



METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION

"Planning the Future - Respecting the Past"

M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: April 30, 2024
TO: THE MAYOR AND ALDERMEN OF THE CITY OF SAVANNAH
FROM: METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION
SUBJECT: Future Land Use Map Amendment

PETITION REFERENCED:

Petitioner: Josh Yellin

Property Owner: Asbury United Methodist Church

Address: 1201 Abercorn Street and 115 Duffy Street

Alderman: District - 2 – Detric Leggett

County Commission: District - 2– Malinda Hodge

Property Identification Number: 20053 03001 and 20053 03014

Petition File No.: 24-002111-ZA

MPC ACTION:

The Planning Commission recommends **approval** of the request to amend the FLUM to reflect Traditional Commercial use.

MPC STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

The MPC Staff recommends **approval** of the request to amend the FLUM to reflect Traditional Commercial use.

MEMBERS PRESENT: 11

Traci Amick
Stephen Plunk
Travis Coles- Vice Chair
Karen Jarrett – Chairwoman
Laureen Boles
Dwayne Stephens
Tom Woiwode
Jeff Notrica
Joseph Welch - Online
Jay Melder
Michael Kaigler

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

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



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, Planning and Urban Design



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

STAFF REPORT

To: The City Council
From: The Planning Commission
Date: April 30, 2024
Subject: Comprehensive Plan - Future Land Use Map Amendment
Agent: Joshua Yellin
Address: 1201 Abercorn Street, 115 E Duffy Street
PIN's: 20053 03001, 20053 03014
Site Area: 0.22 Acres
Aldermanic District: 2 – Alderman Detric Leggett
Chatham County Commission District: 2 – Commissioner Malinda Scott Hodge
File Number: 24-002111-ZA

Request:

The Petitioner requests amendment of the Future Land Use map from Traditional Neighborhood to Traditional Commercial for the subject parcels in an effort to adaptively reuse the existing historic church on the parcel as a restaurant and event venue. The church is identified as a contributing resource in the Victorian Historic District. The adjoining parcel at 115 East Duffy is proposed to be developed as off-street parking in support of the use.

Background:

The subject parcels have a combined area of 0.22 acres. The subject parcel (Figures 1 to 4) has been home to several congregations in the past but is not currently in operation. The Petitioner's intent is to adaptively redevelop the contributing historic building as a restaurant.

The existing church at 1201 Abercorn Street is a significant community building in a residential area with a history dating back to the late 19th century. Originally Duffy Street Baptist Church, it was rebuilt after a hurricane in 1896 and later expanded by architects Alfred Eichberg and Hyman Witcover in the Richardsonian Romanesque style. Renamed Second Baptist Church in 1923, it

later became Asbury United Methodist Church in 1930, serving as a hub for Savannah's African American community. Despite its historical significance, the church faced challenges such as water damage and lack of accessibility, leading to its designation as a historic site in need of preservation. Ultimately, the congregation decided to sell the building in 2024.

Immediate repairs to secure the exterior envelope, including roof repairs, masonry repainting, and wood window restoration will be undertaken first to stop further deterioration of the structure. Pending the variance, rezone, and special use application approvals, the building will be rehabilitated and adaptive reused for commercial use (talks are underway with potential local restaurant business to be the tenant). The rehabilitation work will follow the Secretary of Interior Standards for Rehabilitation, require a local COA, and the use of the state and federal historic tax credit programs will mandate additional state and federal level historic preservation reviews. General site plan improvements proposed include paving and striping 7 vehicle parking spaces on the lot west of the church at 115 E Duffy Street, along with bicycle/moped parking on the southwest corner of the building. The existing and historic palm trees in the sidewalk on Abercorn and Duffy Streets will remain.

