

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

GLPC Commission Members Present: Franklin Bailey, Johnny Ball, Ron Bythwood, James Miller, Ed Hightower (Chairman), Steve Miller, Vicki Rountree, Chris Webb, and Tommy Willis

GLPC Commission Members Absent: Chip Wildes

Staff: Matt Martin - City of Valdosta Planner; and Molly Stevenson - Lowndes County Planning Analyst (Clerk)

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

CALL TO ORDER, INVOCATION, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman Hightower called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. Chairman Hightower led the Pledge of Allegiance followed by the Invocation by Commissioner Bailey. 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 hearings for the local member governments, as listed on the agenda.

Agenda Item #2

Approval of the Meeting Minutes: September 25, 2023

Chairman Hightower called for additions, questions, and corrections of the September 25, 2023, GLPC meeting minutes. There being none, Chairman Hightower called for a motion. Commissioner Bailey made a motion to approve the September 25, 2023, meeting minutes as presented. Commissioner Bythwood second. All voted in favor, no one opposed (7-0). Motion carried. **Commissioner Ball arrived after the September 25, 2023 Minutes were approved.**

Agenda Item #3

VA-2023-16

Hickory Heights LLC (802 Harmon Drive, 1501 & 1509 Hickory Road),
Rezone 2.52 acres from R-10 to R-M

Mr. Martin presented the case in which the applicant is requesting a change in zoning on 2.52 acres from Single-Family Residential (R-10) to Multi Family Residential (R-M). The subject properties are located at 802 Harmon Drive, 1501 Hickory Road and 1509 Hickory Road. These are along the south side of the road, between 500 and 1,200 feet east of North St Augustine Road. The applicant is the owner of these properties as well as the property in between (1.79 acres, 1505 & 1507 Hickory Rd) which is already zoned R-M. These properties currently contain several single-family residences as rental property. The applicant is proposing to demolish all of these residences, combine all of these properties together into one tract of land (4.31 acres total), and redevelop the entire property as one apartment complex with 75+ dwelling units.

The subject property is located within a Community Activity Center (CAC) Character Area on the Future Development Map of the Comprehensive Plan which allows the possibility of R-M zoning. It should be noted that the existing R-10 zoning on the property is “non-compliant” with the CAC Character Area (not intensive enough).

The subject properties are part of a residential neighborhood that was one of the unincorporated “islands” that were annexed by the City in 2006. These properties had R-10 zoning in the County and were given R-10 zoning in the City upon annexation. In the years leading up to its annexation, this area was once dominated by “owner occupied” single-family housing and it was considered a very stable neighborhood. However, this characteristic has since changed to one that is now dominated by rental houses and a large apartment complex in the rear area along Harmon Drive (owned by the applicant). While the neighborhood was still in the county, even some non-residential uses crept in through special approvals in R-10 zoning and there was even a failed neighborhood buyout attempt for a proposed shopping center. Over the past 10 years, the Candlewood Suites hotel has been constructed on property that was rezoned to C-C, and the neighborhood’s “Character Area” has been changed from Transitional Neighborhood (TN) to Community Activity Center (CAC) for the specific purpose of furthering the transition of this neighborhood to an area of higher intensity development. Resulting from this was a 2018 rezoning of the 1.79 acres in between the subject properties, from R-10 to R-M (by an out-of-town developer) for the purposes of developing a separate apartment complex. The plans for that complex were fully reviewed and approved by the City, but the actual construction of the project never commenced. The current applicant later acquired the property, along with the current subject properties, and is simply proposing to combine them all together to develop a larger complex, which will be managed in conjunction with the applicant’s existing complex to the NE.

As an overall future land use pattern for the area, staff continues to believe the majority of properties toward the rear of the neighborhood are very well-suited for multi-family or professional office development. Light commercial development should occur on assembled properties fronting North St Augustine Road. The applicant’s proposal is in keeping with this overall land use projection. The applicant has also informally expressed a desire to continue his redevelopment efforts in the area with future phases of multi-family development that are adjacent to these subject properties and that are based on an overall master plan. Staff finds this encouraging and therefore supports this request.

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.

Commissioner Bailey inquired about the height of the new structures looking out toward the adjacent motel. Mr. Martin affirmed that no issue exists. Chairman Hightower asked if there were any further questions for staff from the commissioners. There being none, Chairman Hightower opened the Public Hearing portion of the case.

