

GREATER LOWNDES PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
325 WEST SAVANNAH AVENUE
Monday, October 27, 2025 – 5:30 PM

GLPC Commission Members Present: Franklin Bailey, Ron Bythwood, George Foreman, Calvin Graham, Ed Hightower, James Miller (Vice-Chair), Steve Miller (Chair), Vicki Rountree, Chris Webb, Tommy Willis

Absent: Chip Wildes

Staff: Matt Martin, Planning Director, City of Valdosta, Amy Martin, Senior Planner, City of Valdosta, JD Dillard, Lowndes County Planner; Molly Stevenson, Lowndes County Planning Analyst (Clerk)

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

CALL TO ORDER, INVOCATION, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman Steve Miller called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance. Commissioner Franklin Bailey gave the Invocation. Chairman Miller 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 Miller 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 29, 2025

Chairman Miller called for additions, questions, and corrections of the September 29, 2025, GLPC meeting minutes. There being no additions, questions or corrections to the September 29, 2025, GLPC meeting minutes, Chairman Miller called for a motion. Commissioner Bythwood made a motion to approve the September 29, 2025, meeting minutes as presented. Commissioner Willis second. All voted in favor, no one opposed (9-0). Motion carried.

Agenda Item #3

REZ-2025-16	Copeland Road Subdivision, 2480 Copeland Rd., 0165 119, ~17.8 ac.
Current Zoning:	R-10 w/conditions (Suburban Density Residential/conditions)
Proposed Zoning:	R-10 (Suburban Density Residential)

Mr. Dillard presented the case in which the applicant is requesting to remove several of the Conditions that were placed on the property as a result of REZ-2018-07, which ultimately approved for R-10 by a vote of (3-2-1) with the following Conditions:

1. All lots, including the existing residence, shall front interior roads.
2. If there are any proposed entrances off of Lester Road, then the developer will be required to pave Lester Road from the entrance to Copeland Road. The Developer will also be responsible for the design, any acquisition of necessary right-of-way, relocation of utilities, and construction costs for the paving of Lester Road from the developments southernmost entrance to Copeland Road.
3. The developer will be required to construct a pedestrian crossing and sidewalk from the subdivision to Lowndes Middle School. The Developer will be responsible for the design, relocation of utilities, and construction costs for those improvements.
4. All lots adjacent to the western border and the southern border of the subject property shall meet or exceed a minimum lot width of 100'.
5. No manufactured homes or mobile homes.
6. No two-family or duplex residences.
7. Minimum lot size of 1/3 acre lots (14,520 sq. ft.) instead of ¼ acre lots.

The subject property is within the Urban Service Area, Valdosta Airport (VLD) Overlay, a drastic groundwater recharge area, and Suburban Character Area, which recommend R-10 zoning. The subject property possesses road frontage on Copeland Rd and Lester Rd, a county-maintained major collector and local road respectively, with proposed access from Copeland Rd only.

The TRC analyzed the request, the standards governing the exercise of zoning power set forth in 10.01.05 of the ULDC, and factors most relevant to this application, including the neighboring land uses and lot sizes, the availability of County Utilities, the nearby existing school campus (Lowndes Middle), the adjacent undeveloped Board of Education owned property, and some of the previously imposed conditions that have already been resolved or are under GDOT guidelines, and therefore recommends approval of the request for R-10 zoning with the following conditions:

1. All new lots shall front interior roads.
2. All lots adjacent to the western border and the southern border of the subject property shall meet or exceed a minimum lot width of 100'.
3. No manufactured homes or mobile homes.
4. No two-family or duplex residences.
5. Minimum lot size of 1/3 acre lots (14,520 sq. ft.) along the southern border instead of ¼ acre lots.

Chairman Miller asked if the revised conditions allow for the proposed layout. Mr. Dillard stated they do. Commissioner Bailey asked if County Water & Sewer are available. Mr. Dillard confirmed they are. Further discussion from commissioners involved lot sizes and driveway access.

There being no further questions for staff, Chairman Miller opened the Public Hearing portion of the case.

