

MINUTES
CITY OF SUWANEE, GEORGIA
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
August 4, 2015

PLANNING AND ZONING MEMBERS: Present: Pete Charpentier, Larry Pettiford and Anthony Manners. Staff members present: Josh Campbell, Daniel Robinson and MaryAnn Jackson.

CALL TO ORDER

Pete Charpentier called the meeting to order at 6:34 pm

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Anthony Manners moved to approve the agenda as presented, second by Larry Pettiford. Motion carried 3-0.

ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES: February 3, 2015

Larry Pettiford moved to approve the March 3, 2015, second by Anthony Manners. Motion carried 3-0.

OLD BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

RZ-2015-001 – The City of Suwanee is initiating a rezoning from M-1(Light Industry District) and PMUD (Planned Mixed Use Development District) to PMUD with conditions to allow for mixed-use development including multi-family and commercial uses. The tracts are located in Land Lot 236 of the 7th District on the southeast corner of Buford Highway and Chicago Street and contain approximately 4.87 acres.

Josh Campbell presented the staff report as follows: Following the approach of the Suwanee Town Center, the City seeks to zone the subject property and connect it to adopted plans. Once again, the City is positioned to play a role in the form and quality of development in the downtown area. For this reason, the City initiated this rezoning from M-1 and PMUD to PMUD in order to further the goals the City’s Downtown Suwanee Master Plan and 2030 Comprehensive Plan. The subject property is located at the corner of Chicago Street and Buford Highway adjacent to Town Center. The property consists of 3 tracts of land totaling 4.87 acres owned by the City of Suwanee. The purpose of this rezoning is to ensure that the subject property will be developed in a manner that is consistent with and adds to Town Center. The City wishes to rezone the property from its current M-1 (Light Industrial District) and PMUD (Planned Mixed Use Development District) to PMUD (Planned Mixed-Use District).

The City is nearing the completion of its most recent update to the Downtown Suwanee Master Plan (Council voted to transmit the plan to the Atlanta Regional Commission for comment at the July Council meeting). The DSMP is the principal planning document

for the Town Center and downtown area. The DSMP was a community-based planning effort to guide future development and reinvestment into the City's downtown area. This plan, which was crafted and guided with input from a citizen and business owner stakeholder group, consulting firm, staff and elected officials, identified the subject property as a potential catalyst for extending high quality development down Buford Highway from Town Center.

At the time this report was being developed, the ownership of the subject property was being transferred from the City to the Downtown Development Authority (DDA). A DDA is an independent authority that serves as the development arm of a city. It may be tasked to undertake development activities for a City including owning and selling of property. The City of Suwanee wishes to task the DDA in this manner for this property. The City initiated the rezoning of this property to control and prepare for future development.

The subject property consists of 3 tracts totaling approximately 4.87 acres. Tract 1 is zoned M-1 which allows for light industrial uses. This parcel is currently undeveloped, but was previously developed with a small apartment. The small building was demolished by the City in 2011. Tract 2 is an undeveloped 0.22 acre parcel that is zoned PMUD. The City zoned it to PMUD per RZ-2003-007 in order to enable the development of Town Center. Tract 3 was also rezoned to PMUD per RZ-2003-007. The parcel contains a regional detention pond that serves Town Center. This pond could be modified to serve the remainder of the subject property as well.

When the subject property is developed it may use this master detention facility, but the project will need to demonstrate compliance with all of the storm water requirements for City.

The subject property is an approximately 4.87 acre undeveloped tract located on the corner of Buford Highway and Chicago Street. Access is available to both roads. The site consists of some areas with steep topography and contains the regional detention pond for Town Center. Tract 1 is a heavily wooded, but the rest of the property is mostly cleared of trees.

The subject property is surrounded by a mixture of uses and zoning districts. To the north, across Buford Highway, is a mixture of commercial uses including a credit union (zoned C-2), multi-tenant shopping center (zoned Old Town Commercial District – OTCD) and an auto repair shop (zoned OTCD). The Old Town Commercial District is only allowed within the Old Town Overlay District. It allows for many commercial uses that are found in C-1 and C-2, but also allows for uses that involve the sale of alcohol. OTCD also requires reduced setbacks. To the east of the subject property is Town Center which is zoned PMUD and contains a mixture of uses including residential, commercial, institutional recreational, and office uses. To the south is an undeveloped property zoned R-140 residential. To the west is the Suwanee Lumber Company, zoned M-1.

