

GREATER LOWNDES PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
325 WEST SAVANNAH AVENUE
Monday, February 27, 2023 – 5:30 PM

GLPC Commission Members Present: Franklin Bailey, Johnny Ball, Ron Bythwood, Calvin Graham, Ed Hightower (Chairman), Steve Miller, Vicki Rountree, Chip Wildes, Tommy Willis

GLPC Commission Members Absent: Chris Webb

Staff: Matt Martin, City of Valdosta/Hahira Planning & Zoning Administrator; JD Dillard, Lowndes County Planner; Trinni Amiot, Lowndes County Zoning Administrator (Clerk)

VISITORS PRESENT:
(Sign-In sheet available in file.)

CALL TO ORDER, INVOCATION, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman Hightower called the meeting to order at 5:29 p.m. Chairman Hightower led the Pledge of Allegiance followed by the Invocation by Commissioner Willis. Chairman Hightower welcomed everyone to the GLPC meeting and explained that the Planning Commission serves as an advisory (recommending) body to the local member governments regarding land use requests, and the final determination of the requests presented at this meeting will be made by the applicable local governments. Chairman Hightower then explained the meeting procedures and announced the dates of the public hearing for the local member government, as listed on the agenda.

Agenda Item #2

Approval of the Meeting Minutes: January, 30, 2022

Chairman Hightower called for additions, questions, and corrections of the January 30, 2023, GLPC meeting minutes. There being none, Chairman Hightower called for a motion. Commissioner Bythwood made a motion to approve the January 30, 2023, meeting minutes as presented. Commissioner Wildes second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Agenda Item #3

REZ-2023-03 Flannigan, James Rd./Smith St., Rezone ~8 acres from R-1 (Low Density Residential) to P-D (Planned Development)

Mr. Dillard presented the case stating that this request represents a change in zoning on the subject property from Low Density Residential (R-1) zoning to Planned Development (P-D) zoning, for the development of a 144-unit apartment complex and amenities. In 2022, the applicant requested a speculative C-G zoning, to which the GLPC recommended denial. The applicant then requested tabling by the Board of Commissioners, to speak with the opposition and develop an overall site plan, which was produced and reviewed by the TRC. Staff supported the C-G request as the proposed uses were beneficial to the greater community, but ultimately, the request was withdrawn prior to a final hearing by the Board of Commissioners to pursue the residential development.

The subject property is within the Urban Service Area and a Neighborhood Activity Center Character Area according to the Comprehensive Plan Future Development Map, which permits P-D zoning. Access to the subject property is from either James Road, a County maintained major collector on the West, or Smith Street to the North, a County maintained local road, with the proposed main entrance to the complex off of Smith Street to the North, and secondary access off of James Road to the West.

Aspects of this case worthy of consideration include the following: 1. The subject property abuts R-1 zoning to the North and East, R-21 to the South and West, along with C-H and P-D districts further to the East and South respectively.; 2. James Road is a major collector road and designed to support increased traffic activity; 3. The Urban Service Area designation of the property indicates infrastructure is provided, and urban density development is supported on the lot. 4. Staff also discussed reducing the height on one to three of the units as a transition into the surrounding community, for a total of 120-136 units.

The TRC reviewed this application and had no objectionable comments. In addition to the Tree and Vegetation Protection standards of Section 4.07.07, if approved, the minimum buffer required between P-D and Residential zoning districts is at least 15' wide and includes a 6' tall opaque privacy fence, 3 shade trees per 100 linear feet, and 19 shrubs per 100 linear feet..

Commissioner Willis asked if staff was concerned that the project is out of character for the area. Mr. Dillard stated that taking the building heights into consideration was discussed. Commissioner Bailey believes the project is not out of character for the area. Other questions from commissioners were of a clarification nature.

There being no other questions from the commissioners, Chairman Hightower opened the Public Hearing portion of the case.

Speaking in favor of the request:

- Mac McCall – 3308 Country Club Rd., Valdosta, GA

Mr. McCall stated he is the architect of record for the applicant and stated he was available to answer any questions the commissioners might have. He reiterated that the proposed use is compatible with FLUSE (Future Land Use), utilities are already in place, and he is supportive of the proposed project as the area is a growing and changing neighborhood.

Commissioner Bailey asked Mr. McCall about potential height flexibility to which Mr. McCall stated it would be cost prohibitive but there are plans to maintain and create an even greater tree line buffer. Mr. McCall also stated that going higher than 3 stories would increase the costs exponentially. Commissioner Willis asked about the ingress and egress to the property. Mr. McCall stated that the main access would be via Smith Street and fully fenced and gated with a turnaround on Smith Street. The secondary access would be off James Road and accessible by tenants and fire only. Commissioner Graham pointed out that Smith Street is a narrow, two-lane road and asked about the potential of a traffic light being installed. A traffic study is under review to address any potential traffic issues.

Speaking against the request:

- Pastor William C. Morgan – 2181 Smith St., Valdosta, GA

Pastor Morgan stated that 130 signatures representing opposition to the request had been gathered, with many people being concerned about safety issues, particularly for the elementary school nearby. Additionally, with the proximity to single-family residences, there are environmental concerns regarding the affect on individual wells, and the existing wildlife being displaced.

Commissioner Bailey and Commissioner Miller asked Pastor Morgan what he would like to see on the property with regard to development to which Pastor Morgan answered he'd like to see single family homes.

