



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

STAFF REPORT

File Number: 23-001408-ZA
Date: April 23, 2024
Location: 810 East Broad Street, 613-623 East Gwinnett Street, 610-614 East Bolton Street
PIN(s): 20043 07001, 04, 05, 06, 13, 15, 18, 19, 20
Acreage: +/- 1.38 acres
Prepared By: Edward Morrow, Director of Development Services

Request

The Applicant requests MPC review of an amended application to rezone approximately 1.38 acres located at the southeast corner of the intersection of East Broad and East Gwinnett Streets from TC-2 (Traditional Commercial -2) to S-PD (Small-Planned Development). The proposed development consists of a 4-story mixed-use building with up to 185 apartments and up to 10,000 sf of commercial space. The development proposes underground parking within the building. The proposed PD Ordinance is based largely on a modified TC-2 use schedule, as well as modified development standards including increased building footprint, increased dwelling unit density, and reduced off-street parking requirements.

Background

The application was submitted to the City of Savannah March 3, 2023, as a request to rezone from TC-2 to D- X (Downtown Expansion), and was subsequently heard by MPC on November 7, 2023, as a request to rezone from TC-2 to S-PD. MPC (Board and Staff) recommended denial of the application. The application, having been modified after being reviewed by MPC, was placed on the March 28, 2024, City Council agenda. The amended application was remanded by Council to MPC for the present review.

Public Notice

The second hearing of the application was noticed via a legal ad in the Savannah Morning News, signs posted to the site for the Special Called Meeting of the MPC, and public notice mailers sent to property owners within a 300-foot radius of the site.

Community Engagement

On June 30, 2023 the Applicant conducted a neighborhood meeting at the W.W. Law Center regarding the initial iteration of the application MPC Staff was present for the meeting, during which citizens expressed concern regarding: the demolition of the historic church which once occupied the property, lane access for the remaining church that adjoins the site, displacement of the site's residents, and increased traffic to be generated by the proposal.

Per the Applicant, a community meeting was held with the Victorian Neighborhood Association (VNA) on March 12, 2024 following the revisions to the proposed building design. MPC Staff was not in attendance.

Forsyth Park Community Alliance (FPCA) requested a meeting with the Applicant in late March regarding revisions to the project, but the meeting was never held as dates and venues could not be coordinated by the parties.

The original application indicates VNA and FPCA as the affiliated neighborhood entities; however, per SAGIS, the site is physically located within the **Eastside** neighborhood. A member of the Eastside Alliance indicated that the plans for the site had not been shared with their organization, nor has a meeting been requested or held to date.

Site

The subject property consists of nine (9) parcels, together totaling approximately 1.46 acres. After ROW dedications, the adjusted acreage per the submitted GDP is 1.38 acres.

The land uses and zoning districts surrounding the site are as follows:

Location	Land Use	Existing Zoning
North	Historic theater; single family homes; <i>future mixed use residential/commercial development</i>	TC-2
South	Duplex housing; Church; electrical substation	TC-2
East	CSX rail line; Single-family and Duplex housing	TR-1
West	Single-family and Duplex Housing	TN-1

Existing Zoning

- Intent: The intent of the TC-2 zoning district is to allow historic mixed-use neighborhoods with traditional development patterns characteristic of Savannah during the streetcar and early automobile eras. The district provides for the creation of commercial corridors along higher classifications of streets that traverse historic neighborhoods.

- **Allowed Uses:** The TC-2 zoning district allows for a variety of housing types, commercial uses, and public and institutional uses. Permitted uses can be found attached as an addendum to this report.
- **Development Standards:** Relevant TC-2 development standards can be seen in the chart below.

5.13.5 Development Standards for Permitted Uses		
Standards	TC-1	TC-2
Upper Story Residential		
Lot area per unit (sq ft)	No min.	No min.
Lot width per unit (ft)	No min.	No min.
Apartments		
Lot area per unit (sq ft)	435	435
Lot width (ft)	30	30
Nonresidential		
Lot area (sq ft)	--	--
Lot width (ft)	20	20
Building		
Building Coverage (max)	--	--
Building Frontage (min)	70%	70%
Building Footprint (max sq ft) [1]	5,500	10,000
Building Setbacks (ft)		
For blocks without contributing structures*		
Front yard	5 (max)	5 (max)
Side yard (interior) [2]	10 (min)	10 (min)
Side yard (corner)	5 (max)	5 (max)
Rear yard	10 (min)	10 (min)
For blocks with contributing structures*		
Front yard	Avg of block face	Avg of block face
Side yard (interior) [2]	10 (min)	10 (min)
Side yard (corner)	Avg of block face	Avg of block face
Rear yard	10 (min)	10 (min)
Building separation	See Fire Code	See Fire Code
Height (max) [1]	3 stories up to 45 ft	3 stories up to 45 ft
Accessory Structure Setback	See Sec. 8.7	See Sec. 8.7
* Refer to Contributing Resources Map in Sec. 7.11.4		
[1] Monumental buildings in the Streetcar Overlay District are exempt from the maximum building footprint and maximum height standards provided that the visual compatibility criteria are met.		
[2] There is no minimum side yard (interior) setback for properties adjacent to any TC zoning district.		