Speaking in favor of the request:

- Matthew Inman, Engineer for the Applicant – 2704 N Oak St. Ext.

Mr. Inman said the intent is for all lots will face interior roads and 41 lots would bring down the cost per lot, making them more affordable.

No one spoke in opposition to the request.

Commissioner Hightower asked if the ingress/egress would only be from Copeland Road. Mr. Dillard stated that is the plan.

There being no further discussion, Chairman Miller called for a motion. Motion by Commissioner Bailey to recommend approval of the request with 5 conditions as presented by staff. Commissioner Hightower second. All voted in favor, no one opposed (9-0). Motion carried.

Agenda Item #4

CO-2025-08 JB2 Partners LLC Tracy Rose & Camala Wiles (200 E College St)
CUP for a Bed & Breakfast Inn within the Historical Overlay District.

Ms. Martin presented the case in which the applicants are requesting a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) to operate a Bed and Breakfast Inn within the Historical Overlay District. The subject property is currently zoned Single-Family Residential (R-10) and located at 200 East College Street. This is at the NE corner of East College Street and Slater Street, and also about 2 blocks east of the VSU main campus. The property contains an existing 2-story historic single-family residence (4,556-sf) which is owner occupied by the applicants. They are proposing to continue occupying the residence while periodically hosting travelers in their home as a traditional Bed & Breakfast Inn.

The subject property is located within an Established Residential (ER) Character Area on the Future Development Map of the Comprehensive Plan. The property is also located within both the local Historic District as well as the Brookwood North National Register district.

The surrounding neighborhood is predominantly residential, featuring a mix of single-family homes, townhomes, and apartment buildings, sprinkled with various mixed-use properties such as churches and commercial businesses. Directly to the south across East College Street from the subject property is an existing small apartment building. To the southwest lies The Norma Tomberlin House which is associated with Christ Episcopal Church. Immediately to the west and north are single-family residences. While the area to the east is mostly all established residential, the general area to the west (specifically along North Patterson Street) features a variety of uses

including the VSU campus, a church, the VSU Wesley Foundation, and other office/institutional uses.

Pursuant to LDR Section 210-6, Bed & Breakfast Inns are allowed with a CUP approval on residentially zoned property in the local Historic District. In this particular case, the applicants are proposing to keep the primary use of the property as a single-family residence (their home). They are simply proposing to have an old time traditional bed & breakfast inn, by simply hosting travelers/visitors with them in their large historic residence on an intermittent basis. They will fully comply with all the supplemental LDR requirements for Bed and Breakfast Inn. They also meet the intent of LDR Section 210-6, and staff believes this will be an ongoing asset to showcase Valdosta's local historic district.

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

- (1) Approval shall be granted in the name of the applicant only for a Bed & Breakfast Inn in R-10 zoning and the Historical Overlay District, for the existing building in accordance with LDR Sections 210-6 and 218-13(H). The property shall continue to maintain its residential character and historic appearance as approved by the Historic Preservation Commission.
- (2) All parking shall be on-site and located in the rear yard only.
- (3) Signage shall be limited to either one incidental wall sign not to exceed 5 square feet, or one freestanding sign not to exceed 4 square feet and 3 feet in height.
- (4) Conditional Use approval shall expire after 2 years from the date of approval if no Business License application has been submitted by that date.

Commissioner asked about parking requirements and if the same requirements exist for both Air BnBs as for Bed & Breakfast establishments. Mr. Martin stated sufficient parking already exists and the same requirements exist for both types of use. Chairman Miller asked for confirmation that the adjacent carriage house is not part of the request. Mr. Martin explained that the carriage house is a separate parcel and owner.

There being no further questions for staff, Chairman Miller opened the Public Hearing portion of the case.

Speaking in favor of the request:

- Tracy Rose & Camala Wiles, Applicants – 200 E. College St.

The applicants told the history of the property and stated their hope for sharing it with others. The target guest will be parents of VSU students and other campus visitors. They stressed the

importance of preserving historical properties of which this is one and explained this use will benefit the community by extending hospitality.

