

To: Greater Lowndes Planning Commission and Lowndes County Commission  
% J.D. Dillard, Lowndes County Planner

**Re: Please reject REZ-2023-04 2.5-acre rezoning on Quarterman Road**

Dear Greater Lowndes Planning Commission and Lowndes County Commission Members,

I will start by asking you to deny REZ-2023-04 E-A to R-A on Quarterman Road.

Quarterman Road is predominantly agriculture and forestry land, zoned Estate Agriculture (E-A), with a few minimum 5-acre lots, in an Agriculture/Forestry/Conservation Character Area. The proposed REZ-2023-04 2.5 acre rezoning is inconsistent with the Lowndes County Comprehensive Plan. It is inappropriate and should be rejected. If approved, in addition to causing more traffic, clearcutting, paving, and impervious surface, it would serve as a precedent for more such rezoning, which would greatly damage this Character Area. Additionally, many of the properties on Hambrick Road, which one must use to access Quarterman Road, have covenants preserving the rural nature of the land. Any RA zoning would be spot zoning. By right, the subject property can be divided into three five plus acre lots and remain consistent with the neighborhood and character area.

Within the last year or so the Planning Commission has recommended against and the County Commission has denied a similar rezoning on Miller Bridge Road, and a rezoning for a Dollar General at GA 122 and Skipper Bridge Road. Please do the same for this inappropriate rezoning.

In the packet for the Planning Commission, county staff include some numeric calculations that miss the main point of the character area.

In their first calculation, county staff try to dilute agriculture and forestry by including a nearby subdivision. Quarterman Road is almost all E-A zoning with large fields and forests with some minimum 5-acre lots. A few R-21 lots on the northwest end of the road were grandfathered in back in the 1980s along with the R-21 half-acre-lot house-packed subdivision. County staff inappropriately lump together Quarterman Road and the very different subdivision.

County staff's second calculation chooses only one part of Quarterman Road and includes only lots with a single-family dwelling, excluding almost all of the agriculture and forestry land that is characteristic of Quarterman Road. Such presentations are disingenuous and inappropriate for county planning. See below for details. The main point is simple: county staff cannot justify the Quarterman Road rezoning if they look at what is actually on the road, and the whole road. And, they are ignoring the character area set out in the Lowndes County Comprehensive Plan.

Staff also omitted a relevant calculation: that residential sprawl costs the taxpayers more than it can return in tax revenue.

County staff's mis-calculations cannot hide the plain fact: agriculture and forestry are characteristic of Quarterman Road, and that is how it should remain.

Planning Commissioners and County Commissioners should see through these mis-calculations and deny this inappropriate rezoning.

Please find attached petitions against this rezoning. Signatories include almost all the landowners and residents of Quarterman Road, and many from the nearby subdivision.

Details on REZ-2023-04 on Quarterman Road

First, it is obvious from this map of Quarterman Road that large properties characterize the road, and that most of them are in agriculture or forestry. Even many of the smaller lots are primarily wooded, including the subject property.

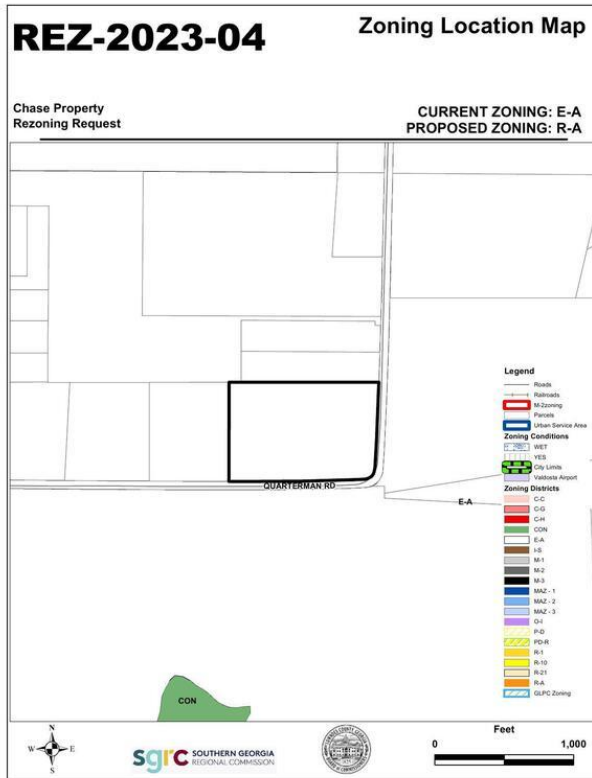


Quarterman Road with Parcel 0102 022 marked in SE corner — Lowndes County Tax Assessors

There is a subdivision next to the road's west side, but that is not part of Quarterman Road.