Proposed Zoning

- **Intent:** The Applicant has provided the purpose of this S-PD District for the Gwinnett Street Apartments Small-Planned Development (“Gwinnett Street Apartments PD”) is hereby established to encourage mixed use development consisting of Commercial and Residential uses that serves an urban transit-oriented area and provides more intensive activities not readily assimilated into other districts.

- Allowed Uses: The Applicant has provided the following principal use table within the submitted S-PD Ordinance.

	Permitted Use	Limited Use	Special Use
Residential			
Apartments	X		
Upper Story Residential	X		
Day Care Services:			
Adult Care Center		X	
Child Care Center		X	
Club or Lodge:			
Private Club			X
Community Services:			
Cultural Facilities (Art/Photo Studio, gallery; museum; theater/cinema/performing arts)	X		
Post-Office/Mail Center	X		
Library/Community Center	X		
Office:			
Office, general	X		
Office, Medical	X		
Coworking Space	X		
Indoor Recreation:			
Indoor Amusement	X		
Indoor Sports Facility	X		
Theater/Cinema/Performing Arts	X		
Retail Sales:			
Retail, General	X		
Art/photo studio; Gallery	X		
Convenience Store		X	
Food-Oriented Retail	X		
Pharmacy/Drug-Store	X		
Plant Nursery	X		
Warehouse or Office Showroom/Flex Space			X
Services:			
Services, general	X		
Animal services, indoor		X	
Bank	X		
Interior Decorating	X		
Personal Service shops	X		
Body art services	X		
Business Support Services	X		
Catering Establishment	X		
Hall, Banquet or Reception			X
Instructional Studio or Classroom	X		
Repair Oriented Services	X		
Eating and Drinking Establishments:			
Distillery, Craft			X
Bar; Tavern			X
Restaurant	X		
Retail Consumption dealer (on premise consumption of alcohol)			X
Package store (not including wine specialty shops)			X
Wine Specialty Shop (not including package stores)			X
Brewery, Micro			X
Industry, Manufacturing and Processing as follows:			
Artisan/Craft		X	
Communications:			
Broadcast Transmission Tower			X

- Development Standards: The Applicant has provided the following development standards within the submitted S-PD Ordinance.

Use Standards	Lot Area per Unit (Min/max sq ft)	Lot Width (min ft)	Building coverage (max)	Building Frontage (min)	Building Setback (Max ft)	Unit Count/Square Footage (Max)	Block Length (Max ft)
Apartments	No min/max	20	100%	70%	-	185	500
Upper Story Residential	No min/max	20	100%	70%	-	185	500
Commercial	No min/max	20	100%	70%	-	10,000 SF	500

RESIDENTIAL UNIT DENSITY.

The maximum number of Residential Units within the respective PD shall be **185 Residential Units**.

BUILDING HEIGHT. (See Exhibit "A")

New Construction –

Buildings shall be permitted to build to a maximum of Four (4) stories and 49 feet above grade.

- Parapets or mechanical screening no larger than 4' in height shall not be counted against the maximum allowable height.

Impact and Suitability

- Comprehensive Plan/FLUM Consistency: The Chatham County-Savannah Comprehensive Plan (PLAN 2040) Future Land Use Map designates the subject property as a mix of Residential Single-Family and Traditional Commercial. The proposed Small Planned Development is compatible with both residential and commercial uses as the proposed use would be mixed use – significant commercial use on the ground floor and upper story residential use. In context, the TC-2 zone permits 'upper story' residential use with no corresponding minimum land area per unit, but the height of the structures is capped at 3 stories or 45-feet, and the building footprint at 10,000 sf.

Very technically, New ZO stipulates that the requested rezoning requires a designation of Planned Development.

