



**METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION**

*"Planning the Future - Respecting the Past"*

M E M O R A N D U M

**DATE:** DECEMBER 11, 2018  
**TO:** THE MAYOR AND ALDERMEN OF THE CITY OF SAVANNAH  
**FROM:** METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION  
**SUBJECT:** MPC RECOMMENDATION

**PETITION REFERENCED:**

**Text Amendment to the City of Savannah Zoning Ordinance**

**Re: Amendments to Article K, Section 8-3215(2)(b) (Principal Uses) and introduction of Section 8-3215(2)(d) to permit commercial uses on certain streets in the CIV district.**

**Applicant: Philip McCorkle**

**File No. 18-005956-ZA**

**MPC ACTION:**

**Denial** of the request to amend Article K, Section 8-3215(2)(b) (Principal Uses) and introduce Section 8-3215(2)(d) to permit commercial uses on certain streets in the CIV district. **Recommendation of an alternate amendment** to permit commercial uses currently allowed in the TC-1 district in Mid-City on the ground floor of lots fronting Bull Street in CIV district.

**MPC STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

**Denial** of the request to amend Article K, Section 8-3215(2)(b) (Principal Uses) and introduce Section 8-3215(2)(d) to permit commercial uses on certain streets in the CIV district. **Recommendation of an alternate amendment** to permit commercial uses currently allowed in the TC-1 district in Mid-City on the ground floor of lots fronting Bull Street in CIV district.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** 8+ Chairman

Joseph Ervin, Chairman  
Travis Coles  
Ellis Cook  
Roberto Hernandez  
Lacy Manigault  
Wayne Noha  
Eula Parker

Linder Suthers  
Tom Woiwode

**PLANNING COMMISSION VOTE:** Approve Staff Recommendation (9-0)

<b>APPROVAL</b> Votes: 9	<b>DENIAL</b> Votes: 0	<b>ABSENT</b>
Ervin Cook Coles Hernandez Manigault Noha Parker Suthers Woiwode		Branch Jarrett Milton Smith Welch

Respectfully submitted,



Melanie Wilson  
Executive Director

/jh

Enclosure

cc Luciana Spracher, Interim Clerk of Council  
Brooks Stillwell, City Attorney  
Lester B. Johnson, Assistant City Attorney  
Jennifer Herman, Assistant City Attorney  
Beth Barnes, Department of Inspections





## Chatham County - Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission

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### December 11, 2018 Regular MPC Meeting

**Title**

REZONING TEXT AMENDMENT | Philip McCorkle | Section 8-3215(2)(b) | Commercial uses in the CIV district | File No. 18-005956-ZA

**Description**

**Recommendation**

**Contact**

**Financial Impact**

**Review Comments**

**Attachments**

[📎 Staff Report-18-005956-ZA.pdf](#)



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# METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION

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M E M O R A N D U M

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**TO:** The Mayor and Aldermen of the City of Savannah

**FROM:** The Metropolitan Planning Commission

**DATE:** December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2018

**SUBJECT:** Text Amendment to the City of Savannah Zoning Ordinance  
Re: Amendments to Article K, Section 8-3215(2)(b) (Principal Uses) and introduction of Section 8-3215(2)(d) to permit commercial uses on certain streets in the CIV district.

