

**MINUTES**  
**CITY OF SUWANEE, GEORGIA**  
**PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION**  
**September 7, 2021**

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

**CALL TO ORDER**

Michelle Budd called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

**ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

*Muthu C. Naryanan moved to adopt the agenda as presented, second by Glenn Weyant. Motion carried 5 - 0.*

**ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES: August 3, 2021**

*Brad Cox moved to approve the August 3, 2021 minutes, second by Glenn Weyant. Motion carried 5-0.*

**OLD BUSINESS**

**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: See attached presentation.

Michelle Budd called for support. There was none.

Michelle Budd called for opposition.

Tom McConnell, 3795 Smithtown Road, Suwanee, GA. Mr. McConnell informed the Planning Commission that he has lived in Suwanee for over 40 years. He feel the proposed amendment is an egregious attempt to bypass zoning laws. He stated that the amendment will drastically alter what he lives next to and will increase the already heavy traffic. Mr. McConnell indicated that the amendments will only serve developers and their profits. It will allow developers to disregard wetlands and streams. Mr. McConnell requests the amendment be denied.

David Martinez, 3656 Suwanee Creek Court, Suwanee, GA. Mr. Martinez stated that he built his home to have more privacy. The amendment will put a strain on the school system and the road. He asked that the Planning Commission identify the pros and cons of the proposed amendment. He stated that the job of the Planning Commission is not to

approve everything presented to them. Mr. Martinez reminded everyone that there is an upcoming City Council election.

Mr. Everett Hoekstra, 4824 Short Street, Suwanee, GA. Mr. Hoekstra stated that the Planning Commission is instructed to regulate zoning in Section 46 of the City Ordinance. New development should adhere to existing character areas as listed in the Comprehensive Plan.

Mark Farr, 98 Timberlost Trail, Suwanee GA. Mr. Farr has lived in Suwanee for 35 years. He stated that she does not like what the City of Suwanee is trying to do.

Shelly Farr, 98 Timberlost Trail, Suwanee, GA. Mrs. Farr stated that three of the Planning Commission members will not be affected by the proposed amendment.

Mitch Bussfeld, 4215 Lansmoore Crossing, Suwanee, GA. Mr. Bussfeld moved to Suwanee so his kids could attend the Level Creek School District. The traffic on Moore Road has increased significantly. North Gwinnett High School has trailers.

Samuel Rhodes, 3706 Suwanee Creek Court, Suwanee, GA. Mr. Rhodes stated that the tree farm on Smithtown Road has been a part of the landscape for years and that losing it will be sad. He indicated that there is an opportunity to develop it into productive space.

Josh Campbell explained that this is a text amendment to the zoning ordinance. There is no proposed plan for this particular amendment. This is a text only change. The Zoning Ordinance has different districts to chose from. Someone can apply for rezoning to one of those districts right now. The Comprehensive Plan is used to guide our decisions. The City of Suwanee is not handing a blank check to a developer. There are expectations of the developers.

Muthu C. Naryannan asked if minimum lot size can be added.

Josh Campbell explained that Section D says there is no minimum lot size. What is doesn't say is if something is approved under this amendment that minimum lot size should be established as part of that approval.

Discussion ensued amongst staff and the Planning Commission about amending the proposed amendment.

Glenn Weyant moved to approve AMD-2021-001 with revisions, second by Muthu C. Naryannan. Motion carried 5-0.

**AMD-2021-001** with recommended changes by the Planning Commission 9-7-21  
Deletions = ~~strikethrough~~, Additions = **Bold**

**ADD “PLANNED PARK NEIGHBORHOOD” AS A SPECIAL USE TO SECTION 500 R-140, SECTION 501 R-100, SECTION 502A. R-75, SECTION 503. RM-6, SECTION 504. RM-8, AND SECTION 512.2 IRD.**  
**ADD NEW SECTION 515. Planned Park Neighborhood.**

**A. PURPOSE**

The purpose of the Planned Park Neighborhood special use permit is to allow for flexible neighborhood design, while remaining density neutral, encouraging preservation of environmentally sensitive areas (such as wetlands, floodplains, and streams), and promoting the provision of a robust neighborhood amenity package.