No one spoke in opposition to the request.

Chairman Miller asked staff if there is a limit of time per stay to which Mr. Martin responded that 14 days is the maximum time allowed.

There being no further discussion, Chairman Miller called for a motion. Motion by Commissioner Rountree to recommend approval of the request with 4 conditions as presented by staff. Commissioner Graham second. All voted in favor, no one opposed (9-0). Motion carried.

Agenda Item #5

VA-2025-12 Smyrna Ready Mix Concrete LLC (E Savannah Road)
Rezone a total of 75.44 acres from R-6 and E-R, to all M-2

Mr. Martin presented the case in which the applicant is requesting to rezone a total of 75.44 acres from Single-Family Residential (R-6) and Environmental Resource (E-R) to Heavy Industrial (M-2). The subject property is located along the south side of East Savannah Road, approximately 2,100 feet west of Clay Road and also about 1,000 feet west of Stokes Drive. The subject property is currently an undeveloped cleared tract of land, bordered by a substantial tree buffer along most of its boundaries. The applicant is proposing to construct a concrete mixing facility (batch plant) on the property.

The subject properties are located within an Industrial Activity Center (IAC) Character Area on the Future Development Map of the Comprehensive Plan, which allows the possibility of M-2 zoning. It should also be noted that the current R-6 zoning is non-compliant within the IAC Character Area.

The applicant has these two entire parcels of land (nearly 95 acres) under contract for purchase -- pending rezoning approval. These parcels are currently split-zoned, with 19.50 of the acres already zoned M-2. The applicant is simply requesting rezoning of the remaining 75.44 acres so that the entire property will be M-2, and allow the proposed usage as a concrete mixing facility, in the form of a batch plant with yard storage. The applicant selected this property because of its access to two (2) major rail lines, and its isolated/protected location within an overall industrial area with some industrial zoning already in place. The only major concerns with the proposed use are related to the needed truck access to Clay as raised by the City Engineer (see comments on page 5). The applicant is already aware of these concerns and is exploring several options to gain an acceptable truck access for their facility. Details of this will be fully resolved during the Plan Review stage of the development process.

The subject properties are located within a relatively large but isolated area that is bounded on 3 sides by railroads and only limited access to the public road system. The properties have never

been developed, were previously used for agricultural purposes (mainly forest) and were part of the “islands annexation” process in 2006. Surrounding patterns are dominated by industrial zoning and mixed industrial uses, which are typical in the Industrial Activity Center character area. However, there are some residential uses located more than 1,000 feet to the east, which together form their own pocket of lands that are surrounded by industrial usage. These patterns reflect ongoing industrial activity in the area supported by access to highways and railroad infrastructure. This proposal is for a form of infill development on a site that is ideally located for industrial land use.

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 Willis inquired about the existing chemical pipeline. Mr. Martin stated the site plan will be reviewed fully but it does show access will be under the pipeline. Commissioner asked if truck access will be via Clay Road. Mr. Martin confirmed. Chairman Miller asked about usage of the railroad spurs. Mr. Martin stated there are spurs on both the north and south ends of the property.

There being no further questions for staff, Chairman Miller opened the Public Hearing portion of the case.

Speaking in favor of the request:

- Richard O’Shields, Representing SRM – 2101 Pattons Retreat Dr., Smyrna, TN

Mr. O’Shields explained he was present to answer any questions. He stated CSX is the intended rail line. Commissioner Graham asked if the main entrance will be off Savannah Rd. The answer was yes.

No one spoke in opposition to the request.

There being no further discussion, Chairman Miller called for a motion. Motion by Commissioner Foreman to recommend approval of the request as presented by staff. Commissioner Graham second. All voted in favor, no one opposed (9-0). Motion carried.

