

## **Other Business - DDD Amendments**

Comments received online or by email as of **Wednesday morning, August 31 at 9 AM**, regarding the proposed amendments to the Downtown Development District regulations.

### **Online.**

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#### **Barbara Caddell**

1321 Dauphin St.

caddellh@comcast.net

2022-08-26 01:32:24

Comments. The development of the Civic Center "Special District" is a complex process involving upgrading some buildings demolishing others and building some new structures - all in an area adjacent to the proposed Mobile River Bridge and attendant traffic issues. As I understand the law a master plan is required for such a momentous undertaking in order to make sure that the property is developed carefully and all projects fit together both inside the property and with the adjacent neighborhoods. Once the master plan is approved by the planning commission and the city council then appropriate zoning is assigned to fit the plan. The proposal you are considering started with zoning instead of the master plan. At today's meeting proponents of the zoning amendments suggested that the Populous ideas were a "plan" and seemed to focus attention on new construction: an office building built by a developer for the Corps of Engineers and a public garage - and the office building requires a tight deadline. There is no master plan and no plans have been adopted for dealing with the existing structures. Such a piecemeal approach is not good business practice and can result in unintended consequences. I am also concerned about the dissemination of information about this project. Unless someone knew how to access the Planning Commission's on-line information it was difficult to find out exactly what was being considered. One favorable aspect of the recent zoning efforts downtown was a requirement that community meetings be held. I heard through the grapevine that such a meeting was held abruptly after another meeting and without much public notice. What outreach was done to the community across Canal Street - or to people who live in other parts of the city since that property belongs to all of us? If citizens are to respect the planning process they must be given information in a format they can access and made to feel that their comments are important.

**William Guess**

6224 Southridge Rd. N.  
guess6224@yahoo.com  
2022-08-29 20:19:42

Comments. The Civic Center property should remain as currently zoned. This property needs to remain dedicated to tourism/entertainment applications. The City has limited opportunities to develop areas for entertainment and or tourism within this district. Business development can be directed to other areas within the downtown development sectors.

**Jeffery Morrow**

256 S. Lawrence Street Mobile Alabama 36602  
bamajamer256@gmail.com  
2022-08-30 22:25:36

Comments. Commissioners: Because my front door faces the Civic Center Parking Lot I am very concerned with several of the amendments. I have identified my primary concerns by page and line number as well as including a brief comment. Thank you for taking the time to consider these concerns. I am hopeful that they will be addressed before this reaches the City Council.

- Existing Zoning Ordinance - Section 64-3.I. Proposed Amendments Pg. 13 of 49
  - Table 2: Use Table
  - Change Residential Multi-Family dwelling SD-CC.5 from ( R ) to ( - )
  - Comment: Multi-Family dwelling are not allowed in T-3 which is a low density residential district and they should not be allowed across the street in SD-CC.5
  
- UDC – Appendix A Downtown Development District Pg. 441
  - Change (5) V. SD-CC.5: five (5) stories to (5) V. SD-CC.5: three (3) stories
  - Comment: T-3 low density residential is limited to two (2) stories. Allowing SD-CC.5 to have five (5) stories is out of character for the neighborhood and will impact upon the privacy of T-3 directly across the street.
  
- UDC - Appendix A Downtown Development District Pg. 442 lines 23-26 and Pg. 443 lines 1-9
  - This section should be reviewed and modified to limit exterior finishes that are more in line with T-3. As written this section is overly broad.

- SD-CC-.1 through SD-CC-.6 currently contain multiple Heritage trees scattered throughout the property. There is no plan mentioned for these Heritage trees. Any decision regarding these Heritage trees should be made with the input of the city's arborist.

