

MINUTES
CITY OF SUWANEE, GEORGIA
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
December 6, 2022

PLANNING AND ZONING MEMBERS: Present: Michelle Budd, Brad Cox, Muthu C. Narayanan, 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

Glenn Weyant moved to amend the agenda to include AAR-2022-002, second by Brad Cox. Motion carried 5-0.

ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES: November 1, 2022

Muthu C. Narayanan moved to approve the November 1, 2022 minutes, second by Alan Dandar. Motion carried 5-0.

OLD BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

SUP-2022-005 – Owner: Wal-mart Real Estate Business Trust. Applicant: Bowman Consulting. The applicant requests a Special Use Permit to allow for outdoor storage in the C-2A (Special Commercial District) zoning district. The site is located in Land Lot 169 and 170 of the 7th District at 3245 Lawrenceville Suwanee Road and contains approximately 23.04 acres.

Josh Campbell presented the staff report as follows: Walmart seeks a Special Use Permit within the C-2A zoning district for outdoor storage to allow for fifteen storage trailers, each measuring 40-feet by 8-feet (600 SF each) for the purpose of providing seasonal and overflow storage of goods. None of the trailers require utilities. Typically, 1-2 trailers are equipped with fixtures and this expands to 13 trailers during the Christmas freight months. The storage units would be located at the rear of the site and would not be visible from adjacent roadways.

The subject property is a 23.04 acre retail space located at 3245 Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road and occupied by a 207,000 square foot Walmart supercenter. The City of Suwanee Zoning Ordinance does not allow outdoor storage in the C-2A Zoning District without a Special Use Permit. The City has been engaged in code enforcement efforts to address outdoor storage on the property for a couple years. The City informed the property owner that they would need to either eliminate all of the outdoor storage or obtain a Special Use Permit for the storage. The applicant is now seeking a Special Use Permit for outdoor storage in order to be in compliance with the code.

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 be outdoor storage.

The subject property was annexed into the City in 2000 as part of AN-2000-007 which is a City initiated annexation and rezoned from C-2 (Gwinnett County) to C-2A (City of Suwanee) per RZ-2000-020 and 025. Georgia law requires properties to be zoned within the Municipality concurrently with the annexation proceedings.

The Walmart store has a need for increased storage capacity due to demand for goods increasing and unreliable supply chains. The 20-foot wide lane behind the building allows for vehicles to pass even when the temporary storage containers are in place. The storage containers will be screened from adjacent lots by existing vegetation, as well as detention ponds at the rear of the site, and a significant elevation drop and retaining wall at the east side of the parcel. The property is capable of supporting the proposed special use without needing any further changes, provided the property is professionally maintained.

The Walmart Supercenter occupies the entire 23.04 acre lot. The adjacent properties surrounding the Walmart contain restaurants, retailers, gas stations, and an auto repair facility all of which are zoned C-2A (Special Commercial District). The only exceptions are to the north which is occupied by large office warehouse buildings (Zoned M-1) and to the southeast of the property which is currently being developed by a large office warehouse buildings (Zoned M-1). Across Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road to the west are a variety of shopping centers with restaurants and retail zoned PMUD (Planned Mixed-Use District). None of the surrounding restaurant or retail uses are allowed outdoor storage as a use by right.

The subject property is located in the Suwanee Gateway character area. The future land use plan calls for mixed-use center on the subject property. In itself this recommendation does not provide much guidance on whether or not the requested special use is consistent with the City's future plans for this property. However, the Suwanee Gateway character area does provide some guidance. The plan states, "Redevelopment in this area presents an opportunity to visually improve Suwanee's front door. New development should create a strong, positive image of the City that is forward looking and progressive." As such, it is essential that the property is well maintained and contributing to presenting a strong, positive image.

The purpose for not allowing outdoor storage is to prevent clutter, trash, and other negative visual impacts. Approval of the request for outdoor storage containers could be appropriate given that the storage containers are proposed to be located at the rear of the building. Ongoing supply chain issues have become much more common place in the last

couple years. Provided that metal shipping containers used for the outdoor storage and limited to locations with limited visibility the approval of an SUP for outdoor storage could be acceptable with the appropriate conditions. The property owner has a history of poor maintenance of the grounds, including landscaping and the parking lot. Given the poor history of maintenance any approval permitting outdoor storage should include conditions addressing proper maintenance of landscaping and parking facilities.

If approved, conditions should ensure that the outdoor areas are well maintained. Therefore, the Planning Department recommends approval with conditions of SUP-2022-005.

Glenn Weyant asked if any permitting is required to ensure compliance. Josh Campbell explained that the building official and code enforcement will monitor the property.

Alan Dandar asked if electricity will be needed. Josh Campbell said the applicant informed the Planning Department that electricity would not be needed.

