

MINUTES
CITY OF SUWANEE, GEORGIA
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
March 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 6:30 p.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

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

ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES: February 2, 2021

Glenn Weyant moved to approve the February 2, 2021 minutes, second by Alan Dandar. Motion carried 4-0.

OLD BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

RZ-2021-001 – Owner: Adam Freeman. Applicant: Sawmill Industrial Partners, LLC. The applicant requests a rezoning from C-2A (Special Commercial District) to M-1 (Light Industry District) to allow for a distribution facility. The site is located in Land Lot 170 of the 7th District along Sawmill Drive and contains approximately 26.4 acres.

Josh Campbell presented the staff report as follows: The applicant requests a rezoning of approximately 26.5 acres located on Sawmill Drive near Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road from C-2A (Special Commercial District) to M-1 (Light Industry District) in order to allow for a 325,000 square foot distribution facility. The applicant is proposing a single-story industrial building. Approximately 80 car spaces are proposed along the east side of the property, 120 tractor trailer parking spaces would be divided between truck courts located along the north and south sides of the building, and along the west side of the building would be a driveway connecting the 2 truck courts and a stormwater detention facility. Access is proposed via a single driveway onto Sawmill Drive.

The subject property contains a couple of streams that would be considered state waters. These streams are subject to buffer requirements found in the Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control Ordinance and the Stream Buffer Protection Ordinance. In order to develop the property as currently shown, both the state and the City would need to approve variances to the state and local stream buffer requirements. Portions of the property would be considered wetlands. The U.S. Army Corp of Engineers regulates intrusions into the wetlands and the mechanisms for mitigating impacts on the wetlands.

It is likely that the applicant will need to obtain an individual permit from the U.S Army Corp of Engineers in order to develop the property as shown. The applicant is aware of these regulations.

The City of Suwanee landscape ordinance requires an over-story tree to be planted within a 200 square foot island every 7 spaces. The parking lot on the concept plan does not reflect this requirement. The landscape ordinance also has certain tree preservation and replacement requirements. One of these requirements is that any tree removed that is larger than 24" DBH requires compensation at twice the amount of the assigned tree density units. As the site is heavily wooded with mature trees the applicant should be aware of these requirements and prepared to comply.

The City has adopted architectural standards that apply to property zoned to the M-1 zoning district. This ordinance regulates the types of materials that may be used on buildings in the district, among other requirements. The applicant states in their application that they are aware of these requirements and are prepared to comply with them.

The subject property totals approximately 27 acres and is zoned for C-2A uses. The property is densely vegetated and contains steep topography and 2 streams. Although encumbered by difficult terrain and streams the subject property does contain adequate acreage to accommodate the proposed development. As currently shown, the development will require approvals from various state and federal environmental agencies, as well as approval of variances from local regulations. The property will not be able to accommodate a single story 325,000 square foot building without these variances.

The subject property is located in the highly commercialized Suwanee Gateway character area. To the west of the subject property is a Wal-Mart and an associated shopping center both zoned C-2A. To the south of the subject property is a shopping center formerly anchored by a business supply store zoned C-2A. There are also hotels (one zoned C-2A and the other C-3), undeveloped land, and a liquor store, zoned C-2, C-2A, and C-3, located to the south of the property. To the north of the subject property is M-1 zoned property developed with an office warehouse (similar to what is proposed on the subject property) that accesses Satellite Boulevard. Across Sawmill Drive, to the east, are undeveloped commercially zoned tracts, an M-1 zoned tract developed with a self-storage facility, and I-85.

The subject property is located in the Suwanee Gateway character area. The future land use plan calls for high density office in this location. The 2040 Comprehensive Plan states, in regard to the Suwanee Gateway area, "future land use should be dominated by office and commercial mixed-use, with retail and hospitality capitalizing on the improvements." It also states in reference to the subject property, "West of the interstate, the undeveloped parcel behind the existing Office Depot shopping center could form the core of a new office park development that extends to the I-85 frontage." The subject property is challenged by difficult topography and streams. It is partially because of

these challenges that the comprehensive plan calls for high intensity office. Multi-story office buildings with smaller footprints would be more easily accommodated on the property than a large foot print single story building. When the plan was under consideration it was not considered likely that a user would pursue the steps necessary to develop a large foot print single story building. The proposed plan is not consistent with the high density office designation. However, the proposed use is not entirely inconsistent either. Uses consistent with the proposal are common along the length of nearby Satellite Boulevard. Office jobs are often a part of this type of development.

The nearest intersection from the subject property is at Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road. Sawmill's access onto Highway 317 is via right-in/right-out only. While this works fine for smaller vehicles, this could be problematic for larger trucks that would need to do a u-turn at Satellite Boulevard in order to get onto I-85. As such, if approved, a condition should be included that requires traffic leaving the property to turn left out of the property. This would take traffic to Satellite Boulevard and from there it would be much less disruptive for larger trucks to access I-85.

The site is located within the Suwanee Gateway area. The proposed use is not entirely consistent with the comprehensive plan. The possibility of an office/warehouse type use at this location was not considered to be a likely use at this location because of the environmental constraints and the challenges involved in overcoming them. However, it is consistent with the office/warehouse and distribution uses nearby and located along much of Satellite Boulevard. The applicant will be responsible for pursuing relief from environmental related constraints. Staff recommends approval with conditions of RZ-2021-001.

Josh Campbell stated that the applicant has proposed a modification to the staff condition. The applicant would like to not limit cars and vans from turning right out of the driveway.

Michelle Budd called upon the applicant.

Melody Glouton, Anderson, Tate & Carr, 1960 Satellite Boulevard, Duluth, GA. Ms. Glouton stated that her client is requesting to rezone approximately 26.5 acres on Sawmill Drive from C-2A to M-1 for a 325,000 square foot distribution center. There will be 80 car parking spaces and 120 tractor trailer parking spaces. The applicant is in agreement with staff recommendations with a slight modification that automobiles and vans can turn right out of the driveway. Ms. Glouton indicated that her client does not have an issue prohibiting truck traffic from turning right.

Alan Dandar asked about a landscape condition. Josh Campbell explained that the site will have challenges. There are lots of mature trees. The state process will take time. The applicant will also need to get individual permits from the Army Corp of Engineers.

Michelle Budd called for opposition. There was none.

Brad Cox moved to approve RZ-2021-001 with a modified condition, second by Glenn Weyant. Motion carried 4-0 (additions = bold).

1. Access onto Sawmill Drive from the property shall be limited to left turns only **for the 18-wheeler truck traffic and shall be permitted for full interchange access for automobile and van traffic only.** The design **and signage** of the driveway shall reflect this limitation. **The City shall retain the right to modify access out of the property if truck traffic uses the exit to make right turns.**

MINOR AMENDMENT TO THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Josh Campbell presented the minor amendment to the Comprehensive Plan as follows: The City adopted the 2040 Comprehensive Plan, a major update, in February 2019. The purpose of this annual update is to address any significant changes, events and/or shifts in policy that have occurred in the past year. This is the first annual update since the adoption of the plan. This update will include 2019 and 2020.

Please see attached presentation.

OTHER BUSINESS

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ADJOURNMENT

Glenn Weyant moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:21 PM.