

Jeff Notrica	- Aye
Kathy S. Ledvina	- Aye
Pamela Miller	- Aye
Patricia Richardson	- Aye
Katrina Hornung	- Aye
Courtney Bonney	- Aye
Brian Woods	- Aye
Scott Crotzer	- Aye

X. APPROVED STAFF REVIEWS

XI. NOTICES, PROCLAMATIONS, AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

32. Inspections Completed by Staff - October 2025 Report

☉ [Staff Inspections October 2025.pdf](#)

33. Stamped Drawings Report - October 2025 Report

☉ [Stamped Drawings Report - October 2025.pdf](#)

XII. OTHER BUSINESS

34. Chair to appoint 3-person nominating committee for 2026 Chair and Vice Chair

Notrica, Richardson, and Ledvina appointed by Chair for Nominating Committee.

35. Pursuant to City Ordinance 3.18.3, Exemptions and O.C.G.A. 44-10-27. Requirement for certificate of appropriateness; local or state actions exemptions

☉ [Forsyth Park Buildings 1, 2, and 3.pdf](#)

☉ [Forsyth Park Project Notice from City of Savannah.pdf](#)

☉ [Public Comment for Forsyth Park Project - Comments #1-115.pdf](#)

☉ [Public Comment on Agenda Item 35 from Thomerson Jones and Edwards.pdf](#)

☉ [Public Comment - Summary of Change.org petition.pdf](#)

Notrica (Chair) clarified that Item 35 was listed as an informational item and not scheduled for a vote. However, the board agreed to allow public input.

Hornung moved that the public be allowed two minutes each to speak regarding Item 35.

Ledvina amended the motion to include adjusting HPC rules as necessary to permit discussion and public comments.

Melanie Wilson, Executive Director and CEO of MPC confirmed that there was no speaker present representing the City on this item and that each Board member had received a copy of the rules regarding feedback and discussion. Wilson noted that Representatives present include the project architect and a project development team member, but no City representative (the Applicant). A letter summarizing comments and discussions from this meeting will be transcribed and sent to the City along with meeting minutes and related information. The Board is not responsible for formal presentations or detailed discussions on the project, as it is a City-led initiative. Project materials (building pictures and plans) were shared with Board members because they were provided by the City. Many public comments are repetitive; although there were 115 comments, most were similar and grouped for easier review. The Board has allowed two minutes per speaker for public comment. Comments received were well-organized, with similar points grouped together for efficiency.

Board noted that all Board members had read through the received public comments.

Michael Garcia (the Designer for the project) asked to speak after the public.

Peter Galloway, a nearby resident, expressed concerns regarding the handling of the proposed development project. The speaker noted that the zoning change was initially approved but later rescinded for legal reasons. They believe the City is attempting to proceed without proper public or Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) approval, particularly regarding building mass, size, and scale. The proposed structure appears to exceed the maximum building height by approximately 30 feet, reaching 70 feet in total. The resident emphasized that these actions seemed rushed and lacked transparency, and they strongly disagree with the current approach.

Ardis Wood expressed strong concerns regarding the proposed underground parking structure in a high-risk flood zone. Key issues raised included the adequacy of flood insurance coverage, potential toxic impacts from approximately 400 vehicles entering and exiting daily, and the resulting increase in traffic, noise, headlights, and exhaust within a historic residential neighborhood. She emphasized that such a development would significantly alter the character of the area and questioned its compatibility with the surrounding environment. Wood urged the council to carefully consider all ramifications before approving what she described as an oversized and potentially irreversible project, cautioning against hasty decisions.

Corey Highland raised concerns regarding the exemption granted to developers of three large properties on Whitaker Street from obtaining a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA). Highland questioned why individual property owners in the downtown historic district must undergo the COA process for minor changes, while developers planning to construct three substantial buildings—ranging from three to five stories—in the Victorian Historic District are exempt. He emphasized that the COA process typically involves Staff analysis, public input, and a Commission vote, none of which will apply to these projects. Highland expressed frustration that public input will be rendered meaningless since the Commission lacks voting authority on these developments, calling this a troubling precedent.