Agenda Item #6

VA-2025-14 John Owens (Jaycee Shack Road & Inner Perimeter Road)
Rezone a total of 49.92 acres from PRD and C-H, to a combination of R-M and R-10

Mr. Martin presented the case in which the applicant is requesting to rezone a total of 49.92 acres from Planned Residential Development (PRD) and Highway Commercial (C-H), to a combination of Multi-Family Residential (R-M) and Single-Family Residential (R-10). The subject property is located at the SW corner of the intersection of Inner Perimeter and Jaycee Shack Roads. The property is currently undeveloped, and the applicant is proposing to develop the site

as a conventional townhouse-style apartment complex in the R-M portion (up to about 300 dwellings), as well as a single-family residential subdivision (19 lots) in the R-10 portion. The proposed overall development will be constructed in multiple phases, with the initial phases including 48 apartments and 19 single-family residences.

The subject property is located within both the Established Residential (ER) and Neighborhood Activity Center (NAC) Character Areas on the Future Development Map of the Comprehensive Plan, which allows the possibility of R-M and R-10 zonings respectively.

The subject property was part of approved "Planned Development" mixed-use proposal from 2004, consisting of PRD, C-H and R-6 zoning areas (see details on page 2). This approved master plan consisted of single-family, townhouses, multi-family apartments totaling about 275 dwelling units, as well as 3+ acres of non-specific commercial uses. This proposed development never got started, and the property has remained vacant (uncleared) during the 21 years since.

The subject property is located within an area that has a diverse mix of land uses and zoning classifications. To the north of the subject property is the corridor of properties along Inner Perimeter Road, consisting of mainly commercial and some office/institutional land uses. To the NW of the subject property are currently undeveloped properties which are zoned for multi-family and/or office type development. To the SW and south is an established R-10 single-family residential subdivision (Forrestwood Estates). To the east is an existing railroad track that inhibits vehicular access to Jaycee Shack Road, and beyond that road are some more vacant lands which are currently being developed as a new single-family subdivision. The applicant's proposed rezoning pattern fits in very well with the surrounding land use and zoning patterns, and is ideally situated as a much-needed infill development on this property which has been sitting vacant for more than 20 years.

Primary access to the R-M portion of the proposed development will be from Inner Perimeter Road, with secondary access being required as a stubout to the R-P vacant properties to the west. Access to the R-10 portion of the proposed development will be from a northerly extension of Falingleaf Lane into a newly-proposed cul-de-sac. The only potential development concerns at this time are the proper delineation of floodplains and wetlands areas, as well as potential sewer capacity limitations of a nearby sewer lift station (see comments from the City Engineer on page 6). However, all of these items will be addressed as part of the standard Plan Review processes for the development as needed.

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, of the proposed R-M and R-10 zonings as requested.

Commissioner Willis asked for clarification. Mr. Martin confirmed the request includes both the PRD and C-H portions requested to R-10 and R-M. Commissioner Rountree asked if there will be any physical crossing over the tributary. Mr. Martin stated unless the wetlands are mitigated it is

unlikely. Chairman Miller asked for confirmation that another access is required once the number of units exceeds 50. Mr. Martin confirmed.

There being no further questions for staff, Chairman Miller opened the Public Hearing portion of the case.

Speaking in favor of the request:

- Matthew Inman, Engineer for the Applicant – 2704 N Oak St. Ext.

Mr. Inman stated there is no intent to cross the tributary. A second point of access would ideally be over the railroad tracks but that takes additional time and money. The overall buildout is projected to be 325 units, in phases as there is demand. Of that, 19 will be single residences with the remaining being multi-family. Additionally, stormwater protection will be considered and included, and City water and sewer will be utilized.

Commissioner Bailey asked if all townhomes would have access via Inner Perimeter Rd. Mr. Inman affirmed that is the only access currently. Mr. Martin reemphasized 50 units will be the cap for now.

No one spoke in opposition to the request.

There being no further discussion, Chairman Miller called for a motion. Motion by Commissioner Hightower to recommend approval of the request as presented by staff. Commissioner Bythwood second. All voted in favor, no one opposed (9-0). Motion carried.