There being no further discussion, Chairman Hightower called for a motion. Motion by Commissioner Willis to recommend denial of the request on the basis that three-story structures would be out of character for the area, and added traffic would impact both Smith Street and James Road. Commissioner Graham second. Six in favor of the Motion to Recommend Denial of the request, and two opposed (Commissioners Rountree and Miller). Motion carried (6-2).

Agenda Item #4

VA-2023-02 ISH Holdings, LLC, 915 West Street, Rezone 1.76 acres from R-6 to R-M

Mr. Martin presented the case in which the applicant is requesting to rezone 1.76 acres from Single-Family Residential (R-6) to Multi-Family Residential (R-M). The subject property is located at 915 West Street which is along the east side of the road about 300 feet south of the intersection with West Gordon Street. The property is currently vacant and the applicant is proposing to develop it as an apartment complex with 12 dwelling units. This will consist of six (6) 1-story buildings with two (2) dwelling units in each building. Each unit will be 2-bedroom, 2-bath, and consist of 1,088-sf GFA. All of this is in addition to the applicant's proposed stand alone "duplex" to be developed with the same design on the existing adjacent small lot to the north at 921 West Street, which will keep its R-6 zoning.

The subject property is located within an Established Residential (ER) Character Area on the Future Development Map of the Comprehensive Plan which allows the possibility of R-M zoning. The property is also located within the City's local Historic District. The applicant's proposed site layout and building design (for new construction) were approved by the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) on February 6th.

The surrounding land use pattern is dominated by mostly single-family residential, with some institutional uses (churches) nearby, and also a corner convenience store at W Gordon Street 300 feet to the north. Except for the convenience store's C-C zoning, all of the surrounding and nearby properties are solidly zoned R-6. Therefore, this request for R-M zoning would seem to be "spot zoning" and out of character with the surrounding patterns. However, this subject property is somewhat hard to develop with its sloping topography and irregular shape. It also has limited street frontage in comparison to its overall size. There is enough total land area in the property to produce 12 lots under R-6 standards. However, to be developed conventionally with individual lots containing houses or duplexes, there is only enough road frontage along West Street to produce 3 lots. Each of these would then average a little more than 25,000 square feet, as compared to the minimum required lot size of only 6,000 square feet for a single-family residence in R-6 zoning. In order to add street frontage to allow more lots, a new road (with cul-de-sac) would need to be constructed to gain access to the property's interior. This would only yield about 4 more lots and its cost of construction would exceed the value of the added lots.

The applicant is not seeking high-density residential development and is only wanting to have 12 dwelling units on this property. This matches the overall R-6 density pattern of the neighborhood with an average of "6,000-sf per dwelling", but without the extra expense of constructing a standard road. However, the applicant is wanting to consolidate the rooftops by instead having a village of duplexes with a shared driveway and parking area for the complex. With all 6 of these duplexes being on a single parcel

of land, it is therefore classified by definition as "multi-family" development, and hence the need for R-M zoning. The applicant's site plan includes all the required parking and interior access features. The perimeter area will include a 6' opaque privacy fence and a full buffer yard in accordance with LDR requirements. The buildings themselves will exceed the minimum size requirements for floor area, have pitched roofs, and maintain a house/duplex kind of appearance.

There has been very little development or redevelopment in the immediate area in recent years. The applicant's proposal maintains the overall density and land use character of the area, and will hopefully serve as a positive catalyst for future redevelopment proposals.

Staff finds the request consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Standards for the Exercise of Zoning Power (SFEZP) and recommends approval to the City Council.

A question was asked as to whether the development would be considered apartments or duplexes to which Mr. Martin answered the development would be apartments with 2 dwelling units. Commissioner Willis asked about the entrance which Mr. Martin stated lines up with Lamar St. and a turnaround is already factored in. Commissioner Bythwood asked about fencing. Mr. Martin explained that a fence would be installed as a buffer and would not be used for the entrance.

Chairman Hightower opened the Public Hearing portion of the case.

Speaking in favor of the request:

- Anthony Payton, CA Payton & Associates – 2415 Patrick Pl., Valdosta, GA
- Albert Edmonds – 5005 Ken St., Stockbridge, GA

Mr. Payton stated he is the project architect and is available to answer any questions the commissioners might have.

There being no questions for Mr. Payton, Chairman Hightower invited anyone else in favor of the request to come forward.

Mr. Edmonds stated he is the applicant and property owner and his intent is to improve the appearance of the neighborhood.

There being no questions for Mr. Edmonds, Chairman Hightower invited anyone opposed to the request to come forward.

Speaking in opposition to the request:

- LuElla Tillman – 920 West St., Valdosta, GA
- Hoke Hampton, House of God Church – 3420 Fred Walker Rd., Valdosta, GA

Ms. Tillman asked to better understand the project.

Pastor Hampton wants a buffer to protect the church.

There being no further discussion, Chairman Hightower called for a motion. Motion by Commissioner Graham to recommend approval of the request to rezone 1.76 acres from R-6 to R-M as presented by staff. Commissioner Rountree second. All in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried (8-0).

There being no other business, Chairman Hightower adjourned the meeting at 6:37 p.m.

Ed Hightower, Chairman
Greater Lowndes Planning Commission

Date