



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: August 14, 2024
TO: THE MAYOR AND ALDERMEN OF THE CITY OF SAVANNAH
FROM: METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION
SUBJECT: Text Amendment to *Article 7, Sections 7.8.10, 7.9.10, 7.10.10, and 7.11.10, and Article 13, Section 13.5*

PETITION REFERENCED:

Petitioner: Bridget Lidy, on Behalf of the Mayor and Alderman of the City of Savannah.

Property Owner: N/A

Address: N/A

Alderman: District – N/A

County Commission: District – N/A

Property Identification Number: N/A

Petition File No.: 24-003913-ZA-TEXT

MPC ACTION:

The Planning Commission recommends **approval** of the requested text amendment to more clearly define the definition and use of stucco in the City's Historic Overlay Districts.

MPC STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

The MPC Staff recommends **approval** of the requested text amendment to more clearly define the definition and use of stucco in the City's Historic Overlay Districts

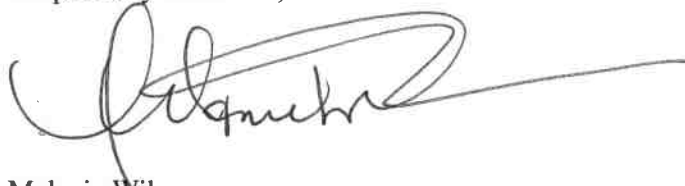
MEMBERS PRESENT: 11

Traci Amick
Stephen Plunk
Coren Ross
Karen Jarrett – Chairwoman
Laureen Boles
Amanda Wilson
Jay Melder
Michael Kaigler
Joseph Ervin
Joseph Welch
Dwayne Stephens

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

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

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



METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION

"Planning the Future - Respecting the Past"

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: The City Council

FROM: The Planning Commission

DATE: August 13, 2024

SUBJECT: Text Amendment to the City of Savannah Zoning Ordinance
Re: Amendment to Article 7, Sections 7.8.10, 7.9.10, 7.10.10,
and 7.11.10, and Article 13, Section 13.5

Applicant: Bridget Lidy, on Behalf of the Mayor and
Aldermen of the City of Savannah, Georgia

MPC File No.: 24-003913-ZA-TEXT

BACKGROUND:

Savannah's Zoning Ordinance currently defines "true stucco" as a material that can only be applied over masonry. This precludes the use of stucco over wood frame construction, limiting the means and methods of construction projects, which is typically beyond the scope of review for work done in any of the City's four Historic Overlay Districts. After detailed research, conversations with the local development community and the HPC Subcommittee, Staff proposed text amendments to the existing ordinances. The proposed ordinance text amendments were placed on the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) and Historic District Board of Review (HDBR) agendas and approved by both Boards to move forward to the Planning Commission and City Council for consideration.

The proposed language in the text amendment also provides clarity by omitting "wood framing" and "metal framing" from the prohibited materials to more precisely convey that one-part stucco is prohibited regardless of the construction type over which it is applied.

REQUEST:

A request by MPC Staff to amend the following sections within Articles 7 and 13 of the Zoning Ordinance to clarify development standards regarding the use and composition of stucco within Historic Districts:

Article 7, Sec. 7.8.10 Savannah Downtown Historic District Design Standards,
Article 7, Sec. 7.9.10 Savannah Victorian Historic District Design Standards,
Article 7, Sec. 7.10.10 Cuyler-Brownville Historic District Design Standards,
Article 7, Sec. 7.11.10 Streetcar Historic District Design Standards,
Article 13, Section 13.5 Defined Terms, Historic.

The proposed amendments to the current text are as follows:

7.8.10 Savannah Downtown Historic District Design Standards

e. Foundations

i. Alterations to contributing resources

1. Foundations shall be repaired with in-kind materials rather than replaced, provided however, if the degree of degradation does not allow repair, the degradation shall be photographically documented and verified by the Planning Director and the new foundation shall be of the same materials and configuration as the original foundation.
2. If the original foundation material and/or configuration is unknown, the new foundation material and configuration shall be based on historic context.
3. The space between piers may be filled with heavy gauge wood lattice with at least one-half (0.5) inch thick lattice boards, horizontal boards, brick, or true stucco over concrete block. Infill material shall be recessed a minimum of three inches behind the front edge of the pier so that the piers are clearly visible and differentiated.

ii. New construction, alterations to non-contributing resources and additions

1. Configuration

Beneath a wood frame building, the foundation shall be recessed and not project forward of the building plane.