Agenda Item #7

VA-2025-15 Stoker Development (310 Eager Road)
Rezone 1.80 acres from R-15 to R-6

Ms. Martin presented the case in which the applicant is requesting to rezone 1.80 acres from Single-Family Residential (R-15) to Single-Family Residential (R 6). The subject property is located at 310 Eager Road which is along the north side of the road, about half way between Jadan Place and Walmar Place. This is also directly across the street from the Langdale Place housing complex. (** This is the same property that was the subject of file # VA-2025-11, which was previously withdrawn by the applicant before final public hearing, and has now been resubmitted.) The property is now currently cleared, and used to contain a single-family residence (1,453-sf). The applicant is proposing to ultimately redevelop the property as a non-conventional townhouse complex with 16 dwelling units along a shared private driveway. If the rezoning is approved, the applicant will then seek Planned Development approval for the townhouse complex

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-6 zoning.

** In addition to the repeated Rezoning request from 2 months ago (# VA-2025-11), this is also the same request (same applicant & property) that was submitted by the applicant in 2020 for rezoning to R-6 (file # VA-2020-06). That request was recommended for denial by the GLPC (9-1 vote) and was later denied by the City Council on August 6, 2020 (6-0 vote). The only difference in the proposals is that in 2020, the applicant was proposing a mixed-residential development with a total of 15 dwelling units as part of a Planned Development request (if the rezoning to R-6 was approved). Now, the applicant is proposing an all townhouse (single-family detached) development consisting of 16 dwelling units. However, the applicant's conceptual site plan does not comply with all the "conventional" development standards for Townhouse development (mainly unit width, and private street design), and this proposal can only be achieved through either a Planned Development proposal (separate request) or through a series of Variances approved by ZBOA. Most significantly of these, the minimum lot width for R-6 townhouses is 24' and the applicant is only depicting 13.5' on their site plan, and the access to each lot must be through a conventional right-of-way.

Density and infill development discussion. The subject property is a classic example of a proposal for infill development. Under R-15 zoning, the property has enough land area (78,500 square feet) for up to 5 single-family lots. However, it does not have enough road frontage along Eager Road for more than one lot (each lot must be at least 100' wide and contain at least 15,000 s.f. of land area). The only solution for subdividing this property conventionally under R-15 zoning is to construct a new street (50' right-of-way) along the eastern property line with a cul-de-sac approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of the distance into the lot, and then subdivide lots off of the new street. [see attached schematic drawings as a comparison for R-15, R-10 and R-6 conventional layouts for single-family homes] The main problem here is that the new street right-of-way would consume nearly $\frac{1}{3}$ of the total land area and therefore the new subdivision would yield a total of only 3 lots under R-15. A very similar kind of scenario would apply under R-10 zoning. The property is still not wide enough along Eager Road to have more than one lot (each lot must be at least 80' wide and contain at least 10,000 s.f.), and it must use the same kind of street design to subdivide and develop the property with more than one lot. Because of the smaller lot widths allowed in R-10 zoning, this scenario would instead allow a subdivision with 4 lots along the new internal street. Ironically, in this scenario each lot would average approximately 13,000 s.f. due to irregular lot shapes and net buildable areas caused by the cul-de-sac. Under the proposed R-6 zoning, this scenario dramatically increases to perhaps 8 lots – depending on actual lot design – but probably more comfortably at 7 lots maximum. However, it should also be noted that R-6 zoning allows the additional possibility of duplexes if the lots are at least 9,000-sf in area, and staff can envision a maximum of 6 duplex lots here. It should be further noted that R-6 also allows conventional townhouses as well, and staff can envision up to approximately 14 of these, provided they are without garages and 2-bedroom maximum, and depending on the private street layout.

Most of these scenarios are intended to illustrate a main point, which is that conventional development (for single-family development) which includes a new standard internal street is “cost-prohibitive” and is wasteful of land, when considering the net result of only a few lots and unimaginative design. Given the property’s characteristics, it is truly a prime candidate for some type of “Planned Development” approach, perhaps with a mixture of residential types – as was proposed in 2020. The only significant question in all of this however, is DENSITY.

