

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

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

CALL TO ORDER

Michelle Budd called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Brad Cox moved to adopt the agenda as presented, second by Muthu C. Naryanan. Motion carried 3 - 0.

ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES: May 4, 2021

Brad Cox moved to approve the May 4, 2021 minutes, second by Muthu C. Naryanan. Motion carried 3-0.

OLD BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

RZ-2021-006 – Owner: Bill Stark Properties, LLC. Applicant: Tonya Woods. The applicant requests a rezoning from R-100 (Residential Single Family District) to IRD (Infill Residential District) to allow for single family detached homes. The site is located in Land Lot 237 of the 7th District at 653 White Street and contains approximately 0.85 acre.

Josh Campbell informed the Planning Commission that the applicant requests postponement of RZ-2021-006 until the next regularly scheduled meeting.

Michelle Budd asked if anyone was present for RZ-2021-006. There was no one.

Muthu C. Naryanan moved to postpone RZ-2021-006 to the next regularly scheduled Planning Commission meeting, second by Brad Cox. Motion carried 3-0.

SUP-2021-001 – Owner: Celebration Hospitality, LLC. Applicant: Erica Kennedy. The applicant requests a Special Use Permit to allow for a building height increase for a hotel in the C-2A (Special Commercial District) zoning district. The site is located in Land Lot 152 of the 7th District at 140 Celebration Drive and contains approximately 1.99 acres.

Josh Campbell presented the staff report as follows: The applicant seeks a Special Use Permit on an approximately 1.99-acre tract for a building height increase to allow for a 4 story approximately 58-foot-tall hotel. The proposed site plan indicates an approximately

69,000 square foot 126 room hotel with a total of 126 parking spaces. Access is proposed via two driveways onto Celebration Drive.

The subject property is zoned C-2A. The C-2A zoning district has a maximum height of 35 feet. The proposed 4 story building has a roof line with varying heights. At its tallest it would be 58 feet tall, but most of the building would be slightly less. A Special Use Permit would be required in order to allow the proposed 4 story 58-foot-tall hotel building.

The Special Use Permit process was created by the City Council in 2001 to better handle certain land uses. The SUP process allows the Council to review certain proposals in the context of their use and take into consideration the surrounding area and other relevant factors. A Special Use Permit does not change the underlying zoning of property, but grants the property an additional specified use. In this case the specified use would allow for additional building height.

In 2008, similar Special Use Permits were approved for hotels on Celebration Drive (Gwinco Boulevard at the time), but neither hotel was constructed. One of the prior SUP's was issued for the subject property, but it limits the height of the building to 50 feet. The building proposed at this time is 58 feet tall and as such will still require a Special Use Permit.

The following comments are provided to make the developer aware of certain pertinent issues. This is not intended to serve as an all-inclusive list of development comments. If approved, the City will formally review the project during the normal development and building review process.

The site will need to comply with the City Parking requirements. The City requires 1 parking space per room plus parking for any additional spaces such as restaurants or meeting rooms. The proposed hotel includes a meeting room. It appears that the proposed parking does not meet this minimum standard.

The proposed concept plan indicates a 10 foot setback along Celebration Connector. Celebration Connector is a public road and there would require a 50 foot setback. As currently configured the location of the building would not comply with the setback.

The City requires landscape islands with trees throughout parking lots. The proposed plan does not appear to meet the City's landscape requirements. The applicant should be prepared to comply with the landscaping requirements

It appears possible that there is a channel or stream on the property. The applicant should be aware that the channel or stream could be considered state waters. The developer should be prepared to comply with the stream buffer requirements for the Erosion and Sedimentation Control Ordinance and the City's Stream Buffer Protection Ordinance.

The C-2A zoning district includes several conditions for hotel uses. The applicant should be prepared to comply with these requirements.

The City of Suwanee Development Regulations require sidewalks along all road frontages. The proposed site plan does not indicate any sidewalks. The applicant should be prepared to comply with this requirement.

