

**THOMASVILLE ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS
OFFICIAL MINUTES
March 14, 2007**

The Thomasville Zoning Board of Appeals met in a regular session on Wednesday, March 14, 2007, at 10:00 a.m. in the Municipal Building Council Chambers. Members present were Carol Biggs, Janet Liles, Ben Tillman, and Bobby Maxwell. Also present was Sr. Asst. City Manager, Kha Thomas; Zoning Administrator, Duane Treadon; Margaret Bryant, Planning Technician.

Call to Order

Ben Tillman called the meeting to order.

Approval of Minutes

Janet Liles motioned to approve the minutes of the February 14, 2007 meeting. The motion was seconded by Carol Biggs, and passed unanimously.

Old Business- None

New Business

Applicant 07-03-01 –Mitchell House, Ltd, has applied for a variance for property located at **101-119 Broad Street and 112-114 Jackson Street**, Thomasville, Georgia. This variance is a request to vary Section 22-181 density standard, and Section 22-291 parking standard.

Mr. Tillman asked Duane Treadon to present the staff report.

Duane Treadon presented the staff report.

Treadon informed the Board that the Mitchell House is in the Downtown Business, and the Historical Districts. The property and surrounding area is zoned C-2. This project is in compliance and conformity with the current Comprehensive plan. Treadon informed the Board that the project will consist of thirty condominiums with retail businesses operating on the first floor. Treadon also stated that the intent as related to this project, of 22-181(multi family subsection) density standard, and 22-291(1) parking standard is to allow for an orderly development of multi family housing without creating issues of overcrowding. This project is unique since it involves the adaptive use for an existing structure. To complicate the matter, this structure is historic in nature and a symbol of Thomasville's past. Currently there only exists enough open space to accommodate 83.33% (50 spaces) of the required 60 spaces based on 2 spaces for each dwelling unit (30). Given this standard, the developer would be restricted to 25 dwelling units. Economically, a development model based on only 25 units is not feasible. Costs are expected to be high for this project, due to extensive renovations to be made as the building is brought up to current safety codes. Extra care is being taken by the developer to insure that the historic character of the building is retained, and in some parts brought back.

Treadon informed the Board that the project would not cause a public detriment with an increase in density. An increase of 60 persons (given average of 2 persons per unit) in the downtown district would have a positive impact due to increased pedestrian traffic, and business patronage.

Treadon stated that a decrease in the required number of parking spaces could have a negative impact based on the limited parking options existing currently in the downtown district. The developer has taken steps to mitigate negative impacts.

Treadon also gave suggestions to lower the negative impact that limited parking may cause. Treadon informed the board that the applicant propose to utilize controlled access through a gate and an access card system that will restrict the use of the parking area to only those authorized to do so. Each owner of a dwelling unit will have access to only one parking space by right. Treadon suggested to further strengthen the developer's plan, each dwelling unit could be assigned a numbered space that is reserved for their exclusive use.

Treadon concluded the staff report by stating that that staff had received no communications in reference to this application.

Ben Tillman asked Treadon whether or not the applicant has considered the fire safety hazards and emergency safety hazards, and whether or not it would be hazardous for that many people to be within that one area. Treadon responded by stating that the developer is working with Fire Services to insure that all fire safety elements are in place, and complies with the fire safety codes; like installing a sprinkler system.

Mr. Tillman asked for the applicant to present his application.

Kirby Glaze addressed the Board, in regards to the application.

Glaze, the owner and CEO, stated that he has been working with the various property owners to purchase the building. They also consulted with each other, to make plans to renovate the building, and bring it back into compliance with building codes.

Glaze informed the Board that the condos would range from one to two bedrooms per unit. He also assured the Board that he has taken the necessary steps to insure that project is in compliance with fire codes. Glaze also informed the Board that a new elevator system and stairwell would be installed within the building.

Glaze then addressed the Board regarding concerns for the parking lot density requirements. He stated that in order to comply with the parking lot density requirements, they would have to demolish parts of the building. To accompany those who are residents of the building, and those who work in the retail stores on the first floor, they would gate and landscape the parking lot. Each residential unit would be issued two cards, and each retail business would be issued one card that would operate the gate. This will eliminate others using the same card to get in the gate, which would cause overcrowding. Glaze stated that the project would be beneficial for retirees who

would like to shop and eat within walking distance from their condo. Some units will attract the younger market as well. The lofts would be built on a more contemporary style.

Mr. Tillman asked for the public to speak in regards to the application.

Kevin Kelly, business owner located 111 S. Broad Street, stated that there would be limited parking spaces for tenants to put tractors, boats, and trailers on. He expressed his concerns, and opposed the application by stating that the development of the project would impact parking areas for other retail stores within the downtown area. Kelly also stated that there needs to be strong retail businesses, and the parking area is needed for the retail businesses. Kelly stated that people visited Thomasville to enjoy the historical nature of the Downtown district. He feels that the parking issue would hinder people, who visit from surrounding cities, from shopping in the Downtown area.

Mr. Tillman stated that the request would be a tough decision to make because they must retain the Historical value of the Downtown area, and insure that parking spaces will be available for customers of the surrounding retail stores.

Mr. Glaze responded to Mr. Kelly's comments by stating that the City's economy is not based on the people that visit Thomasville, but by those that live and purchase homes in Thomasville.

Chris Chubb, asked for the Zoning Board of Appeals not to approve the appeal; he stated that it should be up to City Council to make the decision. He also stated that the parking areas would become too limited for businesses in the area. Chubb thinks that it's a great project, but the density and parking problems within the City must be worked out first, before allowing other projects such as the Flowers project, which will soon come online, be approved. Chubb stated that granting a variance to the code, is not the best way to handle this situation.

Glaze responded to Chubb's comments by asking that the Board not hold the project "hostage" because of the City's parking problems. Glaze stated that the parking lot is privately owned and could BE CLOSED IF DESIRED.

Chubb questioned Glaze by asking him why he waited three years for a variance to remedy this problem.

Glaze responded by stating that requesting a variance to the code by the Zoning Board of Appeals is the only remedy that was available to them.

Mr. Tillman closed public comment by thanking everyone for their heartfelt comments regarding this complicated, yet unique project.

Following a discussion by members of the Zoning Board of Appeals, Mr. Tillman asked for a motion in regards to the request to vary the density standard for the project. Janet Liles motioned to approve the variance to the density standard. No action was taken due to a lack of a second to the motion.

Mr. Tillman then asked for a motion in regards to the applicant's request for a variance to the parking standard. Janet Liles motioned to deny the variance to the code regarding parking standards, the motion was seconded by Bobby Maxwell. The motion to deny the variance was passed unanimously.

Having no further business, meeting was adjourned.

Chairman, Zoning Board of Appeals