**Email.**

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**From:** Jim Backes <[jmcmbackes@gmail.com](mailto:jmcmbackes@gmail.com)>

**Sent:** Monday, August 22, 2022 7:44 AM

**To:** Planning <[planning@cityofmobile.org](mailto:planning@cityofmobile.org)>

**Cc:** Marie Dyson <[mnosyd@comcast.net](mailto:mnosyd@comcast.net)>; Elizabeth Stevens <[estevens@downtownmobile.org](mailto:estevens@downtownmobile.org)>; Jennifer Denson <[jdenson@pepmobile.org](mailto:jdenson@pepmobile.org)>; Carroll, William <[council2@cityofmobile.org](mailto:council2@cityofmobile.org)>; Jeffery A Morrow <[morrow2020@aol.com](mailto:morrow2020@aol.com)>; Jeanne Backes <[jnebackes77@gmail.com](mailto:jnebackes77@gmail.com)>

**Subject:** Further comments on Civic Center Rezoning

To the Commissioners:

I hope this is an appropriate format for my response. I was unable to determine how to add further comments on the August 18 meeting through the website. New information was shared at that meeting, which has added to my concerns about the lack of a comprehensive master plan that integrates the project objectives of the I-10 river crossing, the Civic Center renovation, and the development of the Civic Center parking lot (including the Corps of Engineers office building). In particular, Elizabeth Stevens' expert analysis was a convincing argument for sequencing the action before the Commission with the development of a comprehensive Master Plan.

*Parking for New Residences on Lawrence Street*

In the August 18 meeting, it was finally revealed that the concept for the parking garage is for 800-1200 spaces, with a probable capacity of only 1,000. This is a reduction of 250 from the current surface capacity of 1250. During the City Council Committee meeting Tuesday, William Carroll questioned parking closely, and the discussion had to be cut short. I had offered comments to the Planning Commission that the parking requirement for CC.5 needed to be 2 parking spaces per housing unit ON PROPERTY -- the ordinance as written requires only one, which could be fulfilled by street parking in front of the residence.

*Parking for Office Workers*

I am now even more concerned about parking associated with the office building. The parking structure will be owned by the City with a monthly fee for office workers. Unless parking in the

structure is free to the office staff, the office staff will bypass the parking deck fees and park for free on the adjacent streets. Apparently this is already happening in DeTonti district. I was Executive Vice President of Hargrove Engineers + Constructors when we moved downtown on Royal Street across the street from a City-owned parking deck with plenty of capacity and only a \$40/month fee. I was surprised to see our employees walk 4-5 blocks in the rain to park in the free spots underneath the interstate near Fort Conde Village, even though we gave every employee a \$45/month raise and notified them that they could use that money tax-free for parking. A large parking deck can take a long time to empty, and apparently office staff would much rather walk 5 minutes to their car to be able to depart right away. A 2-hour limit on parking in Church Street East during the workweek should be considered, with exceptions granted only for contractor vehicles and registered residents.

### *Parking for Events*

In the August 16 Council Committee meeting, Councilman Carroll raised the issue of parking capacity during an event at the Civic Center. Now, during Mardi Gras balls and the few events at the Civic Center, patrons will park for free in the neighborhood and walk rather than pay \$10 to park in the surface lot. When my family first moved into the neighborhood, there was a sign prohibiting parking before, during and after an event at the Civic Center on the power pole in front of my house. I don't know when or why this was removed. It hasn't been too much of a factor, because the Civic Center is nearly dead. But, as we all hope in the future, events will be more frequent and better attended. We need to consider going back to the system in place before, prohibiting street parking in Church Street East around the time of events, and funding police enforcement. This way, the parking deck will get the business it should get during events and events will not become a safety and access problem within CSE.

Populous, the City's consultant, informed stakeholders that 'market forces' will respond to the need for parking for events, so that the City need not provide sufficient event parking itself. I understand this concept, and have experienced it myself when attending major league baseball games. If the venue is in a dense urban area with offices and retail, these parking decks can easily be utilized for events during off hours. The problem with this approach is that surface street parking in CSE is much closer than any other parking decks/lots, which are all north of Church Street. So without a restriction to parking in the neighborhood during events (and effective enforcement), patrons will naturally load up CSE with their cars. A restriction will be necessary no matter how many parking decks are erected, because 1) the deck will require a fee, and 2) decks or parking lots take more time to empty than pulling out of parallel parking spots on a street.

