

MINUTES
CITY OF SUWANEE, GEORGIA
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
August 2, 2022

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

CALL TO ORDER

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

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

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

ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES: June 7, 2022

Glenn Weyant moved to approve the June 7, 2022 minutes, second by Alan Dandar. Motion carried 4-0.

OLD BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

RZ-2022-004— Owners: 3805 317 LLC and Franklin Property Group LLC. Applicant: Walker Anderson Homes. The applicant requests a rezoning from R-100 (Residential Single Family District) to RM-8 (Residential Multi-Family Duplex District) to allow for townhomes. The site is located in Land Lot 212 of the 7th District at the southeast corner of Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road and Suwanee Avenue including 212 and 220 Suwanee Avenue and contains approximately 3.06 acres.

Josh Campbell presented the staff report as follows: The applicant requests a rezoning from R-100 (Single Family Residential District) to RM-8 (Residential Multi-family Duplex District) to allow for development of 20 townhomes on 3.06 acres, over three parcels, located on the southeast corner of the intersection of Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road and Suwanee Avenue.

The applicant proposes to construct five 22-foot wide rear-loaded townhomes that face a proposed park along Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road. An underground stormwater management facility would be located beneath the park. The remaining 15 townhomes would be 24-foot wide front-loaded townhomes. As the proposed concept plan shows, these would be internal to the property and face a new 24-foot wide private street accessed off of Suwanee Avenue. Access to garages of the rear-loaded units would also be off of this private street. The rear-loaded units and the front-loaded units would be separated by a second small internal park that would contain a mail kiosk and 8 guest

parking spaces. All units would have two-car garages, minimum 22-foot long driveways, 3-sided brick exteriors, and a minimum of 2,000 square feet of heated floor space.

There are a number of mature trees dispersed throughout the property. The applicant indicates that they will attempt to preserve two large trees at the northeast corner of the site.

The applicant proposes to build a new sidewalk along the frontage of the property along both Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road and Suwanee Avenue, as well as a 4-foot sidewalk along both sides of the internal private street.

Finally, the concept plan indicates a 5-foot setback in the yard abutting Suwanee Avenue, and a 20-foot-wide graded and replanted setback along the length of the southern property line. The western portion of this setback that is adjacent to parcel 7-212-038 includes a drainage easement that would prevent the planting of trees in the setback area. The applicant has proposed a privacy fence along the property line in these locations to provide screening for the adjacent residential property.

The property was the subject of RZ-2022-001. This request was for a rezoning to RM-8 for the construction of 24 townhomes. The case was postponed by the Planning Commission and City Council in January 2022 at the applicant's request. The Planning Commission heard the case on February 1st, 2022 and recommended approval of the request with a modified version of the conditions recommended by the Planning Department. The applicant withdrew the request before it was heard by City Council. The current request is for the same property, but the applicant is not the same.

The property across Suwanee Avenue, to the north, was rezoned to Old Town Commercial District in 2006 per RZ-2006-018. That land was developed with a bank. The proposed concept at the time of the rezoning indicated a second building to be constructed closer to Suwanee Avenue. This building has not been constructed.

The following comments are provided to make the applicant aware of certain pertinent issues. This is not intended to serve as an all-inclusive list of comments: If the requested rezoning is approved, the City will formally review the project for compliance with applicable regulations during the development review process.

The application indicates that the subject property totals approximately 3.06 acres. The survey for the property indicates there is a powerline easement approximately 50 feet wide and 400 feet long. If this is the case then only 50 percent of this acreage may be counted as part of the overall acreage for the density calculation.

The RM-8 Zoning District requires a 50 undisturbed buffer where adjacent to existing residential development or where residential uses are across the street. The subject property has residential uses to the south and east and across Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road, to the west.

The applicant requests a rezoning of the subject property from R-100 to RM-8. The RM-8 zoning district is intended for residential development at a maximum density of 8 units per acre. RM-8 allows for single family attached, duplexes, triplexes, quadruplexes, and multifamily dwelling units. In this case, the purpose of the applicant's request is to build townhomes; therefore, the request is for RM-8 zoning that would limit the use of the property to a maximum of 20 single family attached townhomes.

There are currently 2 single family homes and 5 accessory structures on the property. There does not appear to be any notable environmental encumbrances on the property. However there do appear to be a number of significant trees. It may be worth exploring the practicality of preserving at least some of these more mature trees.