No one spoke in favor of, nor in opposition to the request.

Chairman Hightower called for a motion. Commissioner Rountree made a motion to recommend approval of the request as presented. Commissioner Bailey second. All voted in favor, no one opposed (8-0). Motion carried.

Agenda Item #4

VA-2023-17

Harden Rental Network LLC (2607 Bemiss Road),
Rezone 4.33 acres from R-P to C-C

Mr. Martin presented the case in which the applicant is requesting a change in zoning on 4.33 acres from Residential Professional (R-P) to Community Commercial (C-C). The subject property is the rear portion of the existing parcels located at 2607 Bemiss Road, which is along the east side of the road about 600 feet north of Northside Drive. This is also diagonally across from the intersection of Bemiss Road and Connell Road. The front portion of these parcels (1.60 acres) is already zoned C-C. This front portion contains an existing single-family residence which is currently vacant. The remainder of the property (4.33 acres) is zoned R-P, and is currently undeveloped and heavily wooded. The applicant is proposing to combine the parcels and redevelop the entire tract of land (5.93 acres total) under all C-C zoning. This includes converting the existing residence to a business office and constructing a dog kennel facility on the interior portion. The kennel facility would require a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) approval in C-C zoning, and the applicant may submit the CUP request at a later date (if the rezoning to C-C is approved). No site plan for the kennel facility has yet been prepared, but will be required upon CUP submittal.

The subject property is located within a Community Activity Center (CAC) Character Area on the Future Development Map of the Comprehensive Plan which allows the possibility of C-C zoning.

The subject property is part of a much broader commercial area along the Bemiss Road corridor which is dominated by various levels of commercial zoning, as well as mostly commercial land use patterns. The proposed C-C zoning for the subject property matches the existing C-C on the remainder of the property, and is less intensive than the C-H zoning found on most of the properties to the north along Bemiss Road. Although there is an existing single-family neighborhood to the east, there is no physical connection or access to the neighborhood from

the subject property. The City's general development standards will require substantial buffering between these different zoning areas, and fortunately there is already dense vegetation throughout this required buffer area.

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.

Chairman Hightower asked if there were any questions for staff from the commissioners. There being none, Chairman Hightower opened the Public Hearing portion of the case.

No one spoke in favor of, nor in opposition to the request.

Chairman Hightower called for a motion. Commissioner Bailey made a motion to recommend approval of the request as presented. Commissioner Willis second. All voted in favor, no one opposed (8-0). Motion carried.

Agenda Item #5

VA-2023-18 Tripp Talley and Sam Straka (2206 North Oak Street)
Planned Development approval for a residential subdivision in R-15 zoning

Mr. Martin presented the case in which the applicants are requesting Planned Development approval for a non-conventional single-family Residential development in a Single-Family Residential (R-15) zoning district. Mr. Martin began the presentation clarifying that this is a Planned Development request within the subject property's current R-15 Zoning. It is not a rezoning request and it is not a request for a Multi-Family project. The subject property consists of 0.88 acres located at 2206 North Oak Street, which is located at the SW corner of North Oak Street and Terrace Blvd. The applicants are proposing to subdivide this existing large vacant lot into 3 individual lots utilizing a non-conventional lot layout with a shared residential driveway. The applicant is then proposing to construct 3 individual houses on each lot with a coordinated architectural design that is Craftsman style. The lot sizes are proposed to range from 12,093 -- 13,072 square feet. The heated floor area of each house is proposed to range from 1,755 -- 1,860 square feet. Some of the lots will have reduced minimum lot width and building setbacks than what is normally required in R-15 zoning. The applicant states they will be marketing all of the homes for sale, rather than for rent.

The subject property is located within an Established Residential (ER) Character Area on the Future Development Map of the Comprehensive Plan.

