

February 17, 2016

St. Marys Planning Commission  
418 Osborne Street  
St. Marys, GA 31558

To St. Marys Planning Commission,

I am writing on behalf of the Downtown Development Authority to express the Board's support of the application to rezone the Gilman mill property from Planned Development Mixed Use to Planned Development Industrial zoning.

The St. Marys Main Street vision is to be a leader in downtown economic development by facilitating an environment that encourages business growth and promoting St. Marys as an exciting place to live, shop and invest. After careful review and discussion among the Board, the DDA feels that rezoning the Gilman mill property to industrial will allow for potential job creation that the DDA supports.

The Board believes that rezoning the Gilman mill property to Planned Development Industrial will:

- Help re-activate the approximate 700 acre former Durango-Georgia Paper Mill Site, which closed in 2003 and is located in the downtown area. The closure of this plant cost the City 900 jobs.
- Kick-start job creation in the downtown area. These jobs will help revitalize the downtown and support the existing businesses in the downtown area and beyond.
- Help leverage private reinvestment through targeted public improvements with use of the Tax Allocation District (TAD).
- Offset declining property taxes in the TAD area, which have decreased 30% in the past five years.

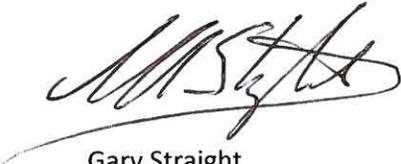
The Board acknowledges that there are negatives aspects of allowing the change in zoning; however, the positives of job creation outweigh these negatives. To help diminish the negative aspects of rezoning the Board believes that the following should be carefully considered in analysis of the new Planned Development Industrial zoning:

- The Conservation Area should be closely examined to ensure that the preservation area is adequate for the wood stork nesting area in perpetuity.
- Be conscientious that the property is near the entrance to the downtown historic area and would require appropriate buffering and signage.

- Examine the height limitations and ensure that they are appropriate for any potential project.
- Examine the uses allowed under the new zoning and ensure that they are consistent with the St. Marys visioning project.

We support that the Planning Commission recommend to City Council that the Gilman Mill Property be rezoned to industrial, its original use. If you need further information, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G. Straight", written in a cursive style.

Gary Straight  
Chair

CC: Mayor John Morrissey  
John Holman, City Manager