Now let's look at how the county staff tried to ignore those obvious characteristics.

Staff's Zoning Location Map cherry picks a section and does not let you see the bigger context.



Zoning Location Map  
PDF

County staff claim that: “For reference, there are 131 properties that have access to Quarterman Road, with an average lot size of 12.10 acres”, but fail to show the context of those properties.

What is this “access to”? Everyone in the county, the country, and the world, has “access to” Quarterman Road, just by driving there. So what does county staff mean?

There are only 44 “properties” that front Quarterman Road. And that includes counting everything with a border line as a separate “property”, even though some of them actually have the same owner. You can count them yourself in the above Tax Assessors map.

Follow [the link to the Tax Assessors map](#), and you can add them up to 1967.18 acres. That's 44.7 acres per lot. That number is that low only because of counting single owners multiple times, about a dozen 5-acre lots, a few 1-acre lots, and a couple of half-acre lots in the subdivision and on the corner, diluting the much larger tracts.

The county staff says there are 87 lots in the subdivision. Let's assume that is accurate.

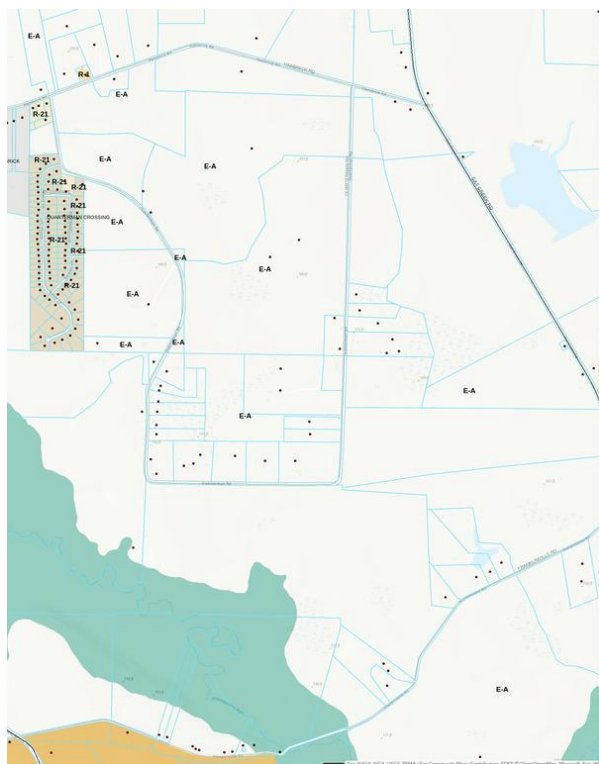
44 + 87 is 131. Which is presumably where they get their 131. (Nevermind three subdivision lots are counted twice.)

Yes, if you include the subdivision with its half-acre lots, the average lot size goes way down.

But it is inappropriate to do that, since that subdivision only exists because it was grandfathered in before county-wide zoning.

So “has access to” appears to be an excuse to include the subdivision lots in staff's figures.

The subdivision has R-21 zoning and is obviously a different beast.



Quarterman Road in VALORGIS

You can see that save for those few R-21 lots on the northwest end of Quarterman Road at Hambrick Road, which were also grandfathered in along with the subdivision back in the 1980s, all Quarterman Road properties are E-A.

I would provide evidence of that 1980s R-21 rezoning, but despite a decade of asking, county staff have not been able to produce the minutes of any County Commission approved that zoning. You can see that the R-21 lots are unlike the rest of Quarterman Road, Hambrick Road, and Cat Creek.

County staff are grasping at half-acre straws by including those R-21 lots in their disingenuous calculations.

Then county staff add an even more inappropriate calculation: "Along the southern boundaries of Quarterman Road, there are 19 properties, including the subject property, that contain at least one, single-family dwelling, with an average lot size of 11.66 acres."

Requiring "that contain at least one, single-family dwelling" conveniently discards Ricky and Sherry Brunston's 100 acres, Iann Walker's 192.21 acres (if they didn't notice her house down by the Withlacoochee River), Ferrell Scruggs' 604.8 acres, Tommy Stalvey (Stalvey Farms West)'s 111.02 acres, and Margaret Quarterman's 204.59 acres. Thus county staff try to avoid the main point that most of the land on Quarterman Road is in agriculture or forestry.