2. Materials

- a. Foundations piers shall be constructed of brick, stone, or true stucco over concrete block piers.
- b. The space between piers may be filled with wood lattice, horizontal boards, brick, or true stucco over concrete block. Infill material shall be recessed a minimum of three (3) inches behind the front edge of the pier so that the piers are clearly visible and differentiated.

f. Exterior Walls

ii. New construction, alterations to non-contributing resources and additions

1. Configuration

On lots less than 60 feet in width the front face shall be constructed so as to form a continuous plane parallel to the street. Bays and porches attached to such elevation may project streetward of the plane.

2. Materials

a. Permitted materials

- i. Residential exterior walls shall be finished in brick, wood or fiber cement siding with a smooth finish or true stucco. Commercial exterior walls shall be finished in brick, true stucco, concrete formed or assembled as stone, precast concrete panels with finish to simulate stucco texture, polished stone

and glazed brick or tile where similar historic examples exist along the same block front.

- ii. Wood or fiber cement siding shall be permitted on townhouses only in wards where wood-sided townhouses already exist or where more than 75% of the lot frontage in the ward contains wood-sided buildings. Where wood siding has been determined to be appropriate, smooth finish fiber cement siding may be used.
- b. Prohibited materials: Vinyl siding, aluminum siding, rolled asphalt, EIFS, one-part stucco ~~over insulation and/or wood or metal framing~~, T-111, corrugated metal, unpainted exposed CMU blocks, fiber cement panels, ceramic-based coatings and sealers on siding.

7.9.10 Savannah Victorian Historic District Design Standards

a. New Construction, Additions, and Alterations

iii. Foundation

1. Alterations to contributing resources

- a. Foundations shall be repaired rather than replaced, provided however, if the degree of degradation does not allow repair, the degradation shall be photographically documented and verified by the Planning Director and the new foundation shall be of the same materials and configuration as the original foundation.
- b. If the original foundation material and/or configuration is unknown, the new foundation material and configuration shall be based on historic context.
- c. The space between piers may be filled with heavy gauge wood lattice with at least one-half (0.5) inch thick lattice boards, horizontal boards, brick or true stucco over concrete block. Infill material shall be recessed a minimum of three inches behind the front edge of the pier so that the piers are clearly visible and differentiated.

2. New construction, alterations to non-contributing resources, and additions

- a. Materials
 - i. Foundations shall be constructed of brick, stone, or true stucco over concrete block piers.
 - ii. The space between piers may be filled with heavy gauge wood lattice with at least one-half (0.5) inch thick lattice boards, horizontal boards, brick, or true stucco over concrete block. Infill material shall be recessed a minimum of three (3) inches behind the front edge of the pier so that the piers are clearly visible and differentiated.

iv. Exterior Walls

1. Alterations to contributing resources

- a. Exterior walls shall be repaired rather than replaced, provided however, if the degree of degradation does not allow repair, the degradation shall be photographically documented and verified by the Planning Director, and

the new wall shall be of the same materials and configuration as the original wall.

- b. If the original wall material and/or configuration is unknown, the new wall material and configuration shall be based on historic context.
- c. Prohibited materials: Vinyl siding, aluminum siding, rolled asphalt, precast concrete panels, fiber cement wood siding, EIFS, one-part stucco ~~over insulation and/or wood or metal framing~~, and T-111.

2. New construction, alterations to non-contributing resources, and additions

- a. Permitted materials: Brick, stone, wood, true stucco, and wood or fiber cement siding.
- b. Prohibited materials: Vinyl siding, aluminum siding, rolled asphalt, precast concrete panels, EIFS, one-part stucco ~~over insulation and/or wood or metal framing~~, T-111, corrugated metal, unpainted exposed CMU blocks, fiber cement panels, and metal panels.

c. Fencing and Walls

i. Materials

- 1. Permitted: Wood, iron, brick, true stucco over concrete block, or extruded aluminum.
- 2. Prohibited: Chain-link, vinyl, PVC, and corrugated metal.

7.10.10 Cuyler-Brownville Historic District Design Standards

a. New Construction, Additions, and Alterations

iii. Foundation

1. Alterations to contributing resources

- a. Foundations shall be repaired rather than replaced, provided however, if the degree of degradation does not allow repair, the degradation shall be photographically documented and verified by the Planning Director and the new foundation shall be of the same materials and configuration as the original foundation.
- b. If the original foundation material and/or configuration is unknown, the new foundation material and configuration shall be based on historic context.
- c. The space between piers may be filled with heavy gauge wood lattice with at least one-half (0.5) inch thick lattice boards, horizontal boards, brick or true stucco over concrete block. Infill material shall be recessed a minimum of three inches behind the front edge of the pier so that the piers are clearly visible and differentiated.