The City developed the 2030 Comprehensive Plan to guide the City. The Comprehensive Plan allows for and encourages mixed-use development in specific areas. The subject property falls into the Town Center Character Area. This Character Area is identified as an appropriate location for mixed use developments, specifically mixed-use center, similar to Town Center in function and style. The Plan also called for Town Center to expand onto the subject property and the adjacent lumber yard property, “Particular attention should be paid to expanding Town Center to the south...continuing development down Buford Highway to support the Old Town gateway at Russell Street...” The Downtown Suwanee Master Plan adopted in 2009 anticipates 3-5 story mid-rise mixed-use development on the subject property. The latest draft of the DSMP update, officially endorsed by Council and transmitted to the Atlanta Regional Commission for review, calls for Town Center-style development to extend down Buford Highway toward Russell Street. The conceptual plan shows a multi-family building around 5 stories tall with commercial uses on the ground floor served by structured parking. The structured parking could also help alleviate parking issues around Town Center during events.

In 2002, the City adopted the Old Town Master Plan. That plan put forth the idea of a new Town Center for the City of Suwanee to be located on the corner of Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road and Buford Highway. The City placed the property on that corner under contract and created a more detailed plan for the Town Center. Upon completion of the Suwanee New Town Center Master Plan, the City purchased the land through an Urban Redevelopment Authority. The City then rezoned the land to the PMUD zoning district (per RZ-2003-007 and 008) and commenced with development of Town Center Park and Town Center Avenue. Upon completion of the park and infrastructure, the City released requests for proposals on the surrounding city owned land seeking parties interested in developing the land in manner consistent with the goals expressed in the City’s planning documents. The City then sold these parcels one at a time to entities that proposed to develop the land in a manner most consistent with City goals.

Following this model, the City recently released a request for proposals for land acquisition and development of the subject property. The RFP describes the property as being suitable for, “mixed-use development including residential and a limited amount of commercial/retail/office/institutional uses.” Design elements should include “downtown-style elements, such as buildings in close proximity to the street, vertical construction, wide walkways and sidewalks, structured parking, focus on pedestrian design, etc. Attention to architectural detailing, proportional massing, appropriate and complementary tenant mixing...”

The RFP is part of an effort to encourage a type of development on the subject property that is consistent with the future plans of the City as outlined in the Comprehensive Plan, the 2009 Downtown Suwanee Master Plan and the 2015 Downtown Suwanee Master Plan Update. The City will be working with the Downtown Development Authority to ensure that development on the property is consistent with these plans. As such, the City is initiating the rezoning of the subject property as PMUD subject to conditions.

The Planning Department recommends rezoning the subject property to PMUD subject to the following enumerated conditions:

1. Development shall be a unified mixed-use project containing up to 240 residential units and up to 30,000 square feet of commercial/office space. Development shall have a minimum of 10,000 square of commercial space at street level and directly facing Buford Highway and Chicago Street. Uses in this space shall be limited to those found in the Old Town Commercial District. Uses in the remainder of the building shall be limited to those that are customarily found in residential areas.
2. Development shall include a multi-level parking deck.
3. Architecture shall be reviewed and approved by the City of Suwanee Planning and Inspections Director prior to the issuance of a development permit. Architecture shall be of a first-class manner consistent with downtown styles, materials and features.
4. Residential development shall be subject to the following development standards:
 - a. Up to 5% of the residential units may contain 3 bedrooms.
 - b. Up to 40% of the residential units may contain 2 bedrooms.
 - c. All remaining units shall be one bedroom or studio units.
 - d. The average size of all the units must fall between 900 and 1,000 square feet.
 - e. All units shall be separately metered to allow for condominium conversion.
 - f. All units shall have a minimum 9 foot interior ceiling heights, 42” cabinet heights, premium countertop surfaces and premium appliances.
 - g. First class tenant amenities such as a swimming pool and workout center shall be provided.
 - h. In addition to the standards listed above, development shall be subject to all applicable life safety and building codes.
5. Commercial development shall be subject to the following development standards:
 - a. Primarily glass storefronts.
 - b. Minimum 20 feet interior ceiling heights.
 - c. Design shall allow for construction of restaurant uses in a portion of the project via the provision of adequate base infrastructure.
6. The development of the site, including design and construction, shall be coordinated with the construction of Buford Highway, with an emphasis on ensuring that the “sidewalk area” is consistent with the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance. Materials, street furniture, street trees, lighting, etc. shall be consistent with the City’s plans for Buford Highway.