Conventionally under R-15 zoning, the property can be easily subdivided into 2 lots meeting ALL of the R-15 requirements. The total area of the property (38,195-sf) is not quite large enough to make 3 lots in R 15, despite the fact that it has ample total street frontage to make the 3 lots. LDR guidelines for Planned Development proposals allow an applicant to request up to 20% bonus density "in exchange for superior aesthetics and creative site design with due justification." In this case, the applicants are requesting the 20% bonus, which increases the

allowable unit density calculation from 2.546 to 3.055, and hence the request for a total of 3 dwelling units. As with all Planned Development requests, the applicants are requesting a few deviations from the City’s standard development code for R-15 zoning, and these are fully listed and described on page 4 of this report. The most significant of these is the reduction in lot area for all 3 proposed lots from the minimum 15,000-sf requirement to a proposed average of only 12,732-sf. Other deviations include a slight reduction in lot width and building setbacks for some of the proposed lots (see attached master layout plan). When comparing the applicant’s proposal to the six (6) nearby properties that are zoned R-15, the proposal exceeds the existing averages on these other properties. A summary comparison of these is listed below:

	<u>Range is sizes</u>	<u>Average</u>
Lot Area (nearby 6 properties)	7,841 -- 16,117 sf	12,342 sf
Lot Area (proposal)	12,093 – 13,072 sf	12,732 sf
Lot Width (nearby 6 properties)	50 -- 110 feet	78 feet
Lot Width (proposal)	80 – 109 feet	101 feet
Heated Floor Area (nearby 6 properties)	1,178 – 1.659 sf	1,334 sf
Heated Floor Area (proposal)	1,755 – 1,860 sf	1,790 sf

Conventionally, the applicant would be allowed an individual driveway for each house, and there would be no controls or guidelines regarding the style or overall character of the house design. However, as trade-off for the bonus density and minor deviations, the applicants are proposing to consolidate the 3 driveways into only one (accessing Terrace Blvd), increase the minimum required heated floor area of each house, and mandate a coordinated and attractive house design. With proper conditions of approval, staff believes this is a very good proposal for infill development that truly meets the overall intent and objectives of Planned Development, on a tract of land that has been sitting vacant for several years.

Staff finds the request consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Planned Development Review Criteria, and recommends approval to the City Council, subject to the following conditions:

- (1) Approval shall be granted for a non-conventional single-family residential subdivision in general accordance with the submitted master plan, with a maximum of 3 detached dwelling units on individual lots that are at least 12,000-sf, and with the depicted minimum building setback distances for each Lot as shown. Permitted uses in the development shall be limited to only single-family dwellings, private gardens, internal open space, keeping of household pets, or Home Occupations which produce no customer or client traffic and are in strict accordance with LDR Section 218-13(HH). There shall be no Home Businesses, Home Daycares, Accessory Dwellings, Personal Care Homes, short-term rentals, nor any other LDR defined permitted or conditional use allowed.
- (2) All dwellings within the development shall reflect a generally Craftsman style architecture similar to the submitted façade drawings, and shall contain at least 1,700-sf heated GFA. There shall be no metal or vinyl siding materials allowed.

(3) The development shall utilize a shared private residential driveway from Terrace Blvd for all dwellings, and there shall be no vehicular access to North Oak Street.

(4) Planned Development approval shall automatically expire two (2) years from the date of approval, if no subdivision plat for the entire approved Development has been recorded by that date.

Commissioner Bythwood asked for clarification of the definition of Short-Term Rentals. Mr. Martin explained that while it is not strictly defined in the Code at this point, it is considered similar in purpose to AirBnB and VRBO.

Chairman Hightower asked if there were any additional questions for staff from the commissioners. There being none, Chairman Hightower opened the Public Hearing portion of the case.

Speaking in favor of the request:

- Tripp Talley, Applicant – 113 Fairway Dr.

Mr. Talley stated the intent is to match the character of the existing homes in the area and to sell the individual lots as owner-occupied homes.

Commissioner Rountree expressed gratitude for the uniqueness of the layout and design as well as the shared access drive off Terrace Blvd.

Speaking in opposition to the request:

- Mike Paine – 710 Georgia Ave.

Mr. Paine voiced concern with regard to increased traffic and potential speeding this close to the University. He and his neighbors value the quiet and walkability of the neighborhood.

There being no further discussion, Chairman Hightower called for a motion. Motion by Commissioner Bailey to recommend approval of the request as presented with four (4) conditions. Commissioner Steve Miller second. All voted in favor, no one opposed (8-0). Motion carried.

There being no other business, Chairman Hightower adjourned the meeting at 6:05 p.m.

Ed Hightower, Chairman
Greater Lowndes Planning Commission

Date