**Applicant: Philip McCorkle**  
**File No. 18-005956-ZA**

**ISSUE:**

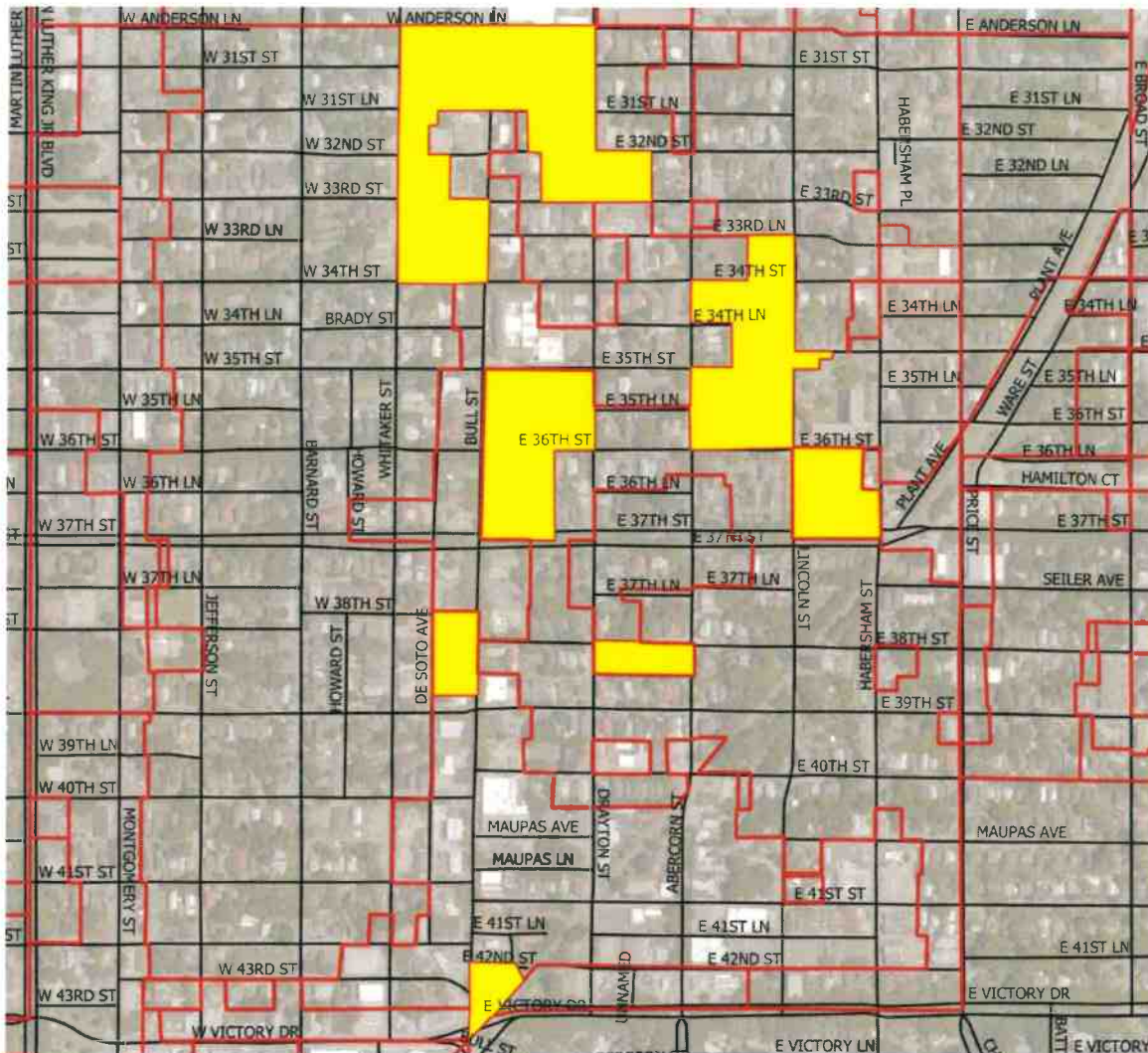
A petition to amend the use requirements for the CIV district in Mid-City to allow ground-floor commercial uses along arterial streets.

**BACKGROUND:**

1. There is growing interest in redeveloping many sites along north-south corridors within the Mid-City historic district, particularly along Bull Street. Many of the most attractive parcels are currently church-owned parking lots or City-owned properties. As there is little desire to construct additional churches or other public or institutional facilities, most of the anticipated development along the corridor—if permitted—will take the form of residences or neighborhood-scale commercial development.
2. The petitioner, Philip McCorkle, represents a client who wishes to construct a multifamily residential building with ground-floor retail on the block bounded by Bull and Drayton Streets between 31<sup>st</sup> Street and 31<sup>st</sup> Lane. The ground floor commercial component of this project is currently prohibited by the Mid-City Ordinance.

