

## Health starts where we live, learn, work, and play.

Everyone should have choices that will lead to a long, healthy, life regardless of where they live.

One in three children in Chatham County is overweight or obese. This issue is a serious threat to the community's health and quality of life. What can we do?

### Your voice matters.

The City of Savannah recently published a draft New Zoning Ordinance (NewZO) for public comment. Learn more at [NewZO.org](http://NewZO.org). The NewZO is an important opportunity to help our community be healthy.



#### Healthy Eating

People who live close to places to buy healthy food are more likely to have better eating habits, reduced obesity, and better health. Locally, one in four children lives in a neighborhood without access to healthy food.



#### Active Living

When children can walk to school, parks, and playgrounds, they are more likely to be healthy and do better in school. Physical activity reduces the risk of illness and chronic disease – and - improves mental health and wellness.

Through the NewZO, we can help communities work together and be stronger by expanding opportunities to be healthy. Zoning should support key community goals like walkability, affordability, and neighborhood stability through incremental development.

**When people make decisions about their health, the choices they make depend on the options they have available.**

## How can updated zoning help our community thrive?

Thriving neighborhoods have a variety of transportation options, parks and recreation, a range of housing choices, economic opportunity, safe and lively streets, neighborhood services, and amenities. Zoning impacts us all by shaping these development patterns and land use over time.

We know that people who live in neighborhoods with sidewalks and bike lanes are more active, have cleaner air, and experience fewer crashes. In order to create more neighborhoods like this, we need streets built to share - and - services within walking distance.

When zoning allows services like healthy food retail, people can choose to walk to the store. When zoning promotes density and mixed use together, shops, houses, restaurants, and schools may locate close to each other, allowing people to go out to eat, walk to school, or buy a quart of milk within a reasonable walk. Businesses can rely on that foot traffic as a customer base. Further, increased residential density ensures that shops, restaurants, and pharmacies have a viable market.

#### Healthy Policy checklist

- ✓ Walkable connected communities
- ✓ Neighborhood services including healthy food retail
- ✓ Mixed Use
- ✓ Density and diversity of housing



## To promote thriving neighborhoods, the New Zoning Ordinance (NewZO) must:

- Promote mixed use.
- Promote diverse housing types and appropriate housing density.
- Create a connected street network for all users. Make Complete Streets our standard.
- Promote small scale development to support neighborhood stability and character.



### Promote Mixed Use.

**Mixing uses helps create a healthy neighborhood** where children can walk to school, a resident can buy a gallon of milk at the corner store, and neighbors can meet at the park for a picnic. Without these walkable destinations, a neighborhood is like any other place where people have to drive to get that milk. And, in neighborhoods where not everyone has a car, getting that milk is even more difficult.

**Mixing uses lets people decide** if they want to live near their work, walk to a local store, or bike to the library with their kids. Mixed use can add jobs to an area, improving quality of life for residents even more. Civic buildings like recreation centers, bandstands, libraries, and schools are non-residential uses that belong in neighborhoods. Parks are too. Simply put, mixed use improves access to local services.

### *Why is mixed use important to healthy communities?*

If we want places to buy healthy food in our community, retail has to be allowed. If shops, pharmacies, houses, restaurants, and schools are located close to each other, people can go out to eat, walk to school, and buy food within a reasonable walk.

### Promote diverse housing types and the right density.

A balance of low-density development and nodes of more intense development can achieve economic development goals, provide housing options, create walkable neighborhoods, and protect open space.

This balance helps create a sense of place – a place to walk, a place to talk to neighbors, a place to know children are safe walking to school. To create thriving neighborhoods, communities are zoning some areas for higher density and a mix of houses, parks, schools, and shops. In addition to the benefits discussed below, higher density areas generate higher real estate taxes, balancing revenue across the city.

### *Why density?*

**Density helps create walkable neighborhoods.** With sufficient density to support shops and restaurants, residents can choose to live in neighborhoods where they can walk or bike to markets, drycleaners, cafes, and pharmacies.





**Density creates a viable market for the services we all want.** Without a critical mass of people nearby, food stores won't survive. Research shows that twenty-two (22) units per acre is a minimum for truly walkable neighborhoods. Downtown is the only Savannah neighborhood that currently meets that threshold.