### *Other Parking Options?*

I am concerned 1) as a taxpayer that the parking garage will not be able to be paid unless revenue from the office building is assured and event parking is incentivized by restrictions to neighborhood street parking, and 2) as a neighbor who will suffer the safety risk and disruption of the enjoyment of my property. The resolution of the parking situation is only one issue that

must be studied in a Master Plan so that a rational solution can be found. It appears that there will be a lot of space opened up underneath the interstate. While I appreciated that this might be utilized for recreational areas (ping pong tables) as presented by Populous, perhaps some portions could be used to flex parking capacity. Such options need further study by experts in a Master Plan.

*The Need for a workable Master Plan before Planning Commission Decision*

As a citizen and as a neighbor, I am happy that this long-standing project is being worked on with a sense of urgency. At the same time, the bridge and tunnel project is also underway and will impact this Civic Center project. All of this newly built environment deserves a comprehensive Master Plan. An old adage in project management is, "**Those who fail to plan, plan to fail.**" It is the responsibility of our civic leaders to bring this overall Master Plan together, with appropriate time for public consultation.

Col. Delapp stated that he disagreed that the Master Plan needed to be completed before revisions to the DDD zoning ordinance were decided, pointing out that several activities are proceeding in parallel. He is correct, insofar as the Planning Commission staff has done a great deal of work already -- work on zoning has started. But, as every project scheduler knows, there is finish-to-finish logic at work here. The zoning revision activity CANNOT finish until the Master Plan is finished. In my experience of managing several billion dollars' worth of capital projects, trying to work around critical schedule logic almost always results in further delays. The Commission should follow the ordinance as Ms. Stevens outlined, and do the staff work alongside those formulating the Master Plan. In that way, the Commission's decision will be made in context, based on sound planning principles.

Our neighborhood, particularly the eastern half, will be disrupted as a construction zone for the next 3 years. We will pay a price during demolition and construction. We will willingly pay it, I believe, if we know that the project solution fairly balances the needs and rights of our neighborhood, our fellow citizens, and our out-of-town visitors. We need to make sure that at the end of it all, it will be worth it.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Sincerely,

James (Jim) Backes

**From:** Church Street East News <[cse.official.news@gmail.com](mailto:cse.official.news@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, August 30, 2022 5:32 PM  
**To:** Planning <[planning@cityofmobile.org](mailto:planning@cityofmobile.org)>  
**Subject:** Public Comment for DDD amendments

Commissioners: Because my front door faces the Civic Center Parking Lot I am very concerned with several of the amendments. I have identified my primary concerns by page and line number as well as including a brief comment. Thank you for taking the time to consider these concerns. I am hopeful that they will be addressed before this reaches the City Council.

Existing Zoning Ordinance – Section 64-3.I. Proposed Amendments Pg. 13 of 49  
Table 2: Use Table

**Change Residential Multi-Family dwelling SD-CC.5 from ( R ) to ( - )**

Comment: Multi-Family dwelling are not allowed in T-3 which is a low density residential district and they should not be allowed across the street in SD-CC.5

UDC - Appendix A Downtown Development District Pg. 441

**Change (5) V. SD-CC.5: five (5) stories to (5) V. SD-CC.5: three (3) stories**

Comment: T-3, low density residential is limited to two (2) stories. Allowing SD-CC.5 to have five (5) stories is out of character for the neighborhood and will impact upon the privacy of T-3 directly across the street.

UDC - Appendix A Downtown Development District Pg. 442 lines 23-26 and Pg. 443 lines 1-9

**This section should be reviewed and modified to limit exterior finishes that are more in line with T-3. As written, this section is overly broad.**

SD-CC.-1 through SD-CC-.6 currently contain multiple Heritage trees scattered throughout the property. There is no plan mentioned for these Heritage trees. Any decision regarding these Heritage trees should be made with the input of the city's arborist.