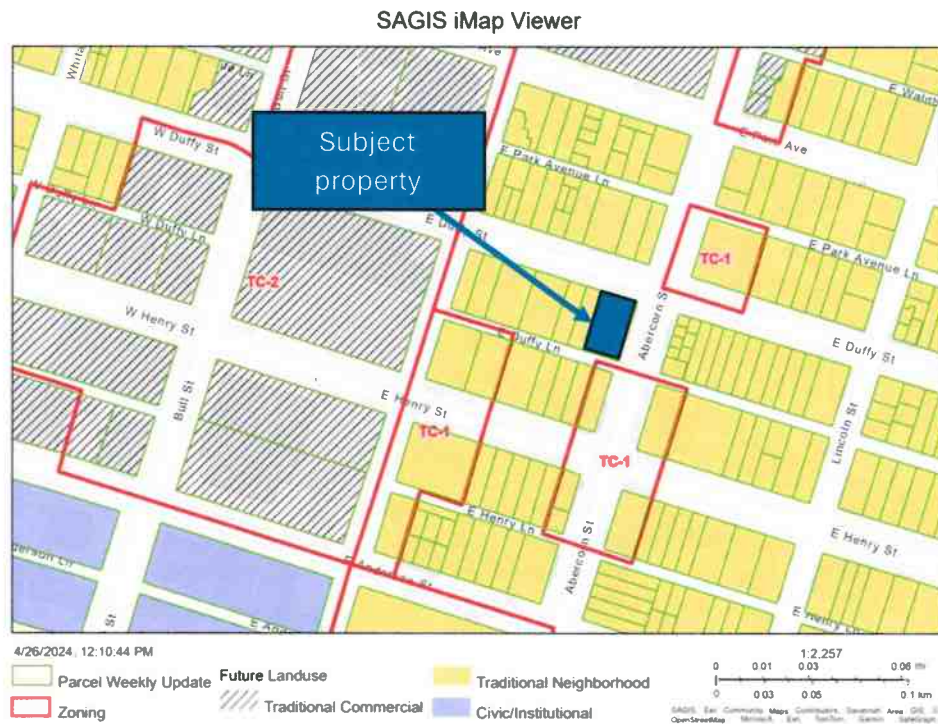
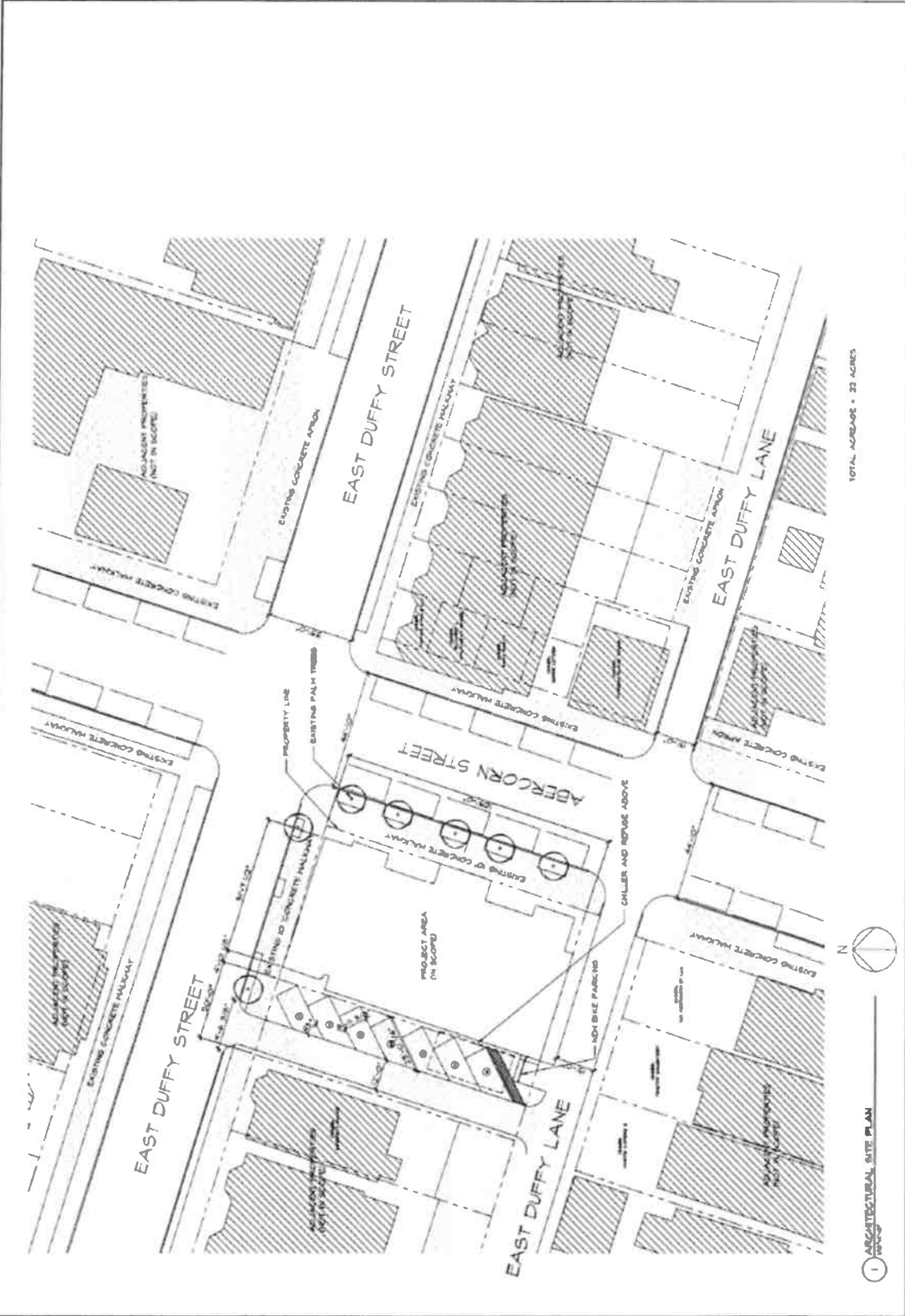


Figure 1: The Future Land Use Map of the subject property.