**B. MINIMUM DESIGN REQUIREMENTS**

1. Consistency with Comprehensive Plan. All projects must be reasonably consistent with the goals and intents of the City of Suwanee Comprehensive Plan.
2. Variations to Development Standards. The special use is intended to provide flexibility as it relates to district development standards.
3. Design Expectations.
  - a. Projects ~~should~~ **shall** incorporate traditional neighborhood design principles. Interconnectivity, pedestrianism, good design, architectural detail, and appropriate scale are essential elements.
  - b. Project should include traffic calming measures, such as designated on-street parking, street trees, roundabouts, raised pedestrian crossings, etc.
  - c. Projects ~~should~~ **shall** have a professionally prepared Master Plan for the entire project. It must be designed and incorporated together to provide a harmonious transition from one housing type to another and must provide convenient access from homes to park spaces. Common architecture, themes, significant natural features, connectivity and other items must be included.
  - d. Projects should have a community green, park, or other focal point must be included to create character and identity. Homes in the project should have easy access to neighborhood amenities.
  - e. Projects should include a variety of single-family housing types (distinguished by lot size, unit size, layout, etc.)
  - f. **When reasonably possible, Projects—should projects shall** minimize disturbance of and impacts to environmentally sensitive areas including wetlands, streams and floodplain. Impacts to these areas are sometimes unavoidable. Impacts should be noted at the time of SUP application.
  - g. Projects ~~should~~ **shall** be sensitive to existing adjacent neighborhoods.
  - h. Projects ~~should~~ **shall** have adequate and appropriate access.

- i. Project should incorporate other standards, as outlined in the City of Suwanee Comprehensive Plan Design Guidelines, which are appropriate for the site's specific location and character area should be included.
- j. When determining the appropriateness and viability of a proposed project, the City shall consult the City of Suwanee Comprehensive Plan **and shall consider the character areas defined in said plan**. Projects that prove that the use of innovative or creative design will benefit the City may be considered for said Special Use Permit.

#### C. USES PERMITTED

Uses specifically allowed by the underlying district are allowed within the Planned Park Neighborhood. Any allowed uses with conditions are still subject to those conditions. Special uses listed in the underlying district still require the approval of City Council through the special use permit process.

#### D. NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

1. No minimum lot sizes or shapes shall be required, except as **established as a condition of approval**. ~~may be established as part of the site development plan review.~~
2. No minimum distance between on-site structures shall be required, except as **established as a condition of approval**. ~~may be established as part of the site development plan review.~~ However, Fire Code requirements shall be met.
3. No minimum yard setbacks shall be required, except as **established as a condition of approval**. ~~may be established as part of the site development plan review.~~
4. **If approved, minimum lot size, building separation, and setbacks shall be established as part of the conditions of approval.**

#### E. LANDSCAPING

Landscaping shall meet or exceed all of the minimum requirements of the City's Zoning Ordinance. The preservation of mature trees and tree stands is strongly encouraged. Street trees included as part of the project shall count towards tree density units for the project.

#### F. UNDERGROUND UTILITIES

All on-site utilities shall be installed underground. Large transformers shall be placed on the ground within pad mounts, enclosures or vaults. The developer shall provide adequate landscaping to screen all above-ground facilities.

#### H. ARCHITECTURAL STANDARDS

Architecture of all buildings or structures are subject to compliance with architectural standards specifically approved for the planned residential park neighborhood.

#### I. COMMON/OPEN SPACE REQUIREMENTS

1. All designated common open spaces shall be preserved by one or more of the following methods:
  - a. Public dedication, subject to acceptance by the City Council by formal vote.
  - b. Conveyance to a property owners' association or nonprofit land conservation organization.
  - c. Retention of ownership, control and maintenance by the developer with a permanent conservation easement donated to a nonprofit land conservation organization.
2. All privately-owned common open space shall conform to its intended use and remain as expressed in the approved site development plan through the inclusion in all deeds of appropriate covenants. Said deed restrictions shall run with the land.

#### J. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

Protections of wetlands, creeks, and streams should be provided where practical.

