



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: April 22, 2025
TO: THE MAYOR AND ALDERMEN OF THE CITY OF SAVANNAH
FROM: METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION
SUBJECT: Zoning Map Amendment

PETITION REFERENCED:

Owner: JR Stokes Properties, LLC / Jeff Greiner

Agent: Harold Yellin

Address: 605 Old River Road, Sandhill Road

Alderman District: Unassigned (Annexation Pending)

County Commission District: 7 - Dean Kicklighter

Property Identification Number: 11046 01001A, 11046 01001B, 11047 01018

Petition File Number: 25-001312-ZA

MPC ACTION:

The Planning Commission recommends **approval** of the proposed rezoning of the subject properties from R-A (Residential Agriculture – Chatham County) to PD (Planned Development – City of Savannah) with the following conditions:

1. Prior to MPC approval of any final master plans:
 - a. the Petitioner shall provide a 'Wetland Plan' identifying wetlands present on the site and identifying areas proposed to be filled and preserved.
 - b. the Petitioner shall provide an updated General Master Plan reflecting the required Wetland Plan.
2. On-site wastewater treatment shall not be permitted.
3. Prohibits clearing and grading of the site until wetland-related permitting has been resolved.
4. All phases will need to demonstrate adequate public facilities, i.e. roads, police, plans for runoff, protection of neighboring subdivisions from flooding, wetlands plan, etc. are in place.

MPC STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

MPC Staff recommends **approval** of the proposed rezoning of the subject properties from R-A (Residential Agriculture – Chatham County) to PD (Planned Development – City of Savannah) with the following conditions:

1. Prior to MPC approval of any final master plans:
 - a. the Petitioner shall provide a 'Wetland Plan' identifying wetlands present on the site and identifying areas proposed to be filled and preserved.
 - b. the Petitioner shall provide an updated General Master Plan reflecting the required Wetland Plan.
2. On-site wastewater treatment shall not be permitted.

3. Prohibits clearing and grading of the site until wetland-related permitting has been resolved.

MEMBERS PRESENT: 11

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

PLANNING COMMISSION VOTE: Approve Staff Recommendation with a condition. (11-0)

APPROVAL Votes: 11	DENIAL Votes:	ABSENT	Abstain	Recused
Amick Boles Coles Jarrett Kaigler Melder Notrica Plunk Ross Welch Wilson		Woiwode Ervin 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, Department of Inspections



CHATHAM COUNTY-SAVANNAH METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION

"Planning the Future, Respecting the Past"

Council Report

To: City Council
From: Planning Commission
Date: April 22, 2025
Subject: Zoning Map Amendment

Applicant/Agent: Harold Yellin, Hunter MacLean for Forino Co., LLP

Address: 605 Old River Road, Sandhill Road

PIN: 11046 01001A, 11046 01001B, 11047 01018

Area: 159.7 acres

Alderman District: Unassigned (Annexation Pending)

Chatham County Commission District: 7 – Dean Kicklighter

Request: Rezone from R-A (County – Residential Agriculture)

to PD (City – Planned Development)

File Number: 25-001312-ZA-MAP

Request

The Petitioner requests MPC consideration of a request to rezone the subject properties from Residential Agriculture (R-A) under the Chatham County Zoning Ordinance to a Planned Development designation within the City of Savannah. Proposed is an approximately 159 acre mixed use residential and neighborhood-scale commercial development. Upon completion, the project would see the construction of up to 1,665 dwelling units with up to 50,000 square feet of commercial floor area. The FLUM and map amendment requests are made concurrently with a petition for annexation of the properties into the City of Savannah.

Background

Public Notice

A request for evaluation of a Development of Regional Impact (DRI - [#4405](#)) was submitted to the Coastal Regional Commission and Georgia Department of Community Affairs on February 19, 2025. A final report was issued on March 19, 2025. The DRI review includes distribution of data about the development proposal to adjoining local governments to permit review and comment regarding potential impacts.

Additionally, 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 on annexation and rezoning.

Community Engagement

A neighborhood meeting was held at Southwest Baptist Church on the evening of February 5, 2025 to permit residents and leadership of the *West Chatham County Community Watch* to ask questions and express concerns to the developer of the proposal.

Existing Zoning and Development Pattern

Site

The site currently consists of 3 parcels totaling approximately 157.3 acres, per data available via SAGIS. Two parcels front directly on Old River Road. The third parcel is discontinuous, consisting of two large portions (+/-29 acres and +/-19 acres) substantially covered by wetlands, per the *National Wetlands Inventory*. The site also contains a portion with the Chatham County *Protected River Corridor Overlay* due to its adjacency to the Ogeechee River.

Existing Zoning

The subject properties are currently zoned Residential-Agriculture (R-A) with a small area within a Protected River Corridor (P-R-C) Overlay under the Chatham County Zoning Ordinance.