- Transportation Network and Transit: The latest iteration of the Plan shows a single ingress/egress point via East Bolton Street into a proposed underground parking structure. No on-street parking is proposed along the one-way East Broad Street frontage, which now features a pedestrian entrance. CAT bus stops are in close proximity of the site along both Broad and Gwinnett Streets. **Trip generation data is a requirement of the general master plan but was not provided by the Applicant though requested.**

The two buildings previously proposed have also been connected to reflect a single building built across East Gwinnett Lane. The lane has not been closed or acquired by the Applicant to permit such a design at present. Further, **the current GDP indicates the ROW and City-owned property that are within the project's scope are not requested to be considered as part of the rezoning application.**

- Public Services and Facilities: A September 7, 2023 variation of the civil site plan was submitted by MPC Staff and reviewed by City Staff through pre-submittal SPR on September 14, 2023. Concerns were expressed by all reviewing departments regarding the ability of existing infrastructure to support the proposed development. The City's **Water, sewer and stormwater departments specifically communicated the need for upgrades. Stormwater stated that the particular line with which the development is proposed to connect is at or near its capacity and they could not rule out flooding of any proposed underground parking garages or adjoining homes.**

Subsequent iterations of the Plan (latest: 10/12/23) introduced improvements that should permit fire truck access to all parts of the building.

Zoning Ordinance Review ([Sec. 6.1.12](#))

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: The range of uses permitted under the current and proposed zoning classifications are similar, including mixed residential and commercial uses. However, the intensity of the proposed development combined with the lack of parking for all proposed commercial and residential uses make it a likely detriment to the neighborhood. If reduced in its scale, the proposed use could be made compatible.

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

MPC Comment: Per the applicant, the proposed development is principally thought to contribute residential units to the region's housing deficit. All units are proposed to rent at market rate.

b. Compatibility

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

MPC Comment: The proposed development is of a scale that will likely have a negative impact on the receiving neighborhood. While some impact is to be expected when a new use is introduced to a neighborhood, careful consideration should be given to ensure traffic circulation remains efficient, off-street parking and loading are adequately accommodated to prevent unsafe blocking of streets, and to ensure the area remains safe for pedestrians.

The new development will impact the site's immediate neighbor as it will adjoin an

existing church that currently enjoys access and off-street parking via the lane. Closure and conveyance of the lane and City property will change the manner in which the Church accesses its property. Redesign to require the portion of the lane adjoining the Church to remain open should be seriously considered.



2. 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: At its current density, the zoning proposal is not compatible with the present zoning pattern and character of the surrounding area. With 4 stories of height at street frontage, the structure has the potential to feel imposing next to one and two-story homes across the street. Also, the proposed density of 185 units is too dense to be consistent with the existing pattern of development. Further, there are insufficient off-street parking spaces proposed. Minimal consideration has been given to circulation and loading for residents, visitors, delivery vehicles and moving trucks and the City's Traffic Engineering department has expressed concern regarding traffic flow and parking .

3. 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: The density increase proposed is inconsistent with that anticipated by the FLUM, and the proposal is of a scale that is inconsistent with the existing pattern of development. Also, the Applicant has not identified commercial uses and associated parking ratios in sufficient detail to establish a realistic off-street parking requirement. The City's Traffic Engineering department has expressed concern regarding traffic flow and proposed parking reductions.

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 FLUM conveys anticipation of intensified commercial and residential use at this location adjoining Broad Street, which is a relatively higher volume thoroughfare. However, the FLUM's anticipated intensification is consistent with that of a neighborhood-scale hub of commercial activity, not downtown-scale as is proposed by the Applicant.

d. Reasonable Use

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

MPC Comment: The current TC-2 zoning classification is the most appropriate zoning classification for the site given its location adjacent to the Historic overlay districts and with the urban transition zone as identified within Plan 2040.

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: A September 7, 2023, variation of the civil site plan was submitted by MPC Staff and reviewed by City Staff through pre-submittal SPR on September 14, 2023. Concerns were expressed by all reviewing departments regarding the ability of existing infrastructure to support the proposed development. The City's Water, sewer and stormwater departments specifically communicated the need for upgrades. Stormwater stated that the particular line with which the development is proposed to connect is at or near its capacity and they could not rule out flooding of any proposed underground parking garages or adjoining homes.

f. Proximity to a Military Base, Installation or Airport

MPC Comment: The subject property is not in proximity of a Military Base, Installation or Airport.

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 is of a scale that will arguably have a deleterious effect on quality of life for residents of the receiving neighborhood. While some impact is to be expected when a new use is introduced to a neighborhood, careful consideration should be given to ensure traffic circulation remains efficient, off-street parking and loading are adequately accommodated to prevent unsafe blocking of streets through illegal parking and stopping, and to ensure the area remains safe for pedestrians – particularly children and those with mobility issues. In addition to reduction in scale, additional street treatments may be considered to offset the intensification of both residential and commercial use in the area that will occur in the coming years.