The existing land use pattern along Eager Road is dominated by single-family residential subdivisions of various shapes and sizes. There is no question that the residential land use pattern should continue. In terms of zoning pattern, most all of the properties along the north side of Eager Road are zoned R-15. However, it should be pointed out that this is a little deceiving in that the abutting small subdivisions along Jadan Place and Walmar Place are nonconforming in that 1/3 of their lots do not meet the R-15 minimum requirements. By today’s standards, they would be zoned R-10 instead. Other nearby developments with a little higher density include those along the south side of Eager Road where there is a mixture of R-15, R-10, and PRD-10 zoning, as well as the Langdale Place development which has R-P zoning. However, the most recent and the most significant development in all of this is the 2013 rezoning of the property about 300’ to the west at #316 Eager Road. This property is the exact same dimension and size (1.80 acres) and was successfully rezoned to R-10, and also received a Planned Development approval for 8 dwelling units. Given the actual R-10 nature of the abutting properties to the east and west, using this prior rezoning approval as a benchmark seems like a logical solution and still leaves open the “possibility” of up to 9 dwelling units with a quality Planned Development proposal.

Staff finds R-10 zoning consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Standards for the Exercise of Zoning Power (SFEZP) and therefore recommends approval of R-10 zoning instead, to the City Council.

Commissioner Rountree asked if the interior road would be a public roadway. Ms. Martin responded it would be a private drive. Commissioner J Miller asked what is different with this request from the previous request. Ms. Martin stated it is essentially the same final request made last time, but not what was initially presented in the information packets. Commissioner Bailey inquired about the feasibility of townhomes. Mr. Martin stated townhomes are not allowed in R-10, but 4 “doors” would be available. Commissioner Rountree asked if the new layout would create more buffering. Mr. Martin confirmed but said it also puts the driveways in the front.

There being no further questions for staff, Chairman Miller opened the Public Hearing portion of the case.

Speaking in favor of the request:

- Matthew Inman, Engineer for the Applicant – 2704 N Oak St. Ext.

Mr. Inman presented an updated site plan showing changes to parking and increased radii for emergency vehicles. He stated each unit would have 2 parking spots available to them. He also explained that the intent is the units will be “short-term homes” for college students or traveling nurses. Mr. Inman further stated that single R-10 residential lots would not be cost effective nor economically viable. The site plan depicts the homes sitting in the middle of the property, providing the best possible buffering, and the applicant has met with the City Arborist.

Commissioner Bailey asked about the proposed sizes of the units. Mr. Inman responded that they will be ~ 980 sq ft - ~1080 sq ft. Commissioner Hightower asked for confirmation that the 2 large trees on the back of the lot will remain. Mr. Inman confirmed. He also stated that there is no intent to clear any more trees. Commissioner Bailey inquired about the possibility of a privacy fence around the entire perimeter of the property. Mr. Inman stated the intent is only for the back of the property.

Speaking in opposition to the request:

- Chasity Luke – 303 Betty Jo Dr.
- Mark Heffelfinger – 305 Betty Jo Dr.
- Charles Hinke – 604 Smithbriar Dr.
- Ann Anderson – 400 Eager Rd.

Concerns of the speakers included density issues, conflict with the existing character of the area, and the transient nature of the prospective residents.

Commissioner Bailey asked the total number of doors in the 2020 request. Mr. Martin responded 15 units were requested. Commissioner Willis asked if any surrounding properties contain 2-story structures. Mr. Martin stated he did not have that information. Further discussion included clarification about the requested zoning and the recommendation of staff.

There being no further discussion, Chairman Miller called for a motion. Motion by Commissioner Rountree to recommend approval of the request of R-6 zoning by the applicant. Commissioner Hightower second. After discussion of the motion, three (3) voted in favor, and six (6) opposed (Bythwood, Foreman, Graham, J. Miller, Webb, Willis). (3-6). Motion failed.

Motion by Commissioner Willis to recommend denial of the applicant’s request to rezone from R-15 to R-6. Commissioner Bythwood second. Six (6) voted in favor, and three (3) opposed (Rountree, Bailey, Hightower). (6-3) Motion carried.

