

**MINUTES  
CITY OF SUWANEE, GEORGIA  
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION  
August 3, 2021**

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

**CALL TO ORDER**

Glenn Weyant called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

**ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

*Brad Cox moved to adopt the agenda as presented, second by Muthu C. Naryanan. Motion carried 4 - 0.*

**ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES: July 6, 2021**

*Brad Cox moved to approve the July 6, 2021 minutes, second by Muthu C. Naryanan. Motion carried 4-0.*

**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 7<sup>th</sup> District at 653 White Street and contains approximately 0.85 acre.

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 4 detached single family houses with a minimum square footage of 2,000 square feet on an approximately 0.85 acre parcel. The subject property is located at the northwest corner of White Street and Davis Street in Old Town.

The subject property is bound by White Street to the south, the railroad to the north and two streets that dead into the railroad on both the east and west side of the property. The property is vacant and contains several large trees including one that is particularly significant toward the southwest corner of the property. The applicant proposes to subdivide the 0.85 acre lot into 4 lots that would front White Street. A new alley would be built behind the new homes to access parking in the rear. The applicant also proposes to build a sidewalk along the White Street frontage and provide street trees.

The following comments are provided to make the applicant aware of certain pertinent issues. This list is not exhaustive of all development issues.

Gwinnett County sewer would need to be extended to the property in order to subdivide the property into smaller lots as proposed.

If the rezoning request is granted, the subdivision of the subject property into 4 lots would require the administrative approval of an exemption plat, which would be subject to the IRD development regulations and reviewed by City staff and appropriate County entities.

The applicant requests a rezoning from R-100 (Residential Single Family District) to IRD (Infill Residential District) to allow for the construction of 4 detached single family houses. The IRD (Infill Residential District) may only be used within the Old Town Overlay District (OTOD). The subject property is in the OTOD. IRD allows for lots that are a minimum of 6,500 square feet. The 4 proposed lots are approximately 8,500 to 10,500 square feet. There are several large trees on the property that would likely be impacted by the proposed development. Redevelopment of the property should attempt to preserve some of the large trees where feasible and practical to preserve the character of Old Town. The property is relatively flat and can accommodate the proposed development.

The subject property is zoned R-100 (Residential Single Family District) and surrounded by other R-100 zoned property with single family detached homes including a new home under construction across White Street. Across the railroad tracks to the north is Suwanee's historic commercial area on Main Street. Although not physically accessible from the property, the rear of development on the subject property could be visible from Main Street, so it is important that any new buildings built on the subject property be compatible in style and scale with the Historic Old Town Character Area on all facades.

The Zoning Ordinance states that IRD uses shall be compatible in intensity and style to neighboring properties. The 4 proposed lots are similar in size to many surrounding lots in Old Town. The lot across David Street from the subject property is 0.26 acre, and the lot two lots down from the subject property to the southwest is 0.34 acre. While zoned R-100, these lots along with other smaller lots along White Street are considered substandard lots of record that were created prior to the adoption of the Zoning Ordinance. The proposed smaller lots on the subject property would continue the historical pattern of smaller lots along White Street.

The 2040 Comprehensive Plan prescribes 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 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. 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 prescribed in the 2040 Comprehensive Plan (2040 Comprehensive Plan, p. 17).

The IRD (Infill Residential District) was created to provide infill opportunities in Old Town as prescribed by the Comprehensive Plan. Several blocks on the other side of the railroad tracks 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 request to rezone the subject property from R-100 (Residential Single Family District) to IRD (Infill Residential District) to allow for 4 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-2021-006.

Glenn Weyant called upon the applicant.

Tonya Woods, DPE, 5074 Bristol Industrial Way, Buford, GA. Ms. Woods stated that the applicant purchased the property and has already demolished a home that was in disrepair. An arborist has taken a look at the oak tree on the property. The plan is to preserve it. Ms. Woods is in agreement with all of the conditions.

Brad Cox asked about sewer connection.

Ms. Woods stated that the applicant hopes to tie in with some other property owners. Ms. Woods also indicated that the owner may let the property sit for a while until the sewer issue is resolved.

Josh Campbell stated that sewer will require approval.

Glenn Weyant called for opposition. There was none.

***Muthu C. Naryanan moved to approve RZ-2021-006 with staff conditions, second by Alan Dandar. Motion carried 4-0.***

1. The number of lots shall not exceed 4.
2. No curb cuts may be granted along White Street. Access shall be provided via rear alley or off Davis Street or West Main Street.