The site slopes significantly towards Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road dropping approximately 20 feet from the power line easement at the rear of the site to Lawrenceville Suwanee Road. The design of the site should be thoughtfully developed to terrace the property to prevent tall walls or buildings from being higher than four feet above any adjacent sidewalk or open space.

The property contains a 50-foot-wide powerline easement along the eastern property line. The Zoning Ordinance only allows 50 percent of the acreage contained within a powerline easement to go towards the density calculation for the property. The proposed density would be 7.06 units per acre with the deduction of 50 percent of the acreage in the powerline easement. As such, the proposed development could be accommodated on the subject property within the proposed RM-8 zoning district.

The subject property is located on Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road near Buford Highway and is surrounded by a mixture of commercial and residential uses. To the east and south of the subject property are single family homes (zoned R-100) that were developed as part of the Suwanee Lake Estates neighborhood. To the north, across Suwanee Avenue, is a commercially zoned property (OTCD) property with a bank. Also, to the north, there are a couple of residentially zoned homes (Zoned R-100) within the Suwanee Lake Estates neighborhood. To the west of the subject property, across Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road, is a mixture of townhomes, single family detached homes, and commercial uses that were developed as part of the Shadowbrook planned mixed-use development. In light of the fact that Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road is now a major arterial road, the proposed zoning district is consistent with the surrounding uses and offers a good transition from Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road and the single family residential on the interior of the Suwanee Lake Estates neighborhood.

The City's Future Land Use Plan recommends mixed-use village for the subject property. The 2040 Comprehensive Plan defines mixed-use village as, "residential developments that include a variety of medium density housing types, both single-family and/or multi-family, and/or limited, small-scale nonresidential uses such as a church, corner market or other neighborhood-oriented service uses. Residential developments may contain live-work units with an office or store on the ground level and residential on the upper floors or entirely residential but located within walking distance of existing commercial

development.” (2040 Comprehensive Plan, p. 26-27). A small townhome development would be consistent with this designation.

The framework plan in the 2040 Comprehensive Plan indicates that this area should be developed with medium density residential. The mixed-use village designation includes a recommended density of 7 to 15 units per acre. During the Comprehensive Planning Process multiple scenarios were envisioned, including development at the upper end of the recommended densities and development at the lower end of the recommended densities. After reviewing the different scenarios, the City decided the lower density scenario was more consistent with the vision for the City. The proposed 7.06 units per acre is consistent with this vision.

The 2040 Comprehensive Plan also defines a policy for the creation of new neighborhoods to ensure new neighborhoods will offer a similar quality of life and quality of design that Suwanee’s established neighborhoods do. The policy states that “new neighborhoods should be well designed with quality architecture, have unique identities, provide inviting public spaces, and connect to surrounding properties and roads. (2040 Comprehensive Plan, p. 33). The proposed neighborhood concept plan shows a usable green space at the front of the neighborhood at the corner of Suwanee Avenue and Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road. This open space should be well designed and create a sense of place and identity for the neighborhood similar to the green spaces found in the Shadowbrook neighborhood across the street.

The subject property is located within the Town Center character area. The Comprehensive Plan states that, “Town Center is characterized by high quality multi-story mixed-use buildings fronting public spaces with neighborhoods of medium density, small lot single family homes and townhomes.” The proposed use is consistent with this element of the Comprehensive Plan including buildings fronting a public space. “High quality” is a key component of development in the City in general, and in Town Center in particular. The proposed architecture appears to be consistent with the quality of architecture elsewhere in Town Center.

Furthermore townhomes would be consistent with the townhomes located across Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road in the Shadowbrook neighborhood and serve as a transition from Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road, an arterial road, and the detached single family homes located to the east of the proposed development.

In conclusion, the requested rezoning of RM-8 with uses limited to townhomes is appropriate with a maximum density of 7 units per acre. The importance of the quality of the design of open spaces increases as the intensity of development increases, and so open space design should be subject to the review of the Planning Department to ensure that these spaces are usable and attractive additions to the area. As such, the Planning Department recommends approval with conditions of RZ-2022-004.

Brad Cox asked if the rear loaded homes will be four-sided brick. Josh Campbell indicated that the condition would require that the rear loaded homes would be four-sided brick.

Alan Dandar asked if a tree study had been conducted on the site. Josh Campbell stated that he was not aware of a study. The applicant is planning to save some trees adjacent to the road, if possible.

Michelle Budd asked Josh Campbell to explain condition number 2. Josh Campbell explained that a mixed-use village allows for live work units. Condition number 2 allows for live work units.