Michelle Budd called for support.

Mr. Chris McCary, Bowman Engineering, 4174 Silver Peak Parkway, Suwanee, GA. Mr. McCary is representing Wal-mart. Mr. McCary explained that there is a supply chain issue which is why the additional storage is needed. The site plan demonstrates that the storage can be done in an orderly fashion. The exhibits show Wal-mart's commitment to maintenance on the site. Mr. McCary is in agreement with the staff recommended conditions.

Michelle Bud called for opposition. There was none.

Glenn Weyant asked how allowing trailers will help Wal-mart address their previous maintenance issues. Josh Campbell stated that he is not sure that it will. However, he has more confidence in the current store manager than the previous manager. The District Manager has been helpful in addressing the issues.

Brad Cox asked if Wal-mart has storage off site. Josh Campbell indicated that they most likely have additional storage off site.

Glenn Weyant moved to approve SUP-2022-005 with staff conditions, second by Muthu C. Narayannan. Motion carried 5-0.

1. The outdoor storage containers shall be maintained in good condition. Rusty, damaged, or otherwise unsightly storage units shall be removed from the property or promptly repaired/maintained.
2. Outdoor storage units shall be limited to the locations shown in Exhibit A.

3. Temporary outdoor storage shall be limited to fifteen storage containers no larger than 40 feet long and 8 feet wide. Said containers shall be located in a manner that does not obstruct the flow of traffic around the building and complies with Gwinnett County Fire Marshal requirements.
4. Maintenance of landscape should adhere to schedule shown in Exhibit B.
5. Parking Lot sweeping should be conducted 3 times per week to remove trash/rubbish according to schedule shown in Exhibit C.
6. Wax Myrtles on site should be trimmed to tree form.
7. Any trees that are deemed unlikely to survive must be replaced during the next planting season.

SUP-2022-006 – Owner: PRD Owner, LLC. Applicant: Tarr Group, LLC. The applicant requests a Special Use Permit to exceed the maximum parking allowed in the O-I (Office- Institutional District) zoning district. The site is located in Land Lot 252 of the 7th district at 4355 Suwanee Dam Road and contains approximately 1.16 acres.

Josh Campbell presented the staff report as follows: Suwanee Dental Care seeks a Special Use Permit within the O-I zoning district to allow for a parking expansion that will provide more than the maximum number of spaces allowed for the property. The subject property contains a building measuring approximately 11,850 square feet. Currently, 10,850 square feet of the building is used for a dental office and 1,000 square feet of the building is used for a financial advisor’s office.

The subject property is zoned to the O-I zoning district and contains an 11,850 square foot office building. The maximum amount of parking allowed for an office building is 1 space per 275 square feet. As such, the subject property is entitled to a maximum of 43 parking spaces. The applicant’s letter of intent states that they are seeking to add 4 parking stalls to increase site parking from 51 to 55 spaces. The subject property was developed prior to the adoption of parking maximums. As such the property was developed with more spaces than the current zoning ordinance would allow. Now the applicant is seeking to provide 4 more spaces.

When the City adopted parking maximums, the change included options for exceeding these established limits. These options include providing spaces in a parking deck, using alternative materials for the parking spaces, or obtaining a Special Use Permit from the City. The applicant seeks to obtain a Special Use Permit in order to allow for the expansion of their current parking area and exceed the maximum number of parking spaces.

The Special Use Permit process allows the city to review whether an increase in parking is appropriate and what alterations might be needed to facilitate this increase in parking.

A Special Use Permit does not change the underlying zoning of property but grants the property an additional specified use. In this case the SUP would allow for more parking.

The subject property was rezoned from R-100 (Residential Single-Family District) to O-I (Office-Industrial District) in 1997 as part of RZ-1997-005 to allow for the development of the office building that is there now.

The subject property is currently occupied by a 2-story office building totaling 11,850 square feet. The property has 51 striped surface parking spaces, which exceeds the current parking maximum for an office building. The landscaping in and around the parking lot does not conform to current landscaping requirements. The applicant is proposing to add 4 parking spaces. In order to accomplish this, they will be reducing the size of the front landscape strip, but it appears that it would still exceed the minimum 15 feet that is required. The front landscape strip is encumbered by an easement containing overhead power lines. As such, no canopy trees could be planted within the landscape strip as required by the ordinance. In order to implement this plan, the property owner will require variances from the city's landscape requirements. As such, it would appear that the property will not accommodate the parking expansion without deviating from landscaping requirements.