Intent

The purpose of the R-A district is to protect those rural areas within the urban expansion areas of the county for future urban development, and to protect certain rural highway roadside areas against strip development, which can lead to traffic congestion, traffic hazards and roadside blight.

The purpose of the P-R-C district shall be to create areas within protected river corridors as defined by the River Corridor Protection Act, in order to help preserve those qualities that make a river suitable as a habitat for wildlife, a site for recreation, and a source for clean drinking water, to allow free movement of waters. Such districts shall be considered "overlay" districts and the uses permitted such districts shall be those uses permitted in the zoning district which it overlays, subject to the restrictions and prohibitions of Sec. 4-10.

Allowed Uses

Permissible Uses in the R-A district are appended to the end of this report.

Proposed Zoning

Intent

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.

In return for greater flexibility in site design requirements, planned developments are expected to deliver innovative and exceptional quality community designs that preserve environmental, historic and cultural resources; incorporate creative design in the layout of buildings, open space and vehicular and pedestrian circulation; assure compatibility with surrounding land uses and area character; and, provide greater efficiency in the layout and provision of roads, utilities and other infrastructure that would not otherwise be possible within a base zoning district.

Allowed Uses

The PD district encourages innovative land planning and design concepts by:

- i. Reducing or eliminating the inflexibility that sometimes results from strict application of zoning and development standards that were designed primarily for individual lots or developments;
- ii. Encouraging the assembly of properties that might otherwise be developed in unrelated increments;
- iii. Ensuring orderly and thorough planning and review procedures that will result in a cohesive development;

- iv. Allowing greater freedom in providing a mix of land uses in the same development, including a mix of housing types, lot sizes, [densities](#) and nonresidential uses to encourage variety and to avoid monotony;
- v. Allowing development to take advantage of special site characteristics, locations and land uses to protect environmentally sensitive areas and to promote better design; and
- vi. Encouraging allocation and improvement of common open and recreational space in residential areas as well as providing for the maintenance of the open and recreational space.

As proposed, the “Riverside PD” essentially combines uses as permitted within the [RMF-2](#) (Residential Multi-family-2), [B-L](#) (Limited Business), and [B-N](#) (Neighborhood Business) zoning districts of the City of Savannah Zoning Ordinance. Development standards and procedures are largely aligned with those established in *NewZO* with the noted exception of increased maximum permissible building heights to compensate for the development’s adjacency to wetlands and the Ogeechee River.

Housing Type	RMF-2
Single-family detached	✓
Single-family attached	✓
Two-family	✓
Townhouse	✓
Stacked Townhouse	✓
Three-Four Family	✓
Apartment	✓

Limited Business (B-L)

The B-L district is established to accommodate a variety of residential uses and a limited range of small-scale, neighborhood-oriented commercial and nonresidential uses together within the same district. This district is intended to be used in conjunction with nearby or adjacent Residential districts to create sustainable neighborhoods with convenient access to neighborhood-serving commercial uses.

Neighborhood Business (B-N)

The B-N district is established to permit small-scale, neighborhood-oriented nonresidential uses and upper story residences. This district is intended to provide for limited commercial opportunities in a walkable environment and to reduce or prevent impacts on adjacent or nearby residential uses. Uses in this district are intended to be located primarily on collector or arterial streets within convenient traveling distance from neighborhoods which they will serve.

Impact and Suitability

Comprehensive Plan/FLUM Consistency

The predominate future land use designation on the subject properties is ‘Planned Development.’ These 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 present request is filed concurrently with a request for amendment of the Future Land Use Map. Small portions of two properties totaling roughly 7 acres contain designations of Residential-Suburban Single-Family. If approved, the change will ensure that the entire 157-acre development’s use is consistent with its FLUM designation.

Transportation Network and Transit

Primary ingress and egress for the site is proposed via access points on Old River Road (County). One full movement access point, located at the northern extent of the development will align with Four Lakes Parkway to serve the mixed-use (commercial) development pod. Based on the concept plan, as many as 4 additional access points are also planned, several likely to be RIRO only.



Preliminary data submitted with the DRI indicates an anticipated 716 vehicle trips generated at the AM peak, and 915 vehicle trips generated at PM peak time. These numbers are based on a maximum estimated 1,665 dwelling units and 50,000 square feet

of commercial floor area. A Traffic Impact Analysis will likely be required upon application for right-of-way-encroachment permits.

While CAT service is unavailable at this location, a circulator serving the adjoining Chatham-Savannah Manufacturing Center may be advisable to reduce vehicle trips for nearby residents going to/from work, and for those within the Center wishing to patronize nearby businesses during lunch hours.

Public Services and Facilities

Upon annexation, the development is proposed to be served by City of Savannah Water and Sewer. The project will utilize “wet pond detention” to attenuate post development runoff levels to pre-development levels and for water quality.