Jeffery Morrow  
256 S. Lawrence Street  
Mobile, Alabama 36602

## **Other Business - DDD Amendments**

**Comments received after 9:00 AM Wednesday, August 31, 2022.**

**Online.**

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### **Government Street Collaborative**

1609 Government Street

GovernmentStreetMobile@gmail.com

2022-08-31 16:02:39

Comments. The Government Street Collaborative is recommending a more transparent effort on the part of the City to educate the public on the current proposal and recommends that the decision process be slowed to allow the public time to understand the complications involved. It was apparent at the Planning Commission's Working Session last week that the Commission itself has great uncertainty and confusion over the correct process and path to take on the Populous architectural firm's plans as well as the use of a portion of the Civic Center property to build a 6 story office building for the Corps of Engineers. The proposed CoE building and parking garage may interfere with a more robust plan to make the renovation of the Civic Center profitable once completed. Care must be taken to make certain whatever proposal is approved for the site costing the City hundreds of millions of dollars is a viable plan and is supported by the residents of Mobile. The Citizens of Mobile deserve to have the opportunity to learn more about the impact positive and negative of the proposed DDD changes and the proposed renovations and use of the Civic Center site. The GSC believes it is vital to not make a hurried decision on such an important City asset a decision that will lock the Civic Center property's use for generations to come. A master plan must be developed and agreed upon by the interested parties and the most important party here are the taxpayers residents and citizens of Mobile. Approving these changes in piecemeal will the GSC believes result in another city asset being wasted. Let's get this right involve the public in a true transparent fashion by educating them and allow public input.

**Marie Dyson**

203 S. Dearborn St. Mobile AL 36602

mnosyd@comcast.net

2022-08-31 17:01:56

Comments. Using the Lined Number Version of the Proposed Amendment I make the following recommendations:

- Page 27 Table 2 Use Table-Residential: Change Multi-Family Dwelling from R to - (Not allowed) Only Single-Family Dwelling allowed.
- Page 30 Line 25: IV. Residential Parking: Change from 1 to 2 spaces per unit on site.
- Page 34 Line 9 V. Re building heights SD-CC.5: Change from 5 stories to 2 stories.
- Page 35 Lines 1-31 re: Finishes Roofing Materials Fences etc. Support making it MANDATORY that all projects within local historic districts require review and approval by the Architectural Review Board which may limit size design and material choice.
- Overall recommendations: Increase number of parking slots develop a Master Plan before revising the zoning AND as required by ordinance submit a plan to the City of Mobile Arborist and Mobile Tree Commission for the removal of the heritage oaks currently planted in the Civic Center parking lot.

**Email.**

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**From:** Brenda Bolton <[brendabolton310@gmail.com](mailto:brendabolton310@gmail.com)>

**Sent:** Wednesday, August 31, 2022 10:42 AM

**To:** Planning <[planning@cityofmobile.org](mailto:planning@cityofmobile.org)>

**Subject:** Civic Center project

Commissioners:

I join the Government Street Collaborative, Church St East and many others in recommending a more transparent effort on the part of the City to **educate the public on the current proposal and to slow down the process** to allow the public time to understand the complications involved. It was apparent at the Planning Commission's Working Session last week that the Commission itself has great uncertainty and confusion over the correct process and path to take on the Populous architectural firm's plans as well as the use of a portion of the Civic Center property to build a 6 story office building for the Corps of Engineers. The proposed CoE building and parking garage may interfere with a more robust plan to make the renovation of the Civic Center profitable once completed. Care must be taken to make certain whatever proposal is



approved for the site, that will cost the City hundreds of millions of dollars, is a viable plan and is supported by the residents of Mobile.

Sincerely,  
Brenda Bolton  
Resident, Dist. 2  
310 West St. Flo Claire  
476-1068

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Brenda Bolton