2. New construction, alterations to non-contributing resources, and additions

a. Materials

- i. Foundations shall be constructed of brick, stone, or true stucco over concrete block piers.
- ii. The space between piers may be filled with heavy gauge wood lattice

with at least one-half (0.5) inch thick lattice boards, horizontal boards, brick, or true stucco over concrete block. Infill material shall be recessed a minimum of three (3) inches behind the front edge of the pier so that the piers are clearly visible and differentiated.

iv. Exterior Walls

The intent of these standards is to ensure that exterior building walls reflect and complement the traditional materials and construction techniques of the district’s architecture.

1. Alterations to contributing resources

- a. Exterior walls shall be repaired rather than replaced, provided however, if the degree of degradation does not allow repair, the degradation shall be photographically documented and verified by the Planning Director, and the new wall shall be of the same materials and configuration as the original wall.
- b. If the original wall material and/or configuration is unknown, the new wall material and configuration shall be based on historic context.
- c. Prohibited materials: Vinyl siding, aluminum siding, rolled asphalt, recast concrete panels, fiber cement wood siding, EIFS, one-part stucco ~~over insulation and/or wood or metal framing~~, and T-111.

2. New construction, alterations to non-contributing resources, and additions

- a. Permitted materials: Brick, stone, wood, true stucco, painted concrete block, precast concrete panels, metal shingles, and wood or fiber cement siding.
- b. Prohibited materials: Vinyl siding, aluminum siding, rolled asphalt, precast concrete panels, EIFS, one-part stucco ~~over insulation and/or wood or metal framing~~, T-111, corrugated metal, unpainted exposed CMU blocks, fiber cement panels, and metal panels.

c. Fences and Walls

The intent of these standards is to ensure that walls and fences define outdoor spaces appropriately, separate the private and public realms and add architectural interest to a building’s façade. In addition to compliance with the requirements set forth in Sec. 9.6, Fences and Walls, fences and walls shall also comply with the following standards:

i. Materials

1. Permitted: Wood, iron, brick, true stucco over concrete block, or extruded aluminum.
2. Chain link may be permitted in the side and rear yards but not in the front yard. Plastic or metal slats used in chain link shall not be permitted.
3. Prohibited: Vinyl, PVC, and corrugated metal.

7.11.10 Streetcar Historic District Design Standards

a. New Construction, Additions and Alterations

iii. Foundation

1. Alterations to contributing resources

- a. Foundations shall be repaired rather than replaced, provided however, if the degree of degradation does not allow repair, the degradation shall be photographically documented and verified by the Planning Director and the new foundation shall be of the same materials and configuration as the original foundation.
- b. If the original foundation material and/or configuration is unknown, the new foundation material and configuration shall be based on historic context.
- c. The space between piers may be filled with heavy gauge wood lattice with at least one-half (0.5) inch thick lattice boards, horizontal boards, brick or true stucco over concrete block. Infill material shall be recessed a minimum of three inches behind the front edge of the pier so that the piers are clearly visible and differentiated.

2. New construction, alterations to non-contributing resources, and additions

- a. Materials
 - i. Foundations shall be constructed of brick, stone, or true stucco over concrete block piers.
 - ii. The space between piers may be filled with heavy gauge wood lattice with at least one-half (0.5) inch thick lattice boards, horizontal boards, brick, or true stucco over concrete block. Infill material shall be recessed a minimum of three (3) inches behind the front edge of the pier so that the piers are clearly visible and differentiated.

iv. Exterior Walls

1. Alterations to contributing resources

- a. Exterior walls shall be repaired rather than replaced, provided however, if the degree of degradation does not allow repair, the degradation shall be photographically documented and verified by the Planning Director, and the new wall shall be of the same materials and configuration as the original wall.
- b. If the original wall material and/or configuration is unknown, the new wall material and configuration shall be based on historic context.
- c. Prohibited materials: Vinyl siding, aluminum siding, rolled asphalt, precast concrete panels, fiber cement wood siding, EIFS, one-part stucco ~~over insulation and/or wood or metal framing~~, and T-111.