Brad Cox stated that there is not a lot of parking for business. Josh Campbell stated that the onstreet parking would be helpful with the non-residential component. Plus there are 8 parking spaces around the park with the mail kiosk. Discussion ensued amongst the Planning Commission and staff regarding parking.

Michelle Budd called upon the applicant.

Corbitt Woods, 3691 Portland Trail Drive, Suwanee, GA. Mr. Woods is representing the applicant. He has worked on this project several times trying to come up with a concept that will work for everyone.

Mr. Woods indicated that he had a couple of issues with the conditions. He is having trouble with the underground detention. It was expected to cost \$100,000 to \$200,000. It will cost \$600,000 to construct the underground detention pond. Mr. Woods would like to work with the City Engineer to construct a traditional pond.

Condition #6 requires replanting of 20 foot wide buffer along the eastern and southern exterior property lines. Mr. Woods stated that he cannot replant in the power easement.

Mr. Woods is requesting to amend condition #11 to state that rear loaded units shall have brick exterior on the first floor.

Alan Dandar asked Josh Campbell about the buffer replanting. Josh Campbell explained that Georgia Power has been known to cut down tree that are planted in the power easement. Planting of vegetation along the utility line would be preferable.

Josh Campbell emphasized that the underground detention is an important element of the project. If the underground detention is not possible, the Planning Department is not interested in approving the project.

Michelle Budd called anyone else in support. There was none.

Michelle Budd called for opposition.

Ms. Golden, 284 Seminole Circle, Suwanee, GA. Ms. Golden also owns 218 Seminole Circle. Ms. Golden stated that she is vehemently opposed to the proposed project. She is concerned about traffic, wildlife, and contaminating the creek.

Paul Dzikowski, 5265 Overbend Trail, Suwanee, GA. Mr. Dzikowski's parents live at 3849 Lawrenceville Suwanee Road. He is representing his parents. They are opposed the project. Mr. Dzikowski stated that water will come onto his parents property. There is not sufficient screening or buffer. There is a large old oak tree that should be saved if the project is approved. Parking is not sufficient for businesses. Mr. Dzikowski also indicated that he is concerned about cut-through traffic.

Brad Cox asked for clarification of brick on the rear loaded units. Josh Campbell explained that brick shall be on all four sides of the rear units, according the recommended conditions.

Glenn Weyant asked about the large oak tree on the adjacent property. Josh Campbell stated that there are things that can be done to try to preserve the tree. Glenn Weyant asked about the live work units. Josh Campbell explained that the business would have to be a use allowed in the Old Town Commercial District.

Alan Dandar asked Mr. Woods what would happen condition #4 was approved as written, if it would kill the project. Mr. Woods stated that it would most likely kill the project. There are new standards that are making the underground pond cost prohibitive.

Discussion ensued amongst the Planning Commission and staff regarding the recommended conditions.

Glenn Weyant moved to approve RZ-2022-004 with amended conditions,

Brad Cox moved to approve RZ-2022-004 with conditions, second by Glenn Weyant for discussion. Discussion about the conditions ensued. Brad Cox amended motion his to approve with conditions as noted below, second was amended by Glenn Weyant. Motion carried 3-1(deletions = ~~strickethrough~~, additions = bold). Alan Dandar voted against.

1. Develop in accordance with the concept plan (Exhibit A – Dated May 26, 2022) and incorporated herein by reference, with changes as necessary to meet conditions of zoning or other development requirements. If needed due to conditions of zoning that require substantial changes to the concept plan, within 180 days of approval, submit revised plans to the City that reflect the changes required herein by the conditions of zoning. Said plan shall be subject to the review and approval of the City Council.
2. Development shall be a unified project containing up to 20 single family attached or detached residential units and minimum of 0.5 acres of open space. A minimum of 5 units shall be rear loaded units facing Lawrenceville-Suwanee

Road fronting an open space. The remaining units may be front loaded units. ~~On the first floor of the 5 rear loaded units facing Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road uses found in the OTCD should be permitted. Said spaces shall also be eligible to apply for Special Use Permits as listed in the OTCD.~~

3. Development standards for single family attached homes:
 - a) Minimum unit width shall be 22 feet.
 - b) Minimum unit size shall be 2,000 square feet.
 - c) Maximum building height shall be 3 stories or 35 feet.
 - d) Minimum yard abutting a street: 5 feet
 - e) Minimum side yard setback shall be 20 feet.
 - f) Minimum rear yard setback shall be 40 feet.
 - g) Minimum distance between buildings shall be 10 feet.