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: Both the range of uses currently permitted on the subject properties and those proposed are appropriate; coordinated development of the entire parcel is more desirable, however, than continued incremental flag-lot subdivision for single-family home development. The proposal would increase the intensity of uses on the parcels and volume of traffic on adjoining thoroughfares considerably, but roadway improvements and buffering are required which will mitigate some impacts to adjoining property owners.

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

MPC Comment: The proposal does address an urgent need in the region for additional housing units. The primary entrance of the development aligns with the Chatham-Savannah Manufacturing Center (SMC), an industrial park that will continue to create jobs into the future as sites are acquired and developed. It is possible that the proposed apartments could offer housing to SMC workers or those traveling to employers in Bryan and Effingham Counties via I-16.

b. Compatibility

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

MPC Comment: The proposed uses are not of a nature that will devalue adjoining properties for ordinarily anticipated residential purposes. The proposal would increase the intensity of uses on the parcels and volume of traffic on adjoining thoroughfares, but coordinated development of the entire vacant parcel is more desirable than continued flag-lot subdivision without proper infrastructure installation. *Additionally, if commitments can be reached regarding innovative design practices for actively managing stormwater on the*

site, the development could have the benefit of improving flooding for the subject property and those adjoining.

- 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 preferential to the pattern seen along Old River Road which consists of single homesteads with direct road frontage. Some of these have given rise to flag lots, with a second tier of single-family residential parcels to the rear accessed via a shared drive.

The proposal offers the ability to develop a large, contiguous parcel with circulation via rights-of-way meeting current standards, utilities, and neighborhood-scale commercial uses that should have the effect of reducing nearby resident trips to more distant locations for convenience commercial needs.

- 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: Principally, the urgent regional need for additional housing units to support economic growth is likely the most significant factor favoring approval of the proposal. Secondly, any commitments to innovative site design that may be achieved and the potential to set precedent for more contextually sensitive development in the interest of ecological balance is also a compelling opportunity in consideration of this project.

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: The present request is substantially consistent with the Plan 2024 Future Land Use Map and associated goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan.

d. Reasonable Use

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

MPC Comment: The property has reasonable use as presently zoned, however, if developed under the current zoning designation, there is minimal incentive for coordinated development. In its current state, the parcel is likely to be subdivided for individual homesteads of 30,000 square feet to one acre in area with no infrastructure development.

e. Adequate Public facilities

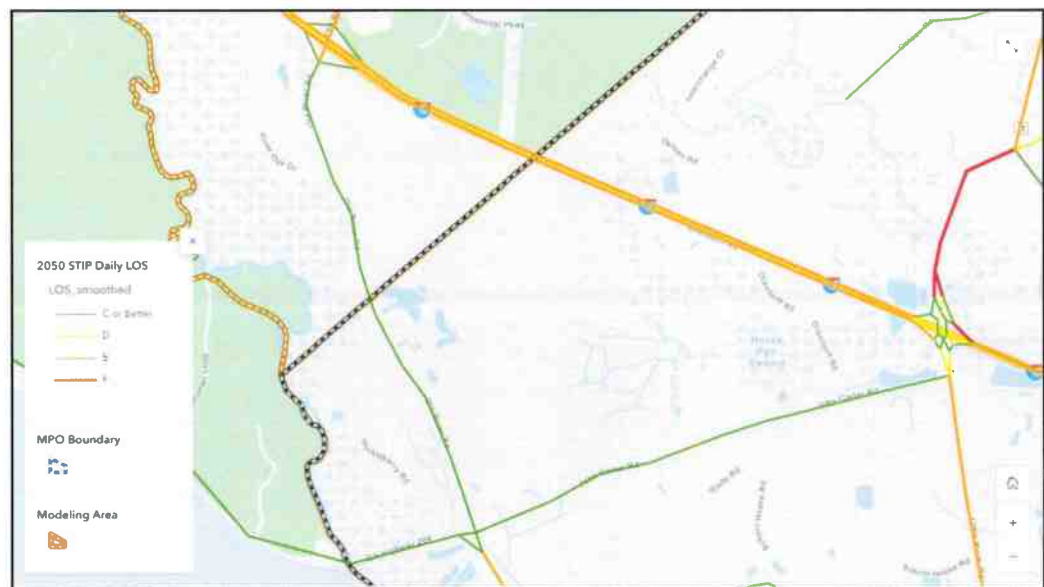
Whether adequate school, public safety and emergency facilities, road, ingress and egress, parks, wastewater treatment, water supply and stormwater drainage facilities are available for the uses and densities that are permitted in the proposed zoning district.

MPC Comment: Adequacy of public facilities or required system improvements will largely be determined at the time development permits are sought. Additionally, Savannah-Chatham County Public Schools will be notified of the proposed development to account for future enrollment growth in their facilities planning efforts.