Felicia Flagg, a resident living directly across from the proposed project development, expressed concerns about the impact on her property, which will face constant traffic from vehicles entering and exiting the garage. She emphasized that if the project is approved, public input will be significantly limited, as the process will become closed to further comments. Felicia referenced two articles that outline the project's background, including issues such as no-bid contracting, ignored flooding risks, zoning irregularities, and undisclosed developer contributions to City Council members during hearings. She warned that the property transfer would exempt the project from standard design review, which she stressed is critical for maintaining oversight. Flagg commended the Commission's thorough work and noted that losing their input would be detrimental.

Elizabeth Hollis raised concerns regarding the lack of public design review for a recent project in the Victorian District. She emphasized that projects within the Downtown Historic District undergo review to protect its integrity, yet similar protections appear absent for the Victorian District, which she felt is being treated as an area for developments that threaten neighborhood character. Hollis noted that she has lived in the district for 40 years and stressed the importance of reviewing all projects to maintain community standards. She highlighted that a recent zoning change from TN1 to TC2 was granted quickly, enabling the project to proceed without adequate oversight. Hollis urged that the Victorian neighborhood requires stronger protections and consideration moving forward.

Clara Gregg, a resident of the Victorian district directly across from the proposed project site, expressed strong opposition to the demolition of a historic funeral home composed of two Victorian houses similar in footprint to her own. She criticized the Commission for disregarding its core purpose of ensuring architectural compatibility and adherence to zoning regulations, noting that private construction projects typically undergo rigorous review for such compliance. Gregg argued that the City's decision to allow a 100% privately owned office complex represents governmental overreach and prioritizes short-term interests over long-term preservation, posing risks to the flood-prone historic neighborhood. She urged the Commission to reject the proposal, citing concerns about trust, historical preservation, and abuse of power.

Rebecca Fenwick raised concerns regarding the Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) issued for property demolition, noting that the required deconstruction has not occurred. She questioned the lack of enforcement, penalties, or follow-up when legal requirements are unmet. Fenwick expressed that the City's purchase of the property seemed inappropriate and could set a problematic precedent. She suggested that the City should participate in the design review process despite potential time and cost implications, emphasizing that design review is integral to Savannah's identity and should not be bypassed. Fenwick highlighted the need for

transparency, criticizing the process as secretive and irregular, and questioned whether the City should issue a public statement. Fenwick pointed out that the City's archaeology ordinance, which applies only to city-owned properties, had never been enforced and should be considered in this case.

Michael Brown, a nearby property owner, expressed strong concerns regarding the recent demolition of a historically restored building within the downtown district. He commended the Staff (MPC) for their efforts in preserving the integrity of the area and for conducting research on properties such as 2324 MLK. However, he criticized the City's decision to disregard Staff expertise and authority, suggesting that these actions were taken to benefit a single developer at the expense of the historic district. Brown emphasized that such decisions undermine preservation efforts and diminish the role of Staff in safeguarding the community's heritage.

Thomas Hollis expressed agreement with previous speakers, emphasizing that the project should undergo a public design review process. He questioned why timber from the demolished building was discarded instead of salvaged. Hollis stressed the importance of protecting the Victorian district with the same level of care as the Downtown Historic district, noting its close proximity. He shared that he and his family have lived in the neighborhood for over 40 years, raised two children there, and witnessed both positive and negative changes. Hollis urged the community to safeguard the historic neighborhood from detrimental developments like the current project.

Linda VanApeldoorn, a concerned neighbor, and stated in complete transparency that she sits on the TSN board, although she was not here to speak on behalf of them. She felt that her view is shared by many other neighbors, in her neighborhood. And basically, the hope was that the use of conveyance of title doesn't set a precedent that will allow for future avoidance of the HPC review process. And added that she thought it was shameful that nobody from the City came here today to speak to the public.

Jim Hundsrucker, President of the Foresight Park Community Alliance, presented a petition with over 1,500 signatures and accompanying comments opposing recent actions by Mayor Johnson and City Manager Melder. Hundsrucker emphasized that the Mayor's decisions appeared influenced by major donors, undermining public oversight and protections for Savannah's historic Victorian district, which are guaranteed by city ordinance and the U.S. Constitution. He highlighted the historical significance of the site, formerly Cantonment Oglethorpe, and warned that disturbing military burial grounds could impose a \$35 million financial burden on taxpayers. Hundsrucker named several donors and individuals linked to the project and criticized prior demolitions of historic African American funeral homes without salvage, noting community concerns about preservation and accountability.