4. A usable open space that serves as a focal point of the development and creates a sense of place and identity for the neighborhood shall be located at the corner of Suwanee Avenue and Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road. This open space shall be fronted by a minimum of 5 residential units as depicted in the approved concept plan and should be a minimum of 110 feet wide and 110 feet deep in both directions. Steps should be provided from said open space to Suwanee Avenue either at the corner of Suwanee Avenue and Lawrenceville Suwanee Road or elsewhere along Suwanee Avenue. A sidewalk shall be designed around the open space to connect each unit facing the open space with the steps to Suwanee Avenue. Prior to issuance of a development permit, the grading plan, landscape plan, and detailed hardscape plan for said open space must be reviewed and approved by the City of Suwanee Planning and Inspections Director. Said plans shall be stamped by a Professional Engineer (P.E.) and Registered Landscape Architect (RLA). Plans should minimize slopes, mounds and visible drainage structures within the open space. Plans should terrace said open space to avoid any exposed walls greater than 4 feet in height.

5. A second open space shall be provided between the rear loaded units and front loaded units. This space should be designed to maximize screening of the rear loaded units and maximize usable open space by minimizing slopes, mounds and visible drainage structures within the open space. Said open space should include the neighborhood mail kiosk and guest parking. Prior to issuance of a development permit, the grading plan, landscape plan, and detailed hardscape plan for said open space must be reviewed and approved by the City of Suwanee Planning and Inspections Director. Said plans shall be stamped by a Professional Engineer (P.E.) and Registered Landscape Architect (RLA).

6. Provide a 20-foot-wide replanted buffer along the eastern and southern exterior property lines. Intrusion into the buffer shall be limited to disturbance needed for grading, construction, perpendicular utility crossings, and storm water facilities. Where sparsely vegetated, said buffer shall be replanted with trees and landscaping intended to provide screening as much as possible. Where screening

with adequate landscaping is not possible, a fence shall be installed to screen the development from adjacent homes. The design of the fence shall be subject to approval of the Planning Department. No buffer shall be required along Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road or along Suwanee Avenue.

7. All residential units shall have 2-car garages that are accessed via an internal private street. Driveways shall be a minimum of 22 feet long. Back porches constructed on the driveways shall be constructed in such a manner as to minimize risk of vehicles impacting porch supports.
8. Along Suwanee Avenue, on street parking spaces shall be provided if practical. Explore relocating overhead utilities underground if practical, excluding existing utilities located in the power line easement. Curbing on Suwanee Avenue shall be provided along the length of project. Behind the curb a minimum 6-foot-wide landscape strip shall be provided. Said landscape strip shall be planted with 3-inch caliper overstory trees on 40-foot centers. Behind the landscape strip a minimum 5-foot wide sidewalk shall be provided. Improvements listed above shall be located within the right of way. If additional right-of-way is necessary to accommodate said improvements this shall be provided with the approval of the final plat. The City's consulting engineer shall approve the final design of said improvements.
9. Along Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road any improvements within the right-of-way are subject to the final approval of the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT). Provide a minimum 5-foot-wide sidewalk along Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road. Provide 3-inch caliper trees planted on 40-foot centers. Said trees may be located either within the right-of-way or on private property depending upon the final approval of GDOT.
10. Provide landscaping to screen driveways from view of public streets. Plants used for this shall be anticipated to grow to a minimum of 4 to 6 feet in height. Landscaping shall be approved by the City of Suwanee Planning and Inspections Director.
11. Architecture shall be consistent with "Exhibit B". Buildings shall use brick on front and side facades. Rear loaded units shall have a brick exterior on the rear ~~elevation~~. Wood or fiber cement materials may be used as trim. Windows on front elevations and side elevations visible from the road shall have simulated divided lites.
12. Any wall facing a street, external or internal, shall be clad in a high quality material. Said walls and the materials used to construct the walls shall be subject to the approval of the Planning and Inspections Director.
13. All new utilities shall be located underground.

- 14. Prior to issuance of a development permit, an arborist shall be consulted to assess the oak tree located at the front of 3849 Lawrenceville Suwanee Road and any steps that should be taken to preserve it if it is in good condition.**

OTHER BUSINESS

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ADJOURNMENT

Glenn Weyant moved to adjourn 7:30 p.m.