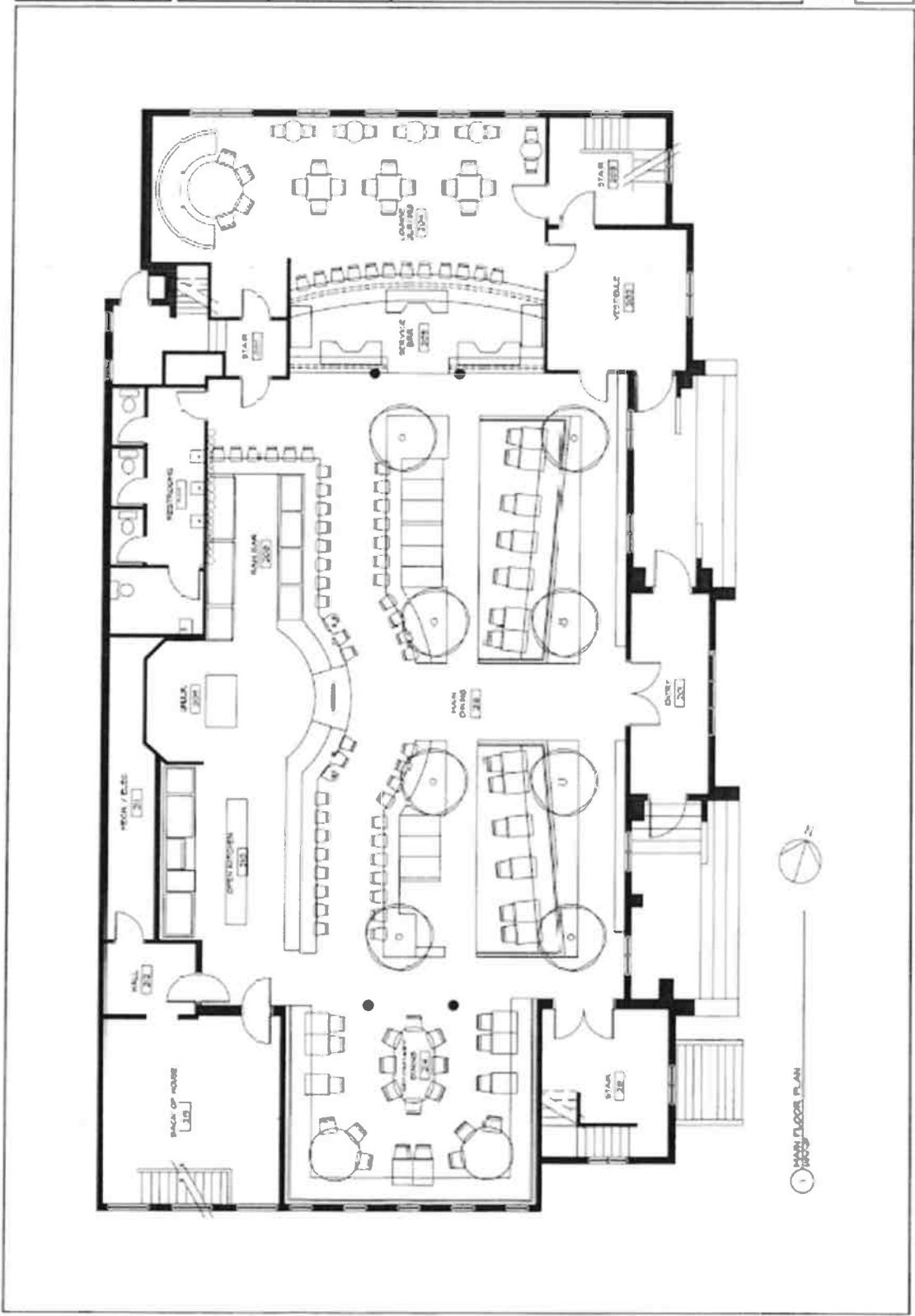
Figure 2: Existing condition of the subject building.



TOTAL ACREAGE = 2.2 ACRES

NOT FOR CONSTRUCTION

Figure 2: Parking Concept Plan



NOT FOR CONSTRUCTION

Figure 3. Interior Design Concept Plan

Evaluation:

Within the City of Savannah, the Zoning Ordinance requires amendments to the zoning map to be consistent with the FLUM. In essence, amendment of the FLUM very technically signals appropriateness of only specifically identified zoning districts. New ZO requires a Future Land Use designation of Traditional Commercial for property to be rezoned to a Traditional Commercial (TC-1 or TC-2) zoning district.