The Zoning Ordinance requires hotels to have a pitched roof with a 4 to 12 pitch. The applicant is requesting to do a flat roof. The applicant will need to either alter the roof or obtain a variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals if they want to build as proposed.

The site is an undeveloped parcel vegetated with mostly young pines located at 140 Celebration Drive. The topography of the site slopes steeply up from Celebration Drive approximately 30 feet. The zoning ordinance requires hotels to be at least 2 acres. The subject property is 1.99 acres as a result of the County acquiring right of way from the subject property. The Zoning Ordinance includes an exemption that protects lots that contribute to right-of-way from meeting minimum lot size standards. The site should be suitable for use as a hotel.

The site is located on Celebration Drive southwest of Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road just south of I-85 in the Suwanee Gateway district. This area is surrounded by commercial uses and zoning districts. The subject property is bound by Celebration Drive to the north and the Celebration Connector to the west. Directly across the subject property to the north are two one-story restaurants. The property to the east of the subject property is a vacant parcel in unincorporated Gwinnett County that is zoned commercial. The parcel to the south of the subject property is also in unincorporated Gwinnett County and developed with a gymnastics school. A three-story hotel sits on the property across Celebration Connector. The proposed hotel would be compatible with surrounding uses in the area, and the building height increase is not likely to negatively impact the surrounding properties.

The City of Suwanee adopted Architectural Standards in 1999. There are currently four hotels/motels along Celebration Drive that were built prior to the adoption of these standards. Three are three stories and one is two stories. The applicant requests a Special Use Permit in order to build a fourth story. The applicant is seeking to exceed the height requirements for the C-2A Zoning District resulting in a more visible building. As such it would be reasonable to expect the proposed building would exceed the current Architectural Standards.

The building height increase proposes a fourth story for a hotel (approximately 60 feet tall). This increase would be 25 feet higher than typically allowed in the C-2A zoning district. The proposed building is located in the heart of a highly developed area with commercial office, and industrial uses. Residential uses are not located near the subject property. A 60 foot tall hotel should not negatively impact the area.

The Future Land Use Plan recommends high density office uses for the subject property. While the proposed hotel use with a building height increase is not entirely consistent with this designation, the Gateway Character area does anticipate hospitality uses in the area. The high density office designation does support the idea that this is an appropriate location for an increase in height. The City has historically targeted the Suwanee Gateway character area as one of the appropriate locations for special uses in commercial zoning districts.

Approval of the request with conditions would be appropriate. The proposal is consistent with the Future Land Use Plan's commercial designation and the tract is located in the heart of a commercial area, with no residential uses in the immediate area. Additionally, a special use permit for a building height increase was previously approved for the subject property as well as a property down the street. The subject property is well located for a hospitality use with a building height increase. Therefore, the Planning Department recommends approval with conditions of SUP-2021-001.

Michelle Budd called upon the applicant.

Stephen Overcash, ODA Architecture, 2010 South Tryon Street, Charlotte. Mr. Overcash stated that the request is appropriate for the area.

Michelle Budd called for opposition. There was none.

Brad Cox moved to approve SUP-2021-001 with conditions, second by Muthu C. Narayanan. Motion carried 3-0.

1. Approval is limited to a single hotel structure. The height of the building(s) shall not exceed 60 feet, not including any building height exemptions specifically listed in the Zoning Ordinance. Any features of the building that are exempted (such as decorative towers) from height limitations shall not exceed 75 feet in height.
2. Architecture shall be similar to that shown in Exhibit B. All areas of the building elevations with light colored stucco shall be brick, while areas shown with dark stucco may remain as stucco. The rear of the building shall meet the material requirements of the architectural standards. Final architecture shall be subject to the approval of the Planning and Inspections Department.

OTHER BUSINESS

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ADJOURNMENT

Brad Cox moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:46 PM.