

City of Sugar Hill
Planning Staff Report
RZ 21-011

DATE: March 2, 2022; **Updated 4/29/2022**
TO: Mayor and Council
FROM: Planning Director
SUBJECT: Rezoning RZ 21-011, single-family detached homes
5060, 5376, & 5404 Sycamore Road

ISSUE The City of Sugar Hill has received an application dated December 6, 2021, from Megan Peace (Elmington Residential) requesting to change the zoning from existing Single-Family Residential (RS-100) to Medium Density Single-Family Residential (RS-72) for residential subdivision with 87 single-family detached homes.

On April 11th, the city council defeated a motion for conditional approval. Since a subsequent motion for denial was not considered, the request remains on the agenda until final action is taken by the city council.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. Consider a motion to table the decision for later discussion and debate in consideration of an amended submission by the applicant.

OR

2. Allow applicant to withdraw their request without prejudice.

Staff recommended approval of RS-72 zoning with the following conditions (3/2/2022):

1. Maximum number of lots shall be limited to 87. All proposed lots adjoining the Sugar Hill Plantation subdivision shall be subject to the minimum lot width and rear setback for the RS-100 zoning district.
2. All streets, alleys, sidewalks (except those required within the Sycamore Road public right-of-way), storm water facilities and other common areas or facilities shall be privately owned and maintained.
3. Buildings shall be constructed to substantially resemble the elevations attached as Exhibit 1. The builder(s) shall be required to use at least four distinct house plans and elevations subject to approval by the City Manager. Variations in materials, color and architectural details shall be required such that no elevation is used on more than 30% of the total homes in the project.
4. A 10' enhanced landscape strip and no-access easement shall be incorporated into the Sycamore Road frontage subject to approval by the City Manager. Enhanced landscape strip is to consist of at least a wooden privacy fence (six-foot minimum height) as well as a staggered row of evergreen and semi-evergreen trees and shrubs which are native or adapted to the area. Trees shall be 6' tall at time of planting. Plantings shall be arranged to provide an effective visual screen of at least 20' in height at maturity. Landscape strip must not contain more than 1/3 of a single species and must

be shown on a landscape plan to be approved by the city manager prior to receiving any permits. Developer shall install the landscaping prior to the first certificate of occupancy issued for a dwelling in the subdivision.

5. Prior to final plat approval, a dedicated left turn lane shall be provided at the project entrance on Sycamore Road. Project access improvements shall be subject to Gwinnett County and City of Sugar Hill approval.
6. Developer shall provide a minimum of three gas appliances in each unit.
7. If required, rock blasting shall be conducted only between the hours of 9 AM to 5 PM, Monday through Friday or state regulated times, whichever is more restrictive.

PLANNING COMMISSION PUBLIC HEARING AND RECOMMENDATION

The Planning Commission held a scheduled public hearing on January 18, 2022. Applicant representative Megan Peace and Alex Hensley spoke on behalf of this request. Citizens and guest who spoke/ made comments included, Alexandra & David Tamutus, Myron Frady, Bryan List, and Vonnie Frady. Issues raised included sight distance issues at entrance and request to move entrance, speeding on Sycamore Road, preserving trees, traffic congestion on Sycamore Road especially at the intersection of Sycamore and Nelson Brogdon Boulevard, dynamite blasting, drainage, underground springs, detention, flooding issues, old landfill possibly located on site, animal preservation, leaving more buffer trees for privacy, the density of the development and the fact that they are going to be rental homes. Commission Member Rosemary Walsh motioned to table this request. Commission Member Jason Jones made the second. Motion to table was approved 4-0.

The Planning Commission convened for a meeting on February 21, 2022 to finalize a recommendation on this case. Applicant representative Megan Peach and Alex Hensley were present. Chairman Jeremy White motioned to recommend approval with conditions as presented by staff. The motion died for lack of second. Commission Member Phil Olsen motioned to recommend denial. Vice Chairman Julie Adams made the second. Motion approved for denial 3 for, 1 against (Jeremy White).

DISCUSSION

- Elmington Residential builds single family residential homes for rent in professionally managed communities. While this would be a new development type in Sugar Hill, institutional investment in build-to-rent single-family residential is a growing market nationwide.
- The city's zoning ordinance does not control residential tenure but primarily regulates dimensional standards and therefore does not differentiate between homes for sale and those for rent.
- While the proposed home plans are smaller in actual square footage than most nearby homes, the three- and four-bedroom floor plans with two-car garages are otherwise very similar to homes in the area.
- While many Millennials may desire to purchase their own a home, they trail previous generations on household formation and home ownership. However as larger numbers of Millennials age into their middle to late thirties and start forming households, they will likely start buying more homes and competing for the same housing products as downsizing Baby Boomers.
- As production in home building remains sluggish while development costs and demand continues to increase purchasing a first home is likely to prove difficult for newly formed households. This type of housing product could provide opportunities to start raising a family while building the financial resources to purchase a home.