#### K. APPLICATION PROCEDURES

1. The following procedures, applications and exhibits shall be required when applying for a Special Use Permit for a Planned Park Neighborhood:
  - a. Pre-application conference: Before submitting an application for Special Use Permit for Planned Park Neighborhood, the applicant shall confer with the Director to determine the feasibility for the proposed plan and its relationship to the City's Comprehensive Plan.
  - b. Professional service requirement: Plans or exhibits developed as part of an application for a Planned Park Neighborhood shall certify that the services of two (2) or more of the following professionals were utilized in the design or planning process:
    - i. A planner who is a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners;
    - ii. A landscape architect registered by the State of Georgia;
    - iii. An architect licensed by the State of Georgia; and/or
    - iv. A professional civil engineer registered by the State of Georgia.

2. Review information required site development plan: All applications for a Special Use Permit for a Planned Park Neighborhood shall include the following information on the site development plan and supporting documents:
  - a. A recent boundary survey with north arrow and scale.
  - b. A full legal description of the property with attached copies of any instruments referred to such as deeds, plats, covenants or restrictions.
  - c. The names and addresses of the owners of the property to be rezoned and evidence of unified control of the property.
  - d. The total area of the site in acres and square feet.
  - e. A map indicating the location, arrangement and dimensions of the following existing features within and immediately adjacent to the property: Vegetation including tree preserve areas, state waters, wetlands, 100-year floodplain, cemeteries, archeological sites, land uses, utilities, drainage ways, easements, public street rights-of-way, railways, and property lines.
  - f. A statement as to how the proposed project conforms to the City's adopted Comprehensive Plan Design Guidelines.
  - g. Plans showing the location of different housing types, areas of preservation, areas adjacent to existing residential neighborhoods, recreational areas, open spaces, trails arrangement and dimensions; building setbacks from perimeter boundaries and from public rights-of-way; proposed buffers with dimensions and status/extend of vegetation, landscape strips with proposed dimensions and proposed planting materials, proposed tree save areas with description of vegetation; proposed traffic circulation plan showing the location and dimensions of all streets, driveways, walkways, bikeways, and parking spaces; and all proposed common elements including utilities, conservations areas, open spaces and recreation/amenity areas.
  - h. A plan and statement detailing the manner of improving common open spaces, together with provisions, restrictions and conditions anticipated for the use, maintenance, and operation of such common elements.
  - i. A statement, in tabular form, of the anticipated gross residential density, the total number of dwelling units by type, minimum dwelling size and minimum number of bedrooms. Include a breakdown of the various housing types (i.e. cottages, estates, etc.). Provide details about what distinguishes one housing type from the others.
  - j. Proposals for providing storm water drainage and on-site retention areas, approximate size of stormwater facilities, location of berms, swales, and culverts.
  - k. An architectural sketch or sketches of typical proposed structures.
3. Planning Commission: After receiving a staff recommendation from the Director, the Planning Commission shall make a recommendation to the City Council as outlined in the Zoning Ordinance.

4. City Council:

a. Upon receiving the recommendation of the Planning Commission, the City Council shall, at a Public Hearing, review said recommendation and proposed project. The City Council may then either approve, approve subject to conditions, or disapprove the application.

b. In the event the rezoning is approved by the City Council, the site development plan shall be certified by the City and said certified copy shall be filed as a permanent record. Without exception, the approved plan shall be binding upon all existing and future owners and assigns.

c. Approval of the special use permit and the concept plan, does not prevent the property from being developed in a manner consistent with the underlying zoning of the property.

L. CONFORMANCE TO APPROVED SITE PLAN

1. After rezoning to a Planned Park Neighborhood, no permits shall be issued and no development shall commence unless in conformance with the approved site development plan, unless a change or deviation is approved by the City.
2. The Director may approve minor changes and deviations from the approved site development plan which are in compliance with the provisions and intent of this article, and which do not depart from the principal concept of the approved site development plan.
3. Should the Director determine that a requested change or deviation from the approved site development plan does not comply with the provisions and intent of this article, or departs from the principles of the Planned Park Neighborhood, the applicant may apply for approval of such change or deviation to the City Council as a Plan Amendment.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**OTHER BUSINESS**

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**ADJOURNMENT**

Brad Cox moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:22 PM.