

MINUTES
CITY OF SUWANEE, GEORGIA
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
April 6, 2021

PLANNING AND ZONING MEMBERS: Present: Michelle Budd, Glenn Weyant, Brad Cox, and Alan Dandar. Staff members present: Alyssa Durden, and MaryAnn Jackson. Absent: Muthu C. Narayanan

CALL TO ORDER

Michelle Budd called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Brad Cox moved to adopt the agenda as presented, second by Glenn Weyant. Motion carried 4 - 0.

ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES: March 2, 2021

Glenn Weyant moved to approve the March 2, 2021 minutes, second by Brad Cox. Motion carried 4-0.

OLD BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

RZ-2021-004— Owner: Keith and Barbara Maddox. Applicant: Edward M. Townsend. The applicant requests a rezoning from R-100 (Residential Single Family District) to IRD (Infill Residential District) to allow for detached single family homes. The site is located in Land Lot 236 of the 7th District at 481 Main Street and contains approximately 1.38 acres.

Josh Campbell presented the staff report as follows: The applicant requests a rezoning from R-100 (Residential Single Family District) to IRD (Infill Residential District) to allow for the construction of 2 single family detached houses. The subject property is located at 481 Main Street in Old Town.

The subject property is developed with an approximately 1,332 square foot single story home that was built in 1900. Behind the house, there is a more recently built accessory structure. There are two existing curb cuts and parking pads at the front of the property accessed from Main Street, one in front of the house and one close to the northern property line. These are currently used to park cars.

The back half of the property, which is adjacent to the Brushy Creek Greenway is heavily wooded. There are a number of large older trees on the front of the property as well. Several of these trees are dead or damaged, but there are four significant old growth trees on the property: a large magnolia next to the existing house, a large oak tree to the right

of the magnolia at the front of the property, a large magnolia in the middle of the property, and a large oak towards the rear of the property.

The applicant proposes to demolish the existing structures and subdivide the 1.38 acre lot into two lots to construct two new single family detached houses. Each home would have a two-car garage located behind the house and a driveway off of Main Street. The existing lot is currently on septic, and the applicant plans to add a second septic system to support the new lot that would be created. The proposed lots would be approximately 75 feet wide and very deep with enough acreage to meet the minimum lot size requirements for two septic lots.

The subject property is zoned R-100 (Residential Single Family District) and surrounded by other R-100 zoned property. 581 Main Street is across the street from the railroad tracks and gently slopes from Main Street back towards property belonging to the City adjacent to Brushy Creek, which contains the Brushy Creek Greenway. The parcels to the north and south contain single family homes fronting Main Street.

The applicant requests a rezoning from R-100 (Residential Single Family District) to IRD (Infill Residential District) to allow for the construction of two detached single family houses. The IRD (Infill Residential District) may only be used within the Old Town Overlay District (OTOD), and the subject property is in the OTOD. The IRD (Infill Residential District) was created to provide infill opportunities in Old Town as supported by the Comprehensive Plan. Several properties nearby the subject property have been rezoned to IRD and subdivided to create new lots for new single family homes. A rezoning from R-100 to IRD would also be appropriate for the subject property.

The subject property is relatively large for the Old Town area. The lot is 150 feet wide by 395 feet deep, so it can accommodate two lots that exceed the lot requirements of the IRD zoning district. IRD allows for lots that are a minimum of 6,500 square feet. The two proposed lots are approximately 29,782 square feet and 29,586 square feet. The minimum lot width for IRD lots is 55 feet, and the proposed lots are 75 feet. This is compatible with other nearby parcels along Main Street. Ten of the 17 residential parcels that front Main Street are less than 100 feet wide, and the average width of these 10 parcels is approximately 82 feet wide. The proposed lots are consistent with the surrounding area.

The subject property is relatively flat and can accommodate the proposed development. The property has a large amount of tree cover, and redevelopment of the property should attempt to preserve large trees where feasible and practical. While it may be difficult to save all four of the identified significant trees and still accommodate the proposed development, an attempt should be made to save as many of the four trees as possible, and an arborist should be consulted to ensure that saved trees are not damaged during construction.

Additionally, a row of tall trees runs along the property line of the adjacent parcel to the north. These trees are located on the adjacent property and should not be demolished or

impacted. Any development should ensure that impacts to these trees is minimized. The proposed site plan shows a driveway adjacent to the northern property line. An arborist should be consulted, and any structure or driveway should be located far enough away from the property line to ensure that the trees are not impacted.