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: A historic church previously located at 810 E Broad Street was demolished in 2021 in anticipation of the proposed project. Following the demolition of the church, the City adopted a policy requiring review of buildings 50 years old prior to issuance of demolition permits. The site presently contains duplexes that are of a historic nature, but are not deemed architecturally significant due to past modifications. In his recommendation to City Council, the City Manager recommended that the structures be documented, and historic building materials be reclaimed for future reuse.

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 Applicant has submitted elevations, perspectives, and design guidelines in the S-PD document that are conflicting. MPC Staff recommends removal of conflicting text from the S-PD ordinance and requirement that development be in accordance with the submitted

elevations and perspectives, along with adoption of specific conditions regarding exterior finishing to ensure high-quality and visually compatible building materials are used.

Staff Evaluation

Principally, the Applicant has not presented a justification for the creation of the PD beyond the ability to enjoy more favorable development standards. The site is not within a local historic district and is not bound by any particular design standards. Additionally, the site will be cleared eliminating all constraints to development. The present TC-2 zoning district is contextually appropriate and offers the ability to develop the site in a nearly identical manner at a lower intensity.

The chart below identifies several multifamily developments that offer guidance to the level of density that can be achieved in various in-town zoning districts.

Reference Multifamily Developments

Development	Zoning	Stories	Total Units	1 Bedroom	2 Bedrooms	Acreage	Density
Skylark 701 Montgomery	D-C	4	62	41	9	.75	83 du/ac
The Bowery 615 Montgomery	D-C	4	112	78	31	.58	196 du/ac
Park & Broad 1020 East Broad St	S-PD	3	69	60	9	1.63	42 du/ac
2819 Bull Street	TC-1	3	181			1.94	93 du/ac
Starland Village (North) 2115 Bull Street	TC-1	5*	59	54	5	.38	155 du/ac
Starland Village (South) 2201 Bull Street	TC-1	5*	58	32	26	.48	120 du/ac
Gwinnett Street Apartments 810 East Broad St	S-PD	4	185			1.38	134 du/ac

Beyond concerns regarding density and nature of development, the PD Ordinance as proposed presents concerns for ongoing administration.

While the Applicant has eliminated some uses deemed inappropriate in its amended Application, others still included, such as child/day care centers, and banquet and reception halls which may prove impracticable given the site’s limited ingress/egress points, internal circulation and lack of provision of off-street parking.

Also, built into the PD’s language are allowances that could later prove undesirable and difficult to administer:

- Exemption from off-street parking for the first 2,500 sf of a use is requested in addition to reductions in the off-street parking requirement for certain permitted uses;
- Future subdivision of the site is contemplated;
- Design standards not reflected in the presented design are included. Building materials are listed as permitted where their intended use is not adequately demonstrated; and
- Signage would be permitted to an extent greater than that currently permitted by New ZO.

General Development Master Plan Review

Applying the review criteria established in Section 6.1.17 for General Development Master Plans, the Applicant’s submission is evaluated as either complete (C)for having provided sufficient detail or deficient (D) if details are insufficiently clear or missing.

C – Complete

D – Deficient

N/A – Not Applicable

D	<p>A proposed narrative discussing the market concept of the project, explaining the manner in which the criteria of Sec. 6.1.12 have been satisfied, and providing evidence of compatibility with the Future Land Use Plan and adjacent land uses</p> <p>MPC Comment: No narrative or other documentation regarding how the proposal advances the objectives of the Comprehensive Plan has been provided. The Applicant has compared the site to those on the west side of the City along Montgomery and others currently zoned D-X (Downtown Expansion) in an effort to justify the request for several variances to the TC development standards (increased building footprint area, increased height, increased density, and reduced off-street parking).</p>
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C – Complete

D – Deficient

N/A – Not Applicable

C	All proposed land use classifications MPC Comment: The Applicant has provided a list of permitted uses.
C	Total acreage of the overall development and for each land use classification MPC Comment: The Applicant has adequately specified the size of the proposed development, maximum commercial square footage, and a maximum residential unit count.
C	Total number of dwelling units and density for the overall development and for each phase MPC Comment: The Applicant has adequately specified the maximum permissible dwelling unit density. Development is proposed as a single phase.
C	Proposed square footages of nonresidential uses, if applicable MPC Comment: The Applicant has adequately specified the maximum commercial square footage to be permitted.
C	Existing conditions, including the existing zoning districts, locations of existing buildings, streets, alleys, driveways, parking areas, etc. MPC Comment: The Applicant’s GDP generally identifies the existing conditions of the site, though it does not show a proposed dumpster location, or buildings within 100’ of the site.
N/A	Proposed buffers, perimeter and internal, if applicable
C	Curb cut locations on primary roads, internal road system (if applicable) and connectivity to adjacent tracts (if applicable) MPC Comment: The site plan provided shows the location of the only proposed curb cut with full access via East Bolton Street. No other adjoining access is proposed.