3. Prior to issuance of any building permits, the architecture of any proposed buildings shall be subject to the review and approval of the Planning and Inspections Department. The department will be looking for architecture that compliments the historic downtown area. Details such as sizable porches with adequate depth and porches elevated up to 3 feet above grade are important to the overall appearance of homes in the area.
4. Maximum building height shall be 35 feet.
5. The large tree at the southwest corner of the site shall be preserved, and if practical, other significant trees on the property should also be preserved.
6. A minimum 5 foot wide sidewalk shall be constructed along White Street. The sidewalk may meander in order to preserve any existing trees. A minimum 5 feet planting strip shall be provided between the edge of pavement of White Street and the sidewalk. Trees found on Suwanee's list of approved street trees should be installed along White Street in the planting strip at approximately 35 feet on center. Said street trees should be approximately 3" caliper. Trees and sidewalks should be installed on each lot prior to the issuance of a certificate of occupancy for any single family home. The property owner shall provide the City right-of-way for the construction of a White Street trail, if needed, at no cost to the City. Per the Zoning Ordinance, if right-of-way is provided for this purpose then the impacted lots would be exempt from meeting the minimum lot size.
7. If provided, any fencing or walls on the subject property shall be decorative and subject to the approval of the Planning and Inspections Department. Walls and fences should not exceed 4 feet in height.
8. Provide a house location plan (HLP) prior to issuance of a building permit for the property. Said plan shall detail the location of any structures, walls, or fences; the distance of any structures, walls or fences from the property lines; and the height of any fences and walls. HLP shall also include any landscaping, driveways or parking pads. Said HLP shall be subject to the review and approval of the Planning and Inspections Department. The intent of the HLP is to ensure the height of any wall, fence, structure, or location of parking do not create any negative external impacts.

**AMD-2021-001** – A proposed amendment to the City of Suwanee Zoning Ordinance including Article V. Zoning District Development and Use Regulations, in order to add a special use, a Planned Residential Park Neighborhood in the R-140, R-100, R-75, IRD, RM-6, and RM-8 zoning districts, and regulations related to that special use, and other purposes.

Josh Campbell presented the staff report as follows: Staff has prepared a proposed amendment to the Zoning Ordinance. The proposed amendment would add a special use

called a “Planned Park Neighborhood” in R-140, R-100, R-75, IRD\*, RM-6, and RM-8 residential zoning districts. The special use would seek to incentivize the preservation of sensitive environmental areas such as wetlands, streams, and floodplains, promote the development of a robust neighborhood amenity package, and provide flexibility of design, while remaining density neutral.

To use the Planned Park Neighborhood district, an applicant would be required to go through the zoning process and get approval for the special use just like other uses that are allowed with a special use permit within those districts. The proposed ordinance would require plans to be developed with the involvement of certified design professionals. Design expectations are included within the ordinance. No minimum lots sizes or district development standards are included with this special use. The intent would be that these standards would be set during the special use permit process. Application requirements would include the provision of plans that show the existing conditions including environmentally significant areas and a proposed concept plan that would show the proposed layout of homes, roads, opens spaces/recreations area/conservations areas, and stormwater facilities.

Applications would be required to explain how they are consistent with the City’s Comprehensive Plan. The ordinance requires that projects be approved to a concept plan. Architectural standards would be established during the zoning process. Evaluation and approval of the concept plan is up to the discretion of the City Council. Once a project is approved by Council, development would be required to proceed based on the approved concept plan. Staff would be authorized to approve minor deviations to the concept plan with more significant changes requiring Council approval.

It is important to note that the IRD district is only eligible for use within the Downtown Development Authority boundaries and as such the Planned Park neighborhood would only be allowed for use in the IRD within the Downtown Development Authority boundary.

Brad Cox asked about the preservation of environmentally sensitive areas. Currently there is preservation of those areas through permitting and other jurisdictional means. Would this amendment allow additional measures for preservation?

Josh Campbell explained that when land is encumbered by environmental challenges there are requirements that protect them but those same requirements often provide processes that may result in the environmentally area not being preserved or protected. This ordinance will be a tool that the City can use to have property owners make a commitment to try and save those areas as opposed to pursuing those means to avoid preservation.

Glenn Weyant asked if there is a gap that this amendment will be addressing.

Josh Campbell explained that he is seeing requests for more flexible zoning districts.

Glenn Weyant called for anyone is support.

Barbara Wasley, 4560 Barony Drive, Suwanee, GA. Ms. Wasley stated that this amendment is way too much flexibility. Ms. Wasley asked that the amendment be postponed so that it can be rewritten.

Glenn Weyant called for opposition.

Michael Sutherland, Settles Bridge Road, Suwanee, GA. Mr. Sutherland is in opposition of the amendment. He is concerned with density. Mr. Sutherland requests the amendment be postponed.

Roy Cannon, 5035 Meadowbrook Circle, Suwanee, GA. Mr. Cannon asked that the amendment be postponed for 30 days.

Tonya Woods, 3691 Portland Trail, Suwanee, GA. Ms. Woods stated that she has not had time to read the amendment, however, she stated that there is value in reducing lot sizes. Ms. Woods is not opposed to the amendment.

Chris Koenig, 4695 Settles Bridge Road, Suwanee, GA. Ms. Koenig stated that she has read the bullet points of the amendment. She wants to know why this amendment is being proposed.

Josh Campbell stated that the zoning ordinance, the way that it is written, is inflexible. We have used the PMUD as a way to improve quality of development. Town Center is an example of PMUD that our regulations would not normally allow. Village Grove is a PMUD. The difference with this amendment and the PMUD is that it regulates allowed density. The PMUD does not have that limitation. It provides flexibility for the developer.

Ms. Koenig stated that she does not want this along Moore Road. She requests the amendment be postponed.

Tom McConnell, 3795 Smithtown Road, Suwanee, GA. Mr. McConnell stated that he is not in agreement with this amendment. He requests the request be postponed.

Becky (last name inaudible), 4955 (Street name inaudible). Becky is opposed to the amendment. She requests postponement.

***Muthu C. Narayanan moved to postpone AMD-2021-001, second by Brad Cox. Motion carried 4-0.***

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Brad Cox moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:17 PM.