According to the Lowndes County Unified Land Development Code (ULDC), "2.01.02 A. E-A, Estate Agricultural District (5 acre). This district is intended to provide for agricultural activities, including those related to crops, livestock, and timber, protected from the effects of suburban residential development."

In contrast, "2.01.02 B. R-A, Residential Agricultural District (2.5 acre). This district is intended to preserve the mixed agricultural and residential character of land while providing a transition between rural and agricultural land and suburban and urban land."

There is neither suburban nor urban land adjoining the subject property. Residents of Quarterman Road do not want the road to turn suburban or urban. The county government should not want that, either. Inserting smaller lots in an Agriculture, Forestry, and Conservation Character Area is inappropriate and should be denied.

Back in 2007 when there was an attempt to rezone for a second subdivision next to the existing one (REZ-2007-21), people in the existing subdivision were among those most against it. The Planning Commission recommended denying that one, and the County Commission did deny it. The same should happen for this inappropriate attempt to insert too-small lots into an agricultural and forestry area.

# The Dorfman Report

County staff also omit an actual relevant calculation, which is how much sprawl costs the taxpayers. Yet back in 2007 Lowndes County paid a consultant professor from the University of Georgia to write that up.

**Revenues to Cost by Land Use**

- Using results compiled by AFT, the national averages are:
  - Residential: **\$0.87**
  - Commercial/Industrial: **\$3.45**
  - Farmland/Forestland/Open Space: **\$2.70**
- These figures are \$'s of revenue for each \$1 of expenditures.

*Alliance  
Quality Growth*

© 2004, Jeffrey Dorfman

These bar charts are specific to Lowndes County:

residential fiscal shortfall grows, with residents now paying in only \$0.74 for every \$1.00 returned in combined county and school services, while the commercial/industrial and farmland categories both show quite large fiscal surpluses (\$2.57 and \$1.94 per dollar, respectively).

Figure 1. Revenues per \$1 of Expenditures by Land Use (County Government Only)

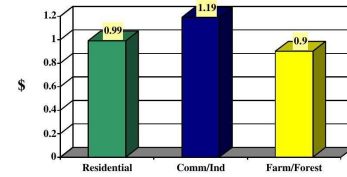
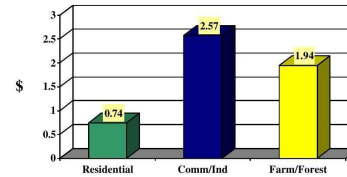


Figure 2. Revenues per \$1 of Expenditures by Land Use (County Government Plus Schools)



4

The Local Government Fiscal Impacts of Land Use in Lowndes County:

Revenue and Expenditure Streams by Land Use Category.  
 Jeffrey H. Dorfman, Ph.D., Dorfman Consulting, December 2007.

Figure 1, Revenues per \$1 of Expenditures by Land Use, the Dorfman Report, 2007  
**PDF**

\$0.74 for residential means for each \$1.00 the county spends, residential only returns \$0.74 in taxes. The specific dollar figures may have changed since 2007, but the proportions are probably much the same.

House lots bring in much less tax revenue per tax dollar spent than agriculture or forestry, because fields and forests don't need school buses and they don't often call the fire department or the Sheriff. Residential even costs the county money by calling the fire department when those with forestry acreage are doing prescribed burns. They also are known to complain about the noise of farming.

As Dr. Dorfman summarized in a different presentation,

*Local governments must ensure balanced growth, as **sprawling residential growth is a certain ticket to fiscal ruin\****

*\* Or at least big tax increases.*

The county should deny this rezoning to avoid costing taxpayers more.

County staff's agenda sheet ends:

*The TRC considered the request and had no other objectionable comments, and staff finds the request consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. If approved, staff recommends the following condition:*

- *All lots must have a minimum lot width of 210'.*

*OPTIONS: 1. Approve 2. Approve with Conditions 3. Table 4. Deny*

*RECOMMENDATION: Option 2*

*DIVISION: Planning Staff: JD Dillard*

I ask that the Greater Lowndes Planning Commission and the Lowndes County Commission reject staff's inappropriate calculations and characterizations and deny REZ-2023-04 on Quarterman Road.

Thank you for your consideration,

Gretchen Quarterman  
Lowndes Area Knowledge Exchange  
229-834-1945  
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Attachments:

- Table of petition signers
- Petition against REZ-2023-04 2.5 acre lot rezoning