Anna Habersham Wright expressed strong opposition to the proposed development project, emphasizing that it is a law office rather than a hotel and contradicts the city's tourism-focused vision and livability standards. She identified herself as a long-standing resident of Savannah, with family ties spanning nine generations, and noted their involvement with the Oglethorpe Plan Coalition and support for the Forsyth Community Alliance. Concerns were raised about increased traffic, potential strain on local infrastructure—including storm drains on Barnard Street and a nearby city water well—and the overall negative impact on the Chatham Square neighborhood. She characterized the project as inappropriate for its location, serving the wrong interests, and harmful to the surrounding community.

Blake Gilman expressed strong opposition to the proposed project in Savannah, citing concerns about fraud and misrepresentation in the intergovernmental contract associated with bond issuance. He noted that the agreement falsely claims there is no pending litigation, despite ongoing legal proceedings against the project. Gilman, an attorney, has filed a complaint with the SEC and intends to submit a whistleblower complaint to the IRS. He emphasized that the project is located in a flood zone and accused officials of withholding critical information from the public. He urged community action to halt the project, describing it as corrupt and detrimental to the city's integrity.

Andrew Jones identified himself as an attorney representing Clara Gregg and Felicia Flagg requested the rejection of a notice of undertaking related to the property development project. Jones provided three main reasons:

- (1) The City is not currently the property owner, as the transfer has not occurred, making the notice invalid until ownership changes.
- (2) The matter is pending in Superior Court, where Jones' firm has filed a petition to overturn the rezoning of the properties in question. A recent hearing addressed a motion to hold the property owners and the City in contempt of a prior court order declaring the rezoning and variances void.
- (3) The plans submitted with the notice rely on these voided approvals, including excessive lot coverage and building heights beyond permitted limits. He argued that the filing of the notice is improper while litigation is ongoing.

Jones concluded by stating the proceeding should not occur while there is a court proceeding on this matter.

William Dallas expressed appreciation for the opportunity to address the Commission and acknowledged the Board members' service to the city. He stated that although he is not a full-time resident of Savannah, he owns property at 210 West Walbert Street and frequently visits. Dallas voiced strong opposition to the proposed garage and building project, citing concerns shared by other community members, including increased traffic, noise, and flooding risks. He criticized the City's approach, suggesting that community input—particularly from the Victorian neighborhood—had been disregarded. Dallas referenced a recent public statement by Mayor Johnson indicating the project would proceed regardless of public opinion. He urged the Commission to advocate for the Victorian neighborhood residents and property owners by communicating their opposition and requesting that the City incorporate community feedback into its decision-making process.

Michael Garcia, a senior associated and designer for LS3P, clarified that he could not comment on any legal matters or their involvement in the current situation. Garcia noted that prior to the exemption status, LS3P participated in multiple meetings with the Victorian Neighborhood Association board. Specifically, they attended two meetings and engaged in discussions with some members present at the current session. He emphasized that the project has undergone several changes, even before the rezoning application was approved. Garcia concluded by expressing willingness to answer questions related to the architectural aspects of the project, which represents the extent of their involvement.

Jeffery Jepson, representing Forsyth Commons, discussed that the Board had previously recommended an archaeological study, which was commissioned and returned with no significant findings; this report was submitted to the MPC. The property is confirmed not to be in a flood zone, despite repeated assertions to the contrary. In compliance with the updated ordinance effective January 2025, the garage will be constructed two feet above base flood elevation, as certified by Thomas and Hutton, the civil engineering firm. Traffic studies were completed and approved by the City, with the only requested addition being a stop sign to address pedestrian traffic on Saturdays, unrelated to garage traffic. Extensive community engagement has occurred, including over 13 meetings with the VNA and its board, resulting in letters of support from the VNA, HSF, Downtown Business Association, and a VNA subgroup that negotiated a neighborhood agreement accepted by the project team. While acknowledging that full consensus is unlikely, significant efforts have been made to incorporate feedback from MPC and HPC. The submitted plans reflect those previously approved and withdrawn by MPC, with HPC Staff recommending approval for height variance and payment plans.

Hornung inquired if the current architectural plans would be within the 40ft height and mass.

Jepson responded that the heights that were submitted on the plans to HPC Board were those that were previously approved.

