

MEETING NOTES

Zoning Update-Technical Committee Meeting
Metropolitan Planning Commission
Arthur A. Mendonsa Hearing Room
May 16, 2007
3:00-5:00 PM

I. Announcement of Related Meetings

The Technical Committee was informed of the Savannah Downtown Master Plan public information meetings to be held at the Desoto Hilton on May 23 and 24 and of the Coastal Georgia Comprehensive Plan public information meetings to be held in Savannah at Armstrong Atlantic State University on May 21.

II. Charlotte Moore updated the Committee on recent presentations of the Zoning Update to the MPC Builders Committee, the Savannah Homebuilders Developers and Engineers Council, and the MPC Planning Academy.

III. Charlotte Moore and Courtland Hyser presented an overview of the existing procedures for various approvals required by the zoning ordinance. They included: Development of Regional Impacts (a State requirement for developments that meet or exceed specified thresholds) map amendments (rezoning), text amendments, and site development plans.

A handout was provided that listed existing review criteria for map amendments. Criteria developed as part of the Memphis-Shelby County (Tennessee) Unified Development Code for text amendments was also discussed. Currently, there are no criteria for text amendments in the County or City.

General responses to developing criteria for such reviews included:

- o To the extent possible, criteria should reduce emotional arguments;
- o Criteria should be clear and measurable;
- o There should be a link to the land use plan;
- o Is the "greater good" of the community being served or only for an individual or small group? What are the broad implications of a map or text amendments?

Concern was expressed regarding the review process in the Landmark Historic District when a variance is requested. Should the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) consider a variance without any comment by the Historic Review Board (HRB)? A policy was suggested that could require that a variance request in the Landmark District be evaluated by the HRB prior to review by the ZBA. The application would then be forwarded to the ZBA with the HRB recommendation. Another concern was the relationship of the height map (i.e., the maximum allowed building height) to compatibility standards.

Another concern expressed was that because the membership on the Zoning Board of Appeals is small (only five members), a quorum could potentially consist of only two members, which may be too minimal.

The difference between the definitions of "open space" and "greenspace" was discussed. The terms should be clarified.

There was a discussion regarding how amendments to the Unified Zoning Ordinance would be handled because there are two jurisdictions that may want different standards. Potential approaches include:

- Appointment of a City-County subcommittee comprised of Aldermen and Commissioners who would be charged with reconciling amendments for approval by both legislative bodies.
- Allow each jurisdiction to determine its own amendments separately. If standards vary by jurisdiction, they would be identified in the zoning ordinance by jurisdiction.

It was mentioned that even though a unified ordinance would be initially adopted, it could begin to become, for all intents and purposes, two ordinances if the County and City do not adopt consistent amendments.

A unified ordinance also raised the legal question of the extent to which one body of elected officials should vote on an amendment that affected the other body's constituents. A secondary consideration is that an amendment that may be desirable for citizens in one jurisdiction may be not be desirable for citizens in the other jurisdiction.

These issues must be resolved in future meetings.