



GLPC AGENDA ITEM # 11

OCTOBER 28, 2024

Conditional Use Request by Abner Smith

File #: CU-2024-07

Mr. Abner Smith is requesting a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for a Church in a Single-Family Residential (R-6) zoning district. The subject property is located at 503 East Savannah Avenue, which is at the SE corner of East Savannah Avenue and Holliday Street. The property is currently vacant and the applicant is proposing to construct a church facility on the property which will include a 3,900-sf building and a parking lot with 16+ parking spaces. The proposed floor plan indicates the church sanctuary will have a seating capacity of about 60 persons.

The subject property is located within an **Established Residential (ER)** Character Area on the Future Development Map of the Comprehensive Plan. The property is also located within the local Historic District, which means that any new construction will need to obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) approval from the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC).

The subject property is part of a relatively isolated 6-block area to the southeast of downtown, between East Savannah Avenue and the railroad tracks. This was once a vibrant residential area full of single-family homes many decades ago, but it later fell victim to intrusion of commercial and warehouse uses, but has now become mostly vacant land. Less than ¼ of the total area is still developed with houses. There are still some old storage buildings along the perimeter area, as well as the Mt Pisgah Baptist Church properties in the western portion. The only new development that has occurred here is the Habitat For Humanity "Sweet 16" housing development from about 23 years ago. It was hoped at that time that such a development would be a catalyst for additional new development in the area, but it has yet to materialize.

The applicant has been discussing his development proposal for this property for 13+ years with City staff. Although the proposal is for an institutional type use instead of being the preferred residential use, the church is relatively small in scope and is deemed by staff to be compatible with the surrounding land use pattern. It is also hoped that as "new development" it will serve as a catalyst for more new development in this area --- which is also a hope and desire of the applicant. Given the small size of the property and the slow-changing development trend of the area, there is no need for special conditions on this CUP approval other than a long-term expiration date.

Staff Recommendation: Find consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Conditional Use Review Criteria, and recommend approval to the City Council, subject to the following condition:

- (1) Conditional Use approval shall expire ten (10) years from the date of approval if the proposed use is not fully constructed and operational by that date.