**FINDINGS:**

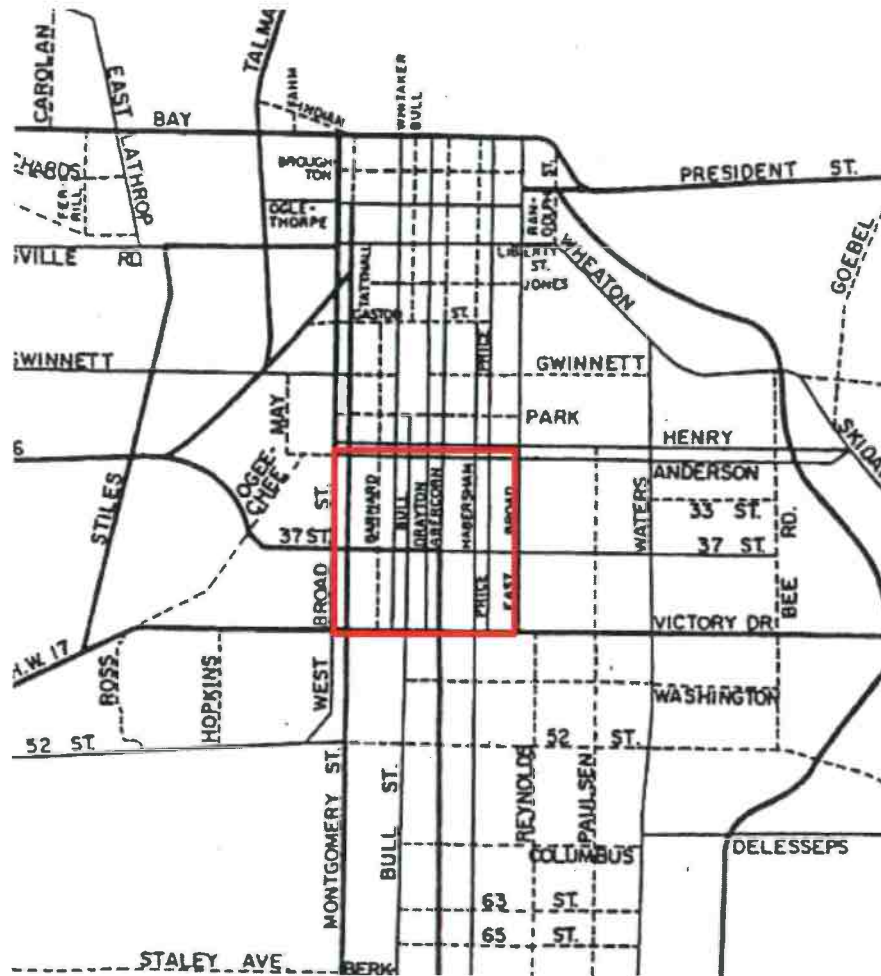
1. The language of the amendment as proposed is as follows, with changes indicated in **bold**:  
  
(b) All commercial uses listed in the table above shall be permitted only when associated with a public or civic facility, except as provided in 8-3215(6), **and except as provided in subparagraph (d) below.**  
  
**(d) Commercial uses allowed in the TC-1 district shall be allowed on the ground floor on a street designated as a collector or arterial on the street classification map found at 8-3048 of the City of Savannah Zoning Ordinance.**
2. As currently written, the CIV district in the Mid-City Ordinance (Article K) only permits a narrow range of commercial uses that are specifically associated with a “public or civic facility.” These include indoor/outdoor recreation, offices (both medical and general), and indoor shooting ranges.
3. The following map highlights all instances of the CIV district along with streets and zoning boundaries in the Mid-City area:



4. The Bull Street corridor in Mid-City between Anderson Lane and Victory Drive historically has played host to commercial and institutional uses. With a 75' right-of-way, parking on both sides, and mature tree cover in many places, the street is ideally suited for walkable neighborhood-scale retail. In addition, there are many existing instances of traditional ground-floor commercial uses ranging from restaurants to breweries and retail stores.
5. The purpose of the CIV district is “*intended to provide for civic and institutional district uses that serve a large area or produce intensive activities not readily assimilated into other districts.*” In practice, the CIV district primarily accommodates churches and associated church facilities (parking lots), as well as educational SCAD buildings. It also accommodates public uses in the form of the Thomas Square park, the Bull Street public library and community centers.
6. A map of arterial and collector streets in Mid-City is reproduced below as it appears in the Ordinance at section 8-3025(g), with the approximate Mid-City boundaries indicated in red. Since every existing CIV district in Mid-City has at least partial frontage on an arterial or collector street, this amendment would directly impact all instances of CIV. While ground-level commercial uses may be appropriate with CIV in some situations, this may not be true in all cases. The following table indicates the major streets that run through Mid-City and their various classifications:

<b>Street</b>	<b>Classification</b>
MLK Jr. Blvd. (West Broad)	Major Arterial
Montgomery Street	Major Arterial
Barnard Street	Collector
Whitaker Street	Secondary Arterial
Bull Street	Secondary Arterial
Drayton Street	Secondary Arterial
Abercorn Street	Major Arterial
Habersham Street	Secondary Arterial
Price Street	Secondary Arterial
East Broad Street	Secondary Arterial

In short, every north-south street in Mid-City except Jefferson Street and Lincoln Street is classified as a collector or greater.



**LEGEND**

- COLLECTOR.....(DASHED LINE)
- ===== SECONDARY ARTERIAL....(THIN LINE)
- ===== MAJOR ARTERIAL.....(HEAVY LINE)

7. Mid-City commercial districts, TC-1 and TC-2, also accommodate virtually every civic use permitted by the CIV district. Perhaps as a result, the CIV district is slated for elimination under NewZo, to be replaced by a slightly modified version of the TC-1 district. This would essentially accomplish the intent of the proposed amendment by other means. See NewZo section 5.13 for additional details.
8. The use table for the TC-1 district is reproduced below as it appears in the Mid-City ordinance.

<b>TC- Districts</b>	<b>TC-1</b>	<b>TC-2</b>	<b>Standards</b>
<b>Key: ✓ = Permitted * = Subject to Special Use Review</b>			
Food service center for homeless	✓	✓	
Group care home (7 to 15 people)	✓	✓	8-3218(5)
Homeless shelter (emergency)	*	*	8-3218(6)
Museum, library	✓	✓	
Place of worship	✓	✓	
Public uses, including recreation sites	✓	✓	
School, public or private (K-12)	✓	✓	
Single room occupancy residence	✓	✓	8-3218(8)
Special needs housing	✓	✓	8-3218(9)
Technical, trade or business school	✓	✓	
Utility, minor	✓	✓	
<b>COMMERCIAL USES</b>			
Artist studio, gallery	✓	✓	
Bar, nightclub, tavern	*	*	8-3219(2)
Boarding or rooming house (up to 10 people)	✓	✓	8-3219(3)
Club, lodge	*	*	
Contractor's office	✓	✓	8-3219(4)
Dormitory for college or university		✓	
Fraternity, sorority house	*	*	
Funeral home	✓	✓	
Gas station with convenience retail	*	✓	8-3219(5)
Greenhouse, plant nursery		✓	
Hotel, motel		✓	
Indoor recreation (commercial)	✓	✓	
Inn, hostel	✓	✓	8-3219(6)
Manufacturing, Limited		✓	8-3219(7)
Microbrewery <small>(17-001851-ZA; adopted 6/8/17)</small>	*	*	8-3219(18)
Office, General	✓	✓	8-3219(8)
Office, Medical	✓	✓	
Outdoor recreation (commercial)		✓	
Package alcohol sales	*	*	8-3219(9)
Restaurant without alcohol sales	✓	✓	8-3219(10)
Restaurant with alcohol sales	*	*	8-3219(10)
Retail, General	✓	✓	8-3219(11)
Retail, Neighborhood	✓	✓	8-3219(11)
Self-storage facility		✓	8-3219(12)
Service, General	✓	✓	8-3219(13)
Service, Neighborhood	✓	✓	8-3219(13)
Shooting range, indoor		*	
Tattoo Studio		✓	8-3219(17)
Taxi dispatch, limousine service, messenger service		✓	
Vehicle repair	*	*	8-3219(14)
Vehicle sales and service, Minor	✓	✓	8-3219(15)
Vehicle sales and service, Major		*	8-3219(15)
Veterinarian, animal hospital	✓	✓	8-3219(16)