Per the applicant, development is planned in accordance with the following schedule, which has been developed in correspondence with City of Savannah Engineering Staff.

Riverside Planned Development Schedule Estimate												
3/21/2025												
Land Use Designation	Density	Area	Total	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034
PD-RMF	20 DU/AC	74.9	1498 DUs	300 DUs	300 DUs	300 DUs	300 DUs	298 DUs				
PD-C	10 DU/AC	16.7	167 DUs			50 DUs	50 DUs	67 DUs				
PD-C	3,000SF/AC	16.7	50,000 SF				5,000 SF	5,000 SF	10,000 SF	10,000 SF	10,000 SF	10,000 SF

While 2050 STIP data currently evaluates the daily level of service (LOS) for this segment of Old River Road as 'C or Better,' continued interjurisdictional efforts should be encouraged to promote coordination in development phasing and upgrade of our transportation network.



2050 STIP Daily LOS Data

f. Proximity to a Military Base, Installation or Airport

MPC Comment: The subject property is within the one mile radius 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 proposed development will be subject to City of Savannah regulations for buffering both from existing less-intense residential uses and sensitive environmental areas that adjoin the development. The proposed General Master Plan demonstrates a perimeter buffer (adjoining residential to the south and along Old River Road), 8.7 acres of open space and 59.4 acres indicated as 'Aquatic Resources' that will serve to maintain a sense of the rural, river-fronting aesthetic of the area.

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 all [local](#), [state](#) and federal regulations. While the General Master Plan indicates nearly 60 acres of 'Aquatic Resources,' a wetland delineation will be required during the site development permitting phase to determine the extent of required buffering. The present process does not constitute approval of any required development permits.

Notably, in its response to the associated DRI notification, the Ogeechee Riverkeeper identified several significant concerns with regard to wetland impacts and implications for stormwater and wastewater management. In effect, these observations recommend that any future development be contingent upon:

- 1) Provision of a *wetland plan* identifying areas for fill and preservation;
- 2) Prohibits clearing and grading of the site until wetland-related permitting has been resolved;
- 3) Prohibition of any future on-site wastewater management and treatment.



Wetlands – NWI via SAGIS

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 R-A (Residential Agriculture – Chatham County) to PD (Planned Development – City of Savannah) with the following conditions:

- 1) Prior to MPC approval of any final master plans:
 - a. the Petitioner shall provide a 'Wetland Plan' identifying wetlands present on the site and identifying areas proposed to be filled and preserved.
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LOCATION MAP

SITE INFORMATION

APPLICANT
 FORMO
 3273 ARGENT BLVD UNIT 102
 FLORENCE, SC 29506

ENGINEER/PLANNING CONSULTANT
 THOMAS & WATSON
 50 PARK OF COMMERCE WAY
 SAVANNAH, GA 31405

PARCEL
 PIN: 1104601001A, 1104601001B, 1104701018
 ACREAGE: 159.7 AC
 ZONING:
 CURRENT: R-A (CHATHAM COUNTY)
 PROPOSED: PD (SAVANNAH)

LAND USE SUMMARY SEE PD TEXT FOR DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

	AREA	ACREAGE	DENSITY	YIELD
FORM	PD - RESIDENTIAL MULTIFAMILY	74.9	20	1,498
PD-C	PD - COMMERCIAL MIXED-USE	14.7	10	147
	AMENITIES/ OPEN SPACE	8.7		
	PRELIMINARY AQUATIC RESOURCES	59.4		
TOTAL		159.7	10.4	1,645

UTILITIES
 WATER: (TO BE PROVIDED BY SAVANNAH)
 SEWER: (TO BE PROVIDED BY SAVANNAH)

NOTES

- ADDITIONAL ACCESS ROADS/ROADS REQUIRED MUST BE SHOWN AND SHALL BE APPROVED SUBJECT TO MEETING APPLICABLE ACCESS STANDARDS OF THE (REPORTING AGENCY) (CITY OF SAVANNAH, CHATHAM COUNTY AND/OR IDEOT AS THE CASE MAY BE)
- PRELIMINARY AQUATIC RESOURCES AS SHOWN ARE BASED ON ASSUMPTIONS BY RESOURCES SAID CONSULTANTS ENCL. THE JURISDICTIONAL FEATURE OF SUCH RESOURCES AS TO POTENTIAL FISHING, BOATING, ETC. MUST BE DETERMINED BY THE FUTURE.
- ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS ARE BASED UPON THE PRESENT DATA AS OF THE DATE OF THE STUDY.
- PRELIMINARY PORTS OF ACCESS SHOWN ARE CALCULATED FOR UNLOAD AND LOAD VOLUMES.

Riverside PD – Proposed General Master Plan (2025)