C – Complete

D – Deficient

N/A – Not Applicable

C	<p>Locations of sidewalks or trails adjacent to roadways or within buffers, including width, if applicable</p> <p>MPC Comment: The submitted site plan shows proposed sidewalks along East Broad and East Bolton Streets.</p>
C	<p>Open space, including identification of passive and active recreational areas, including wetlands</p> <p>MPC Comment: A proposed interior courtyard with swimming pool is indicated for resident use on the provided architectural site plan.</p>
N/A	<p>Plans to protect or alter wetlands, if applicable</p>
D	<p>Maximum number of trips to be generated by the development</p> <p>MPC Comment: No data regarding trip generation for the proposed development has been provided. City’s Traffic Engineering has requested additional information regarding this item.</p>
D	<p>Any development condition(s) that may be part of a development agreement</p> <p>MPC Comment: The GDP indicates that the East Gwinnett Lane right-of way and a portion of the property which is “in process of acquisition” from the City of Savannah is “not part of the zoning application” Closure of the lane and acquisition of City owned properties would be required to permit the proposed development. These items would need to be approved by City Council.</p>
D	<p>General utility plan</p> <p>MPC Comment: City plan reviewers notified the Applicant that utility improvements would be needed to support the development. The Applicant has deferred exploration of specific requirements for the final master plan review.</p>
N/A	<p>Phasing plan, in accordance with Sec. 6.1.20</p>

C – Complete

D – Deficient

N/A – Not Applicable

C	<p>Delineation of any tree preservation areas to be set aside for Tree Quality Point and Landscape Quality Point credit as noted in the City Code Part 4, Chapter 10, Landscape and Tree Protection Ordinance</p> <p>MPC Comment: The submitted site plan indicates proposed areas of landscaping, however it also includes a note regarding the Applicant’s intent to pay into the Tree Fund. Determination of needed TQPs and LQPs will be determined in the final master plan review.</p>
C	<p>General Location of new buildings and structures, streets, alleys, driveways, parking areas, etc.</p> <p>MPC Comment: The Applicant has adequately identified the location of proposed structures and driveways. Identification of any proposed walls and fences, closure of the lane, as well as materials to be used should be required during the final site plan review phase.</p>

Staff Recommendation

MPC Staff recommends **approval** of the amended application to rezone the subject property with the following conditions and modifications to the proposal:

1. The public right-of-way and City-owned property indicated on the GDP as not within the scope of the rezoning shall be included in the application and rezoned if the other subject property within the scope is also approved for rezoning.
2. Reduction of density so that the maximum residential unit count permitted shall not exceed 138 du/ac.
3. The required off-street parking space for each dwelling unit shall be assigned to the tenant of the residential unit and available at all times for their exclusive use.
4. If privileged parking treatment is desired for commercial uses at this location, allowances for uses permitted in the S-PD shall be in accordance with those applicable to the Victorian and Streetcar Parking Reduction Area as outlined in Sec. 9.3.7 of New ZO.
5. The proposed structure shall be built in accordance with the provided elevations and perspectives submitted with the application.
6. The façade of the structure shall be clad at least 70% brick.
7. Any use of stucco shall meet current ordinance requirements.
8. Areas where fiber cement siding is proposed for exterior finishing shall be demonstrated on elevations/perspectives and approved by MPC during final master plan review.

9. All proposed fences or walls shall be identified on the forthcoming final master plan presented to MPC along with proposed height and materials to be used.
10. Wall, marquee and projecting sign placement and area shall be permitted accordance with the submitted sign plan found in "Exhibit B" of the S-PD ordinance. All other aspects of signage shall be guided by relevant portions of Sec, 9.9 of New ZO.
11. The S-PD document shall be modified in accordance with the attached MPC Staff markup.
12. The portion of E. Gwinnett Lane adjoining the existing church shall remain open.
13. Floor plans shall be submitted and approved as part of the final master plan review to determine unit-type distribution and associated trip generation.