Melanie Wilson clarified that the rezoning action was abandoned. She suggested all concerns and issues be directed to City Council.

Ledvina asked why the demolition permit's requirement for salvage was not followed at 124 West Park.

Jepson responded that an environmental survey was conducted on the building, which revealed the presence of lead-based paint and asbestos. Initially, Repurpose Savannah was contacted to assess salvageable materials. Their initial survey did not identify items of interest for salvage. However, they later noted materials such as bricks, pavers, and travertine, some of which were allocated to the City and Repurpose Savannah. Subsequently, Repurpose Savannah requested lumber from the property, but due to its proximity to hazardous materials, legal counsel advised against donating the wood to avoid liability concerns.

Ledvina asked if there was a report of the hazardous materials and if that report was submitted to the City.

Jepson responded that there was a report, it was submitted to the City for demolition permits. Items that could be recycled or reused were reused. Design architect Christian Sottile removed and saved items to be incorporated into the new building.

Richardson expressed mixed feelings regarding the demolition of the building at 124 West Park Avenue. While acknowledging that the structure was unstable and still in use, she emphasized its historical and cultural significance as part of the African American community. Richardson regretted that the situation could not have been handled differently but clarified that decisions regarding the demolition were made solely by the City, not the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC). The HPC's role was limited to listening to public comments and concerns and showing empathy, as they do not have voting authority on such matters.

Hornung asked if there would be public use of the parking garage.

Ledvina emphasized the importance of adhering to the Victorian District Zoning Ordinance and maintaining the historic integrity of Savannah's Victorian District, including Forsyth Park. She recommended that the Forsyth Park Office Complex Development Project, along with associated lots on Whitaker Street and West Park Avenue, as well as the Forsyth Park bathroom plans, undergo the same public review process and Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) guidelines required of other property owners in the district. The request aligned with the intent of the zoning ordinance and comprehensive plan, ensuring transparency, civic participation, and protection of public health, safety, and welfare. Ledvina proposed that the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) petition Mayor Johnson and City Council to require accountability and compliance for this development project.

Melanie Wilson expressed appreciation for Board Members' willingness to pursue additional initiatives, noting that these ideas can still be shared with the City outside of this meeting. She emphasized the importance of documenting all feedback and concerns raised during this session and mentioned that scheduling of the next City Council meeting may be affected by Thanksgiving adjustments.

Ledvina clarified that the petition letter she had proposed was separate from the comments and meeting minutes and asked for a vote from the Board on the proposed petition. She requested clarification on how the City of Savannah could initiate a process that would otherwise require a COA and a 45-day prior notification to the Commission when the city does not own the property and private developers, who control the property, are responsible for obtaining the COA.

Wilson directed questions for clarification of the public/private partnership to the City attorney. She clarified the purview of the Commission to give feedback pertaining to this project.

Hornung expressed disappointment that City representatives were absent to defend what she considered to be a shameful decision. She criticized the planned demolition of historically Black-owned buildings and one of Savannah's few remaining examples of mid-century modern architecture. Hornung raised concerns about the potential impact of constructing a parking structure on the surrounding historic residential area.

Crotzer stated that the Commission's authority over the project had been significantly weakened due to a procedural maneuver involving property transfers between the City and the developer, which eliminated the need for a certificate of appropriateness. This action bypassed historic preservation ordinances and undermined the Commission's role. The issue carries national implications, as Savannah's Historic District is a National Historic Landmark recently listed as threatened, emphasizing the fragility of its status. The City's decision to sidestep its own regulations erodes public trust and jeopardizes its reputation for preservation integrity. Concerns were raised about the developer's failure to honor commitments to sustainable deconstruction, opting instead for conventional demolition, which conflicted with agreed sustainability and preservation goals. These early actions raised doubts about future adherence to historic character in design and construction. Crotzer stressed that its mandate relies on procedural and ethical integrity, and circumventing oversight compromises the foundation of Savannah's preservation movement. He requested transparency and insight into design decisions to uphold standards applied to all projects.