**Density promotes housing choice and affordability.** Higher density areas can provide townhouses, apartments, accessory units like carriage houses, and even live-work spaces. This expands housing choice within a neighborhood so that residents can choose to meet their changing needs and preferences over their lifetime.

That means families, empty-nesters, and young professionals all have a place in our community. It means a grandmother can live near her family and benefit from the services that are attracted - and supported - by larger households with higher incomes. Diverse housing types allow more residents to age in place.

Healthy Savannah and our partners made housing density recommendations to encourage small scale development. This ensures **incremental change** that benefits current residents, rather than excludes them through rapid rent or property tax increases. These policies **promote neighborhood stability and preserve community character.**

## What is density?

Density is the amount of residential development permitted on a given parcel of land. It is typically measured in dwelling units per acre. The higher the density, the larger the number of units permitted.

### Gross Density =

Residential units / total land area

### Net Density =

Residential units / total residential land area  
(excludes roads and other uses)

## Not all density is the same.



*Bull Street has 18 dwelling units per acre (DUA) on this block*



*Jones Street has 47 DUA on this block*



*Whitaker Street 28 DUA on the block*

**Create a connected street network for all users.**

*Make Complete Streets our standard.*

For neighborhoods to thrive, people must connect to places through a complete street network that invites walking and biking, and provides access to bus stops. Providing a safe welcoming pedestrian environment is key to walkable neighborhoods.

**In Savannah, more than 70% of our roads do not have a sidewalk on either side.**

With a well-connected street network, blocks are shorter and people are encouraged to walk.

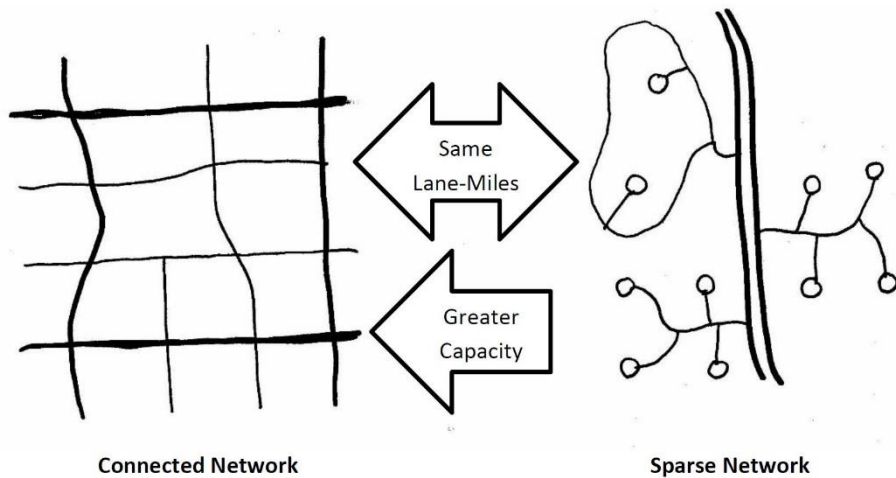
Walkable block sizes result in:

- shorter distances between pedestrian crossings at intersections,
- more direct, and alternate, routes for pedestrians and all traffic
- efficient incident management and response, and
- a dense street network that disperses traffic so that each street carries lower vehicular volumes and is more comfortable for people on foot.



Source: Transport Studio, LLC and SAGIS

*In Savannah, more than 70% of our roads do not have a sidewalk on either side.*



**Everyone benefits from walkable nodes of intense development.** A balanced approach to density brings more people to an area, creating more street activity. More activity creates a natural neighborhood watch, boosting safety. Density also increases the viability and efficiency of the bus system by bringing more people within walking distance of each stop.

A well-connected street network promotes mobility for all road users by increasing the capacity of the network, as shown. Everyone benefits from alternate routes, more direct routes, and dispersed traffic.

**Speak up for healthy Savannah neighborhoods.** Email NewZO project managers [blidy@savannahga.gov](mailto:blidy@savannahga.gov) and [lotsonm@thempc.org](mailto:lotsonm@thempc.org). Tell them that you support Healthy Savannah's recommendations. Contact [policy@healthysavannah.org](mailto:policy@healthysavannah.org) for more information.