Agenda Item #8

HA-2025-07 Rick Williams (Exit 29 - Hahira)
Variances to replace a billboard in C-H zoning

Mr. Martin presented the case in which the applicant is requesting certain variances from the Hahira Zoning Ordinance in order to replace a prior existing billboard sign that was severely damaged during Hurricane Helene 13 months ago. The subject property is a cleared and undeveloped tract of land (about 1.80 acres) located at 1024 GA Highway 122 West, which is in the immediate NE quadrant of the Exit 29 interchange of I-75. The property is currently zoned Highway Commercial (C-H) and is also located within the Hahira Gateway Corridor Overlay District. Specific sections of the Zoning Ordinance from which Variances are being requested, include Sections 4-5.11, 8-4, 8-5, 10-3 and 10-6. (specific language from these Sections is depicted on pages 2-3)

The subject sign, in some form, has existed on this property for many years and has been classified as legal nonconforming sign since at least 2009, when the Hahira Gateway Corridor regulations were adopted by the City. This sign is a large freestanding monopole structure measuring about 60' tall, with a sign face area of 1,200-sf (20'x60'). Under current Overlay regulations, a freestanding sign must be located on a site with a building, and is limited to being monument that is no more than 10' tall and 50-sf in sign area for a single-tenant development. Outside the Overlay District, freestanding signs are limited to no more than 400-sf in area. Therefore, the subject sign is very nonconforming in several regards.

Section 8-5 of the Hahira Zoning Ordinance states that "When a nonconforming structure or a structure containing a nonconforming use or nonconforming sign is razed or damaged by fire, flood, wind, or act of God, such structure or sign may be reconstructed as a nonconforming use only if the damage totals less than 50% of the value of the structure." Based on the total destruction of the sign above ground level, and the stated cost to reinstall a sign meeting the same specifications, it certainly appears to be beyond the 50% threshold. Based on the Ordinance language pertaining to the replacement of nonconforming signs and structures, variances to all the above-stated Sections will be required as well, for this particular situation.

In general, nonconformances are intended to be phased-out over time by attrition as the individual situations warrant, rather than be held in a grandfathered condition forever. There are currently several grandfathered billboards, as nonconforming signs by virtue of their size and location, in proximity to I-75 and Exit 29. In this particular case, the most egregious of the nonconformities stem from the Overlay District requirements. However, this particular sign is located in close proximity to the new I-75 northbound onramp and more than 300' from GA Hwy 122m, and not very visible from other areas outside the immediate interchange. The subject property is also currently vacant (with no building structure) and will be hard to develop on its owns – due to GDOT control of its very limited frontage along GA Hwy 122. Therefore, in this particular case, since the cause of the sign's destruction was involuntary on the part of the applicant (caused by the Hurricane), staff is OK with the complete reestablishment of the prior billboard sign – as it existed prior to the Hurricane.

Staff finds the request consistent with Variance review criteria, and recommends approval to the City Council, subject to the following conditions:

(1) Variance approval shall be granted for the reestablishment of the same kind of 2-sided static-display monopole billboard sign, in the same location as previous, with the height being limited to no more than 65' and a sign area of no more than 1,250-sf as a 20'x60' sign face for each facing direction.

(2) All appropriate State and local sign permits shall be obtained, and the new sign shall be installed within 12 months from the date of Variance approval.

(3) All remnants and debris from the previous sign shall be removed from the property, as required by the Building Official.

Commissioner J. Miller asked for confirmation that the request is for re-establishing the billboard as it was pre-hurricane. Mr. Martin confirmed.

There being no further questions for staff, Chairman Miller opened the Public Hearing portion of the case.

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

There being no further discussion, Chairman Miller called for a motion. Motion by Commissioner Foreman to recommend approval of the request with 3 conditions as presented by staff. Commissioner Bythwood second. Seven (7) voted in favor, two (2) opposed (Rountree, Webb) (7-2). Motion carried.

There being no other business, Chairman Miller adjourned the meeting at 7:15 p.m.

Steve Miller, Chairman
Greater Lowndes Planning Commission

Date