities”*.

The requested ‘Planned Development’ designation is intended for *“Planned communities, often with commercial and amenity centers. While primarily auto-oriented, some offer increasing options for mobility both within the development and to external locations”*

The proposal would not introduce new or inconsistent principal uses not currently existing in the Godley Station Master Planned Development. The proposal would reconfigure the PD Map, and introduce standards permitting the potential mixing of uses to create walkable neighborhoods with access to retail and other nonresidential amenities.

The change will align this particular undeveloped portion of the PD with the policy scheme and approach established with *Plan 2040* and *NewZO*.

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 'Planned Development' FLUM designation more closely represents the *Plan 2040* 'Potential Ways To Accommodate Growth' section of the plan and is in line with the current and future development of the of the site as well as its current and future uses.

Per Sec. 6.1 of the Ordinance, "*A Planned Development (PD) district allows projects that would not otherwise be permitted under this Ordinance because of the strict application of zoning district development standards or general site standards. Generally, the PD district is intended for sites where a developer proposes and the Mayor and Aldermen desire to achieve a certain mix of uses, appearance, land use compatibility and/or apply special sensitivity to the character of the site surrounding area.*"

The specifically proposed development seeks to enhance character of the proposed development through establishment of residential uses in close proximity to work and retail areas, also establishing the strong potential for creating pedestrian/cycling paths connecting parks and schools.

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

MPC Comment: The Coastal Regional Commission's '*Development of Regional Impact (DRI)*' [final report](#) makes notable recommendations related to use buffers which will be addressed in the associated PD Text & Map Amendment. The report also recommends the jurisdiction work to ensure that the existing infrastructure, such as water and sewer, is sufficient for new development and further recommends a Traffic Impact Analysis, as this proposed development will significantly increase vehicular traffic in this area.

It should be noted that the FLUM request and associated PD Amendment represent zoning actions and in no way confer development approvals, which may only be obtained through the relevant permitting processes with the City of Savannah.



Proposed Concept Plan Submitted with the DRI Application

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 previous concepts. The Petitioner’s consideration of and response to Staff and community concerns resulted in an initial postponement to allow the creation of the modified concept for the FLUM and associated PD Amendment requests presently under consideration.

Public comments have included concern for: an incompatible scale of development, impacts to traffic along Benton and Highlands Boulevards, nature and phasing of proposed retail development, and the future prohibition of additional warehouse development. Following conversations and a meeting with the Developer, City and MPC representatives between October and November of 2024, the Highlands Neighborhood submitted an [official position](#) on the petitions with points for consideration by the MPC and City Council.

Other written correspondence from the public and between the Petitioner and the public submitted to Staff will be posted to the final agenda to accompany Staff’s reports.

MPC Staff Recommendation

The Planning Commission recommends **approval** of the request to amend the FLUM from a designation of Commercial-Suburban and Residential-General to Planned Development.