**POLICY ANALYSIS:**

The amendment as proposed would clearly undermine the intent of the CIV district, which aims “to provide for civic and institutional uses serving a large area.” If approved, CIV would become virtually identical to TC-1 in terms of permitted uses, but without the development standards limiting a project to 30 residential units per acre or to a floor plate of 5000 square feet, since the CIV district does not specify requirements for these standards. The amendment would essentially convert all existing CIV districts to less-restricted TC-1 districts, which is clearly not what was intended by the Ordinance.

The language of the amendment could result in additional problems for implementation. In particular, “on a street” is insufficiently precise. It could apply equally to a retail operation directly fronting an arterial street or extend well into a primarily residential block so long as a piece of the building bore some relation to the arterial street. Because of this ambiguity, this provision would be essentially unenforceable and might have to be interpreted in the most expansive sense possible. Even if the proposed language presented no other concerns, the current usage of “on” would have to be refined to “fronting” and further defined.

While it is likely inappropriate to permit commercial uses in all CIV districts as implied by the proposed text amendment, there is a clear case to be made for some ground-floor commercial uses in the CIV districts along Bull Street, which is a significant civic corridor that already has a great deal of commercial activity in other sections. There are only a handful of parcels in the CIV districts along Bull Street that are not already built upon. These are mostly church parking lots that are unlikely to be redeveloped as civic uses anytime soon and will probably remain as they are unless there is a change to existing zoning. There is a compelling public interest in supporting more walkable, neighborhood-oriented commercial use on Bull Street, and since the change would only affect a handful of parcels (see map below for the parcels of greatest interest), the MPC can support a modified version of the proposed amendment that applies only to the Bull Street corridor.



In addition to the parcels outlined above, other affected parcels include the city-owned land comprising Thomas Square park and the Bull Street library; the former Epworth Church site (already the subject of existing text amendments); and the triangular city-owned parcel bounded by the railroad line, Victory Drive, 42<sup>nd</sup> Street and Bull Street.

The MPC proposes language that mirrors the intent of the proposed amendment, but restricts its scope to the Bull Street corridor and further clarifies the meaning of “on a street” to only include parcels fronting Bull Street: *(d) Commercial uses allowed in the TC-1 district shall be allowed on the ground floor of lots fronting Bull Street; such uses must be contained within 110 feet of the Bull Street centerline.* The second clause ensures that commercial uses bear a clear relationship to Bull Street itself while still permitting wraparound cafes, for example. Since Bull Street has 75’ right of way, this implies that commercial uses will be permitted around 65’ along a side street from the lot line, which happens to align well with the depth of traditional commercial buildings elsewhere in the corridor.

The recommended alternative attempts to reconcile a desire for commercial development in a prominent corridor with a need to retain the intent of CIV districts elsewhere in Mid-City. The alternative language remains consistent with NewZo.

#### **ALTERNATIVES:**

1. Recommend approval of the request to amend the Zoning Ordinance as proposed.
2. Recommend an alternate amendment.
3. Recommend denial of the request.

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

**Denial** of the request to amend Article K, Section 8-3215(2)(b) (Principal Uses) and introduce Section 8-3215(2)(d) to permit commercial uses on certain streets in the CIV district. **Recommendation of an alternate amendment** to permit commercial uses currently allowed in the TC-1 district in Mid-City on the ground floor of lots fronting Bull Street in CIV district.

*Amendments recommended to be enacted are shown in boldface type and are underlined.*

#### **ENACT**

##### **Article K, Section 8-3215(2)(b) (Principal Uses)**

(b) All commercial uses listed in the table above shall be permitted only when associated with a public or civic facility, except as provided in 8-3215(6), **and except as provided in subparagraph (d) below.**

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