Ledvina expressed concerns regarding the architectural plans submitted for review to the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC). She noted that the plans lack critical details, including scale, north arrow, zoning information, and compliance indicators with the City of Savannah's large-scale development standards and Victorian Historic District guidelines. The absence of a comprehensive Staff report further complicated the Board's ability to assess conformity with requirements such as setbacks, height, mass, foundation, and exterior features. Ledvina highlighted inconsistencies in lot coverage percentages and raised questions about the inclusion of adjacent parcels, underground parking, and potential private development implications. She emphasized that the plans are incomplete and unreadable, making it impossible to determine compliance or provide informed comments. She also raised concerns about related obligations, such as constructing public restrooms in Forsyth Park, and whether these remain requirements.

Miller emphasized that she did not have a professional background in architecture, design, or construction, but served as a neighborhood president committed to preserving their community through historic review and conservation efforts. She noted that all Board members are volunteers who dedicate significant time to reviewing plans and conducting site visits to provide informed input. Miller clarified that the Board often lacks final authority on projects and is frequently overruled, citing a recent example where they voted against

demolition but were overridden. She expressed concern about the lack of transparency and accountability in the process, criticizing the City for failing to attend the meeting and explain procedural issues. Miller concluded by stressing the importance of public participation and thanked community members for their engagement.

Notrica (Chair) expressed gratitude to those of the public who contributed their input and participation in the discussion. Although he had numerous comments and observations about the project, he decided not to share them at this time.

Richardson acknowledged the necessity of additional parking spaces and recognized the historical context of Campbell and Sons Funeral Home, noting its non-contributing status. She expressed concern about setting a precedent that could negatively impact historic neighborhoods and emphasized the need for the Commission to have greater influence and a broader perspective in such projects. While acknowledging that the project cannot be stopped or fundamentally changed, Richardson encouraged efforts to improve its design to better align with community interests. She commended residents for advocating for their neighborhood and highlighted that similar growth trends are affecting all neighborhoods citywide, not just historic areas. She stressed the importance of demonstrating that the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) is actively engaged and not passive in these matters.

Bonney emphasized that the project had sparked significant opinions and dialogue, highlighting opportunities for improvement in community and city processes. Savannah's historic character is valued and protected, but the city is not static—it must adapt to evolving development needs. Both developers and city boards have made good-faith efforts to collaborate, with the MPC staff playing a key role in navigating complex ordinances. The situation underscores the need for greater accountability, transparency, and collaboration among stakeholders. Development cannot be halted; instead, the focus should be on high-quality projects that support business growth, housing, and affordability. The conversation called for a review of current processes to identify breakdowns and ensure stakeholders feel heard. Failure to address these issues risks turning every project into a contentious flashpoint, undermining constructive dialogue and cooperative problem-solving.

Woods expressed agreement with previous comments made by colleagues and emphasized appreciation for the efforts of the community in advocating for themselves. He acknowledged the importance of open dialogue and recognized the value of community members speaking out. Additionally, Woods suggested that future projects of similar scale should be approached in a more structured and effective manner, highlighting the need for improved processes moving forward.

Motion

There will be no MPC Staff report or recommendation to be produced for this project, pursuant to OCGA 44-10-27. The Savannah Historic Preservation Commission does hereby unanimously approve to allow the public two minutes of public comments per person so that those attending the meeting be allowed to have their voices heard on this item. The Savannah Historic Preservation Commission does hereby approve the Action Request that the Commission write a letter and petition Mayor Johnson and the City Council to request that by the 13th of November that the City of Savannah's Forsyth office complex development project be publicly reviewed and follow the Certificate of Appropriateness guidelines in accordance with the Victorian Historic District zoning ordinance.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Kathy S. Ledvina

Second: Pamela Miller

Jeff Notrica	- Abstain
Kathy S. Ledvina	- Aye
Pamela Miller	- Aye
Patricia Richardson	- Aye
Katrina Hornung	- Aye
Courtney Bonney	- Abstain

Brian Woods

- Abstain

Scott Crotzer

- Aye

XV. ADJOURNMENT

36. Next Pre-Meeting: Wednesday, November 19, 2025 at 1:30 PM - 112 East State Street: Mendonsa Hearing Room

37. Next Meeting: Wednesday, November 19, 2025 at 2:00 PM - 112 East State Street: Mendonsa Hearing Room

38. Adjourn

The Chatham County - Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission provides meeting minutes which are adopted by the respective Board. Verbatim transcripts of minutes are the responsibility of the interested party.