The applicant proposes to demolish the existing house on the property and build two new homes. The existing house was built in 1900 and is one of 34 structures that were identified as historic resources in the Old Town Master Plan in 2002. 13 of these buildings are located along Main Street. Most of these buildings on Main Street have been restored or renovated, and none have been torn down. The house on the subject property has had some modifications to the rear porch and has vinyl siding that is not original to the house. If restored or renovated, the home would be an asset to the historical character of Old Town and Main Street. However the applicant has consulted with a structural engineer who indicated that it is not feasible to renovate or restore the home.

The 2040 Comprehensive Plan supports increasing residential opportunities in Old Town through “carefully-crafted, creative infill responding to and enhancing the historic scale and unique small town character of Old Town” (2040 Comprehensive Plan, p. 17). The plan states that “historic Old Town will be characterized by a mixture of old and new quaint smaller scale development integrated into the existing traditional fabric.” (2040 Comprehensive Plan, p. 16). The proposal is consistent with the Future Land Use Plan that supports single family homes for the subject property. While preserving the existing house would better adhere to the goals of the Comprehensive Plan, infill homes that are sensitive to the context and existing character of the area could equally accomplish this.

The goals of the Historic Old Town character area in the 2040 Comprehensive Plan state that “new development should be sensitive to existing lot character, tree cover, and proportions and scale of adjacent buildings and roads” (2040 Comprehensive Plan, p. 18). As such, it is important that the design of the structures on the subject property take context into consideration to preserve and enhance the quaint character of Old Town. This includes considering the heights and roof pitches of surrounding historic structures. If the request is approved, house location plans and architecture should be reviewed and approved by the Planning and Inspections Department to ensure compatibility with the Old Town Design Guidelines established in 2002 and existing architectural styles as endorsed in the 2040 Comprehensive Plan (2040 Comprehensive Plan, p. 17).

The request to rezone the subject property from R-100 (Residential Single Family District) to IRD (Infill Residential District) to allow for two single family homes is consistent with the 2040 Comprehensive Plan and compatible with surrounding development. As such, the Planning Department recommends approval with conditions of RZ-2021-004.

Alan Dandar asked Josh Campbell why is the existing house going to be demolished. Josh Campbell stated that it would preferable to preserve the house. Saving the existing house preserves the character of the area.

Glenn Wyeant asked about preserving trees. Josh Campbell indicated that an arborist will be providing input on the trees.

Brad Cox stated that preserving the magnolia tree would require offset of the building. Josh Campbell stated that it may be grounds for allowing a variance.

Alan Dandar asked about the proposed site plan with trees along the right side of the property. Josh Campbell indicated that that particular site plan may not work which is why a house layout plan is required.

Michelle Budd called upon the applicant.

Ed Townsend, 564 Scales Road, Suwanee, GA. Mr. Townsend stated that his original intent was to renovate the existing house. He had an engineer look at it and it was determined that the foundation is compromised. He is asking for the option to construct two farm houses. The trees along the property line create a nice barrier. It will be difficult to keep the magnolia tree.

Alan Dandar asked about the foundation of the home. He stated that a lot of older homes have structural issues. Mr. Dandar asked Mr. Townsend to explain his decision to demolish the existing home.

Mr. Townsend stated that he does not have a handle of the cost on preserving the home. The home is 1500 square feet with one bathroom. He is planning to construct a two bedroom house with two bathrooms.

Michelle Budd called for opposition.

Mr. David Owen, 467 Main Street, Suwanee, GA, 30024. Mr. Owen stated that he is not necessarily opposed the request. He would like to preserve the large hardwoods that run along the property line. Mr. Owen would like to work with the builder to make sure the trees are preserved.

Brad Cox asked Josh Campbell to explain the variance process for setback. Josh Campbell explained that an administrative variance would be needed for a change of setback less than 5 feet.

Glenn Weyant asked the applicant if he can flip the driveway on the other side of the property.

Mr. Townsend stated that it would be better aesthetically to not have the two driveways next to each other.

Glenn Weyant asked about the condition that prioritizes trees on the adjacent property. Discussion ensued amongst the Planning Commission members and staff regarding the house layout plan and preservation of the trees along the property line.

Brad Cox stated that there is an accessible sewer line near the property. Mr. Townsend indicated that he had consulted with the Health Department and they said he can put in septic.

Alan Dandar moved to postpone RZ-2021-004 until the next regularly scheduled Planning Commission meeting, second by Glenn Weyant. Motion did not pass.

Michelle Budd called for another motion.

Alan Dandar moved to postpone RZ-2021-004 until the next regularly scheduled Planning Commission meeting, second by Glenn Weyant. Motion carried 4-0.

OTHER BUSINESS

ANNOUNCEMENTS

April 24th is the public outreach at White Street Park and Martin Farm Park.

ADJOURNMENT

Glenn Weyant moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:08 PM.