Traditional Commercial (TC-) districts are designated for commercial-oriented mixed-use development in areas established during the 19th and early 20th centuries. These districts prioritize pedestrian-friendly development, maintaining historic patterns, and fostering a "Main Street" ambiance. TC districts are meant to complement nearby TN and TR districts, enhancing sustainable neighborhoods with easy access to local commercial services. The intensity of permitted uses varies by district number, with TC-1 being the least intensive and TC-2 the most.

Consideration of the following points may serve to elucidate 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.

Savannah-Chatham County's Joint Comprehensive Plan, Plan 2040, identifies the subject parcel and surroundings as 'Urban Core' (Figure 5) with regard to the anticipated character. Per the Plan, these areas are places with higher density and established mixed-use, residential, commercial, and industrial areas, or future opportunities for critical transportation hubs. The Urban character areas for Chatham County are located entirely within the limits of the city of Savannah, and include the historic downtown, urban neighborhoods, port industrial sites, and transitional areas towards the edge of downtown. These areas are poised to receive a large portion of the county's projected population growth, as they have the greatest number of urban amenities, including convenience to employment, schools, and retail. The future of this character area looks to infill development in the Urban Core, and redevelopment and growth in the Urban Transitional areas.

Presently, the FLUM designates the area as '*Traditional Neighborhood*,' owing to its location in the Victorian Historic. The Plan defines the land use category as '*Residential areas in close proximity to downtown or in outlying historically settled areas. This category includes nonresidential uses that are compatible with the residential character of neighborhoods.*'

URBAN CORE

The Urban Core character area contains the local and National Register Victorian and Streetcar Historic Districts, as well as the Eastside neighborhoods in the city of Savannah. This area is characterized by a mix of detached and attached single-family homes, mid-size multi-family buildings, and smaller-scale, neighborhood commercial. Urban Core areas are walkable with a well-connected sidewalk network and street grid. Lot sizes are larger and building heights lower (around 2-4 stories) than in the Urban Downtown. Infill and redevelopment opportunities are more widely available in the Urban Core; any future development should maintain the walkable densities and be compatible with the community character. A range of housing options should be encouraged in the Urban Core to accommodate workers, students, small families, seniors, and others.



PRIMARY USES	Attached & detached Residential, Multi-Family
SECONDARY USES	Commercial, mixed-use, civic & institutional, short-term rental
DENSITY	Medium-high, 6-20 units per acre
TRANSPORTATION	Interconnected street grid, multi-modal transportation
ROAD FUNCT. CLASS	Local roads, collector, arterial, expressway
PARKING	On-street, off-street, limited surface, private driveways
UTILITIES	Supported by existing municipal utilities
OPEN SPACE	Municipal parks, squares, cemeteries, waterfront

Figure 5: Prescribed Urban Core Character Area

The proposed future land use '*Traditional Commercial*' designation is described as intended for Commercial zones near Downtown Savannah or in historically settled regions on the outskirts. These areas feature businesses intended to blend harmoniously with the surrounding neighborhoods in terms of style and size. Typically located along collectors and arterials, they prioritize walkability, often offering limited or street parking, and hosting multi-tenant retail establishments.

The requested FLUM designation is appropriate for the proposed adaptive reuse project.

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

The proposed development is consistent with PLAN 2040 goals regarding promotion of walkable, economically vibrant neighborhoods and preservation of Savannah's historically and culturally significant resources.

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

In addition to the local benefits of preserving Savannah's architectural and social heritage, adaptive reuse offers significant economic and environmental benefits. Among them: reduced environmental impact through minimization of demolition waste and transportation of materials, resource conservation through reduced requirements for new building materials, and the economic benefit of overall cost savings through revitalization of an existing structure.

4. Written comments, evidence, and testimony of the public.

On April 9, 2024, the owner, developer, and project manager presented a proposal for future land use change and project design to the public during the weekly meeting of the Victorian Neighborhood Association.

Community members requested information about the proposed changes to the existing building, how the building will be utilized, and whether there will be enough parking available for customers when the business commences. The developer stated that the building would mainly undergo interior changes in areas such as the cellar and the bell tower, with a reuse assessment to follow. They continued to explain that the restaurant would have 150 seats inside the building and operate from 5 pm to 10 pm, with the possibility of opening for daytime service on two to three days. There would be no outside entertainment, and a small event venue on the 2nd floor was proposed. The developer admitted that parking is an issue and proposed solutions, including seven 45-degree angle parking spaces and on-street parking.

The general public sentiment was agreeable to the proposed changes to the building and land use and solutions to alleviate the parking issue.

Planning Commission Recommendation

The Planning Commission recommends **approval** of the request to amend the FLUM to reflect Traditional Commercial use.