7. Outdoor dumpsters shall be contained in an enclosure constructed of a material consistent with the primary building material for the building.
8. Prior to issuance of a development permit a comprehensive signage plan shall be submitted for review and approval by the City.
9. If not specifically addressed in the Downtown Suwanee Master Plan, the City's current zoning, sign, development building code and other regulations shall apply and remain in full force and effect. Nothing herein shall grant deviations to building, fire or other life-safety codes or regulations except as normally allowed by said codes.

Pete Charpentier asked why the residential portion of the project will be rental versus ownership. Josh Campbell stated that the City of Suwanee is zoning the property to allow for a certain number of units consistent with the masterplan. The City of Suwanee will regulate quality of development.

Pete Charpentier asked about the restriction on the number of bedrooms per unit. Josh Campbell explained that the one bedroom/two bedroom mix is more likely to attract young professionals and empty nesters.

Larry Pettiford asked Josh Campbell to explain to the audience that the master plan was developed with public input. Josh Campbell stated that all of the City of Suwanee Master Plans included a public component.

Anthony Manners asked about tenants for the commercial space. Josh Campbell stated that he anticipates a restaurant with commercial retail mix.

Pete Charpentier asked about parking. Josh Campbell stated that there will be an additional 150 parking spaces with public access.

Anthony Manners stated that there is paved parking behind the existing retail. Josh Campbell explained that the plan is for the parking deck to be in the interior of the building. The units will surround the parking deck.

Pete Charpentier called for anyone in favor of the rezoning.

Sean Mulligan, Suwanee, GA. Mr. Mulligan lives in Shadowbrook Subdivision. He is in favor of the rezoning. Mr. Mulligan stated that he is concerned with the additional retail but he is in favor of increasing density in the area.

Pete Charpentier called for opposition.

Jim Whey, 340 Town Center Avenue, Suwanee, GA. Mr. Whey asked Josh Campbell about Madison Retail. Josh Campbell stated that he is aware that dealing with Madison

Retail has been less than ideal. The Downtown Development Agency may be managing the leasing of the retail portion as opposed to a developer.

Mr. Whey asked about the size of the building. Josh Campbell stated that the building may be five stories.

Tom Brown, 340 Town Center Avenue, Suwanee, GA. Mr. Brown stated that he is concerned with the proposed apartments deteriorating the value of the existing residential. Mr. Brown stated that there is gridlock on Buford Highway in the afternoon. Adding 240 apartments will create more problems. Crime will increase with the addition of apartments. Mr. Brown asked the Planning Commission to postpone their decision.

Katherine Duella, Suwanee, GA. Ms. Duella stated that the existing retail space is empty. Therefore, the City of Suwanee should not add additional retail space. Ms. Duella asked if the lumber yard is a part of the rezoning. Josh Campbell stated that the lumber yard is not a part of the rezoning.

Ms. Duella asked about the number of parking spaces in the parking deck. Josh Campbell stated that there are generally 1.8 to 2 spaces per unit.

Discussion ensued amongst the Planning Commission Members and staff regarding parking spaces.

Marian Cannel, 3933 Savannah Square, Suwanee, GA. Ms. Cannel stated that her concern is the 150 spaces will be used by public. Josh Campbell stated that there will be adequate parking for the residents of the apartments with an additional 150 spaces. Ms. Cannel asked why the multi family will be apartments. Josh Campbell explained that the City of Suwanee recently completed the update to the Downtown Suwanee Master Plan. During the course of the study, the City hired a company to conduct a market analysis. This study showed that there is a market for multi- family residential in this area.

Mr. Wagner, 340 Town Center Avenue, Suwanee, GA. Mr. Wagner asked about the Planned Mixed Use District Zoning District. Josh Campbell explained the Planned Mixed Use District to Mr. Wagner.

Discussion ensued amongst the Planning Commission members regarding density and traffic.

Anthony Manners moved to approve RZ-2015-001 with conditions, 2nd by Larry Pettiford. Pete Charpentier voted against the rezoning. The motion did not carry.

Anthony Manners rescinded his motion.

Anthony Manners moved to deny RZ-2015-001, second by Larry Pettiford. Motion carried 3-0.

OTHER BUSINESS

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Josh Campbell informed the Planning Commission that Alyssa Durden has been hired as the Planning Division Director.

ADJOURNMENT

Larry Pettiford moved to adjourn at 7:46 pm.