2. New construction, alterations to non-contributing resources, and additions

- a. Permitted materials: Brick, stone, wood, true stucco, and wood or fiber cement siding.
- b. Prohibited materials: Vinyl siding, aluminum siding, rolled asphalt, precast concrete panels, EIFS, one-part stucco ~~over insulation and/or wood or metal framing~~, T-111, corrugated metal, unpainted exposed CMU blocks, fiber cement panels, and metal panels.

c. Fences and Walls

i. Materials

1. Permitted: Wood, iron, brick, true stucco over concrete block, smooth fiber cement, and extruded aluminum.
2. Chain link may be permitted in the rear yard but not along any street. Plastic or metal slats used in chain link shall not be permitted.
3. Prohibited: Chain-link, vinyl, PVC, and corrugated metal.

Article 13, Section 13.5 Defined Terms, Historic

Stucco: Fine plaster used for coating wall surfaces or molding into architectural decorations. Exterior plaster applied as a two (2) or three (3) part coating directly onto masonry. Historic stucco consisted primarily of hydrated or slaked lime, water and sand with straw or animal hair as a binder. Exterior Insulation Finishing System, or EIFS, is not considered stucco for the purposes of this Ordinance.

True Stucco: Exterior plaster applied as a two- (2) or three- (3) part coating ~~directly onto masonry. Exterior Insulation Finishing System, or EIFS, is not considered stucco for the purposes of this Ordinance. A traditional three-coat stucco system consists of a lath base (made of wood or galvanized/ stainless steel metal mesh), a scratch coat, a brown coat, and a finish coat. The first layer, or scratch coat, has a rough, “scratchy” surface so the next layer better adheres to it. The middle layer, or brown coat, uses a long trowel or “darby” to create a smooth finish. The top coat, or finish coat, is the layer that is colored and/or textured to achieve the final desired appearance. A two-coat stucco system is used when stucco is applied directly to masonry. Therefore, it only consists of a brown coat and a finish coat. Staff cannot approve most modern stucco wall systems, including Exterior insulation and finish systems (EIFS), multiple layers of wallboard, weatherproofing membranes, and lath are not considered stucco for the purposes of this Ordinance.~~

FACTS AND FINDINGS:

1. The text of the Zoning Ordinance was amended on [Nov 22, 2022](#) for the purpose of revising the definition of “stucco” and adding a definition of “true stucco.”
2. The proposed text amendments were heard by the Historic District Board of Review on [July 10, 2024](#) and the Historic Preservation Commission on [June 26, 2024](#), receiving a recommendation of approval from both Boards.

ORDINANCE ANALYSIS:

Per section 3.7.7 of Article 3, Savannah’s Zoning Ordinance offers four (4) review criteria for proposed text amendments:

- a. **Consistency** – The extent to which the proposed text amendment is consistent with the remainder of the Zoning Ordinance, including any purpose and intent statements.

MPC Staff Comment: *The proposed amendments are intended to provide greater*

clarity and coherence to the City’s regulations regarding development in the Historic Overlay Districts. They are not in conflict with other Ordinance provisions, but rather ensure the Historic review Boards make decisions that are within the scope of their purview.

- b. **New or Changing Circumstances** – The extent to which the proposed text amendment represents a new idea not considered in the existing Zoning Ordinance, or represents a revision necessitated by changing circumstances over time.

MPC Staff Comment: *The proposed text amendment does not represent the introduction of a new idea not previously considered or a revision necessitated by changing circumstances over time.*

- c. **Error or Inappropriate Standard** – Whether or not the proposed text amendment corrects an error in the Zoning Ordinance, or otherwise improves upon existing requirements or standards.

MPC Staff Comment: *The amendments represent the correction of what was likely an error permitting the HPC and HDBR’s intervention into construction means and methods where the scope of a Historic review is typically limited to aesthetic considerations and materiality.*

- d. **Compliance with Higher Law** – Whether or not the proposed text amendment revises the Zoning Ordinance to comply with state or federal statutes.

MPC Staff Comment: *The proposed amendment is not a revision to bring a local ordinance into conformance with state or federal law.*

POLICY ANALYSIS:

The intent of the requested amendment is to ensure that means and methods of construction, which are not in the scope of the Historic Overlay District standards, are not being decided by the Boards, as this is outside of their purview. Whether stucco as an exterior finishing material is applied over masonry or wood framing should not be subject to Historic Board review so long as the correct two- or three-part stucco is used.

PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

The Planning Commission recommends **approval** of the requested text amendment to more clearly define the definition and use of stucco in the City’s Historic Overlay Districts.