The adjacent properties surrounding the subject property contain restaurants; legal, insurance, and health services; medical centers; residential homes; and a variety of businesses. The lots to the north (Zoned PMUD and allowed uses in the C-2A and O-I Zoning District) contain restaurants and legal, insurance, and health services. The property to the west (Zoned PMUD and allowed residential and C-2A uses), across Suwanee Dam Road, are developed with single family detached homes, a day spa, a medical center, and a church. The properties adjacent to the southern side of the lot are zoned C-2 (General Commercial District) and C-2A (Special Commercial District) and contain restaurants; hair and tanning salons; a dry cleaner; and a Pilates studio. The surrounding uses should not be negatively affected by the parking expansion.

The subject property is located in the PIB/Suwanee Junction character area. The future land use plan calls for mixed use center and commercial use. This increase in parking is consistent with the call for commercial uses. The development framework states, "New development and redevelopment should design smaller, more dispersed parking." However, this is in reference to underutilized commercial properties. The proposed parking increase is consistent with the expectations of the comprehensive plan.

The proposed parking lot expansion would involve approximately 2,441 square feet of land disturbance. This minimal amount of land disturbance means the property owner will not be required to address stormwater requirements adopted since the subject property was developed.

The Suwanee Dental Care has operated at this location since shortly after the office building was completed. The property owner reports that the dentist office has seen a significant increase in visits over the last two decades. The building is currently occupied

by 44 employees (42 dental, 2 financial). The applicant states that during peak hours, there is a need for 63 parking spaces. These 4 additional spaces would alleviate some of that need. Approval of the request for additional parking is not likely to negatively impact the surrounding area. The site is partially screened from adjacent lots by existing vegetation including a combination of shrubs and overstory trees. The office building is surrounded by more heavily parked commercial locations. Provided sufficient landscaping is provided on the front of the project, approval of the request should be appropriate.

The purpose of managing parking expansions is to limit impervious surfaces. The proposed parking lot expansion would involve minimal land disturbance (less than 2,500 square feet) and minimal addition of new impervious surfaces. The development of the surrounding property and the recommendation of the future land use plan supports approval of the parking expansion. However, a newer parking lot would be required to adhere to more stringent landscaping requirements. As such, if the request to exceed parking maximums is approved, conditions managing the landscaping for the project should be included. Therefore, the Planning Department recommends approval of conditions of SUP-2022-006.

Muthu C. Narayannan asked Josh Campbell for clarification on the location of the additional parking spaces. Josh Campbell showed him the spaces on the zoning exhibit.

Michelle Budd called upon the applicant.

Dillon Tarr, 8650 State Road 32, Zionsville, Indiana. Mr. Tarr stated that the applicant expressed a need for some additional parking spaces. This is a minimal effort to get them a few more spaces. This will eliminate the employees parking on neighboring properties. Mr. Tarr stated that he is in agreement with the staff recommended conditions.

Muthu C. Narayannan moved to approve SUP-2022-006 with staff conditions, second by Alan Dandar. Motion carried 5-0.

1. Landscape plantings should consistent with locations and material shown in Exhibit A. The hedgerow required at the front of the parking lot shall be subject to an annual inspection by the Planning Department until the hedgerow is well established.
2. Parking lot expansion shall be limited to the changes shown in Exhibit B. The Planning Department is authorized to approve minor changes to the plan in order to accommodate the proposed 4 space parking increase.

AAR-2022-002 – Owner: Inland Sims Development. Applicant: Wayne Raffield. The applicant requests to deviate from the Architectural Standards to allow for a 4,800 square foot accessory building that is not visible from a public road or adjacent properties to use metal as an exterior material.

Alyssa Durden presented the staff report as follows: The property is located at 590 Satellite Boulevard. The main building is brick. The accessory structure is currently under construction. The applicant would like to use metal as an exterior material.

Michell Budd asked if the accessory structure was permitted as a brick building. Josh Campbell explained that the owner asked the consultant to obtain the permit. The property owner did not know that the he would have to comply with architectural standards for an accessory structure.

Josh Campbell stated that the applicant and owner are dealing in good faith. He has been working with the applicant for nearly 20 years.

Michelle Budd called upon the applicant.

Wayne Raffied, 1631 Newben Road, Rutledge, GA. Mr. Raffield explained that the owner plans to tear down or expand the building within the next year. His company is growing at a rapid pace. This will be an auxiliary building used for staging. Mr. Raffied explained that the owner overlooked the building materials listed on the plans. The building can not been seen from the road.

Michelle Budd asked if the metal can be painted. Mr. Raffield explained that the metal is an off white color and that it is paintable.

Brad Cox moved to approve AAR-2022-002 with revised staff conditions, second by Glenn Weyant. Motion carried 5-0 (addition = bold).

1. The use of metal as an exterior building material shall be limited to the accessory building located as shown in Exhibit A.
2. **If the footprint changes for the subject building, the approval of this deviation of the architectural standards does not apply.**

OTHER BUSINESS

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ADJOURNMENT

Muthu C. Narayannan moved to adjourn 7:12 pm.