- The city's comprehensive plan designates the area as established neighborhood and prioritizes the preservation of character and identity of the existing single-family neighborhood. The proposed land use supports this goal.

BACKGROUND

Applicant/Owner: Megan Peace (Elmington Residential) / Srividya and Nagaraj Koduru, Shravan Kapavarapu, and Richland Park LLC

Existing Zoning: RS-100

Request(s): RS-72

Purpose: Residential subdivision with 87 single-family detached homes

Property Size: ± 27.724 acres

Location: 5060, 5376, and 5404 Sycamore Road

Tax Parcel Id Numbers: 7-322-516, 7-306-275, 7-306-062A & 7-306-183

Public Notice: Letters to adjoining owners via USPS regular mail on 12-29-21
Sign posted at 5060, 5376, and 5404 Sycamore Road
on 12-29-21

Ad in legal section of Gwinnett Daily Post on 12-29-21 & 1-19-22

Public Comments: Summarized in the planning commission public hearing and recommendation.

FINDINGS OF FACT

The proposed density is 3.2 units per acre. Maximum density for the proposed RS72 zoning district is 6 units per acre. ***Maximum density for RS100 zoning district is 3.7 units per acre.***

The applicant does not show it on their concept plan, but five-foot-wide concrete sidewalks are required along the entire length of Sycamore Road. The city's development regulations section 5.9 requires 6% or 1.6 acres of recreation area. This can be combined with green space but should be designed with some element of access for residents. The applicant is not required to show these elements on the concept plan for zoning but will be required to reconcile their site design with the requirements prior to permitting.

Surrounding Land Use and Zoning

Direction	Existing Land Use	Existing Zoning
North	single-family residences in Sugar Hill city limits and unincorporated Gwinnett County	RS-100, R60, R100, & RMD
South	single-family residences, daytime dog boarding and training, animal hospital, automotive body repair, undeveloped land with commercial zoning	RS-150, OI, HM1, BG,
East	single-family residences, mobile homes, undeveloped land with industrial zoning	RS-100, MH, HM1
West	single-family residences	RS-100, R100

City of Sugar Hill: Mobile Home (MH), Medium Density Single Family Residential (RS-100), Low Density Single Family Residential (RS-150), (OI), (BG), (HM1)

Gwinnett County: Single Family Residence (R60), Single Family Residence (R100), Multi-Family Residence (RMD, inactive)

ZONING ANALYSIS

1. *Will the rezoning requested permit a use that is suitable in view of the use and development of adjacent and nearby property?*

Yes. The proposed development is for a single-family detached housing product which is like adjacent and nearby properties.

2. *Will the rezoning requested adversely affect the existing use or usability of adjacent or nearby properties?*

No. The single-family detached building types are smaller than the typical nearby home but proposed with a similar lot size and overall density.

3. *Does the property for which the rezoning is requested have a reasonable economic use as current zoned?*

Yes.

4. *Will the rezoning requested create an overcrowding condition with respect to the existing streets, transportation facilities, or schools?*

No. However, the southbound approach of Sycamore Road at Highway 20 currently operates inadequately during the morning peak hour (7:15-8:15a.m.) mostly due to the high throughput volume on Highway 20 according to a recent study conducted by a transportation planning consultant for the City of Sugar Hill. The project is likely to contribute an effect on the future operating conditions at this intersection, but additional study would be necessary to determine the significance of its impact.

This project is within the Lanier Cluster (Sycamore Elementary School zone) and is likely to contribute to an increase in new student enrollment. An updated student enrollment projection from the Gwinnett County Public Schools planning department is not yet available. Staff will update this report when the school planner has completed their analysis. At last study, according to state board of education metrics, there is substantial capacity at Sycamore Elementary, minor capacity at Lanier Middle and Lanier High is at or slightly over capacity.

5. *Does the rezoning requested conform to the Sugar Hill Land Use Plan?*

Yes. The proposed zoning and land use is compatible with the established neighborhood character area.

6. *Are there other existing or changing conditions affecting the use and development of the property which would give support to an approval or disapproval of the rezoning request?*

Excerpts from the Comprehensive Plan (2019):

Develop transitional areas of housing between higher densities in the urban core and suburban residential areas.

Revitalize aging commercial and residential areas through redevelopment and infill strategies.

Improve connectivity between the downtown core and future growth areas.

April 28, 2022



To: Mayor and City Council
From: Megan Peace – Elmington Residential

Subject: Rezoning RZ 21-011, single-family detached homes
5060, 5376, & 5404 Sycamore Road from RS100 to RS72

Dear Mayor and Council,

As you all are aware, our request for re-zoning is still pending before you. We, at Elmington Residential, are committed to this project and do intend to move forward regardless of the outcome of our request, even if it is only for 60 homes. However, we really mean what we say in that we want to be good neighbors and develop a community that blends with the character of the surrounding neighborhood and assuages the fear that some neighbors have regarding the development. After the last council meeting on April 11th, our team heard the concerns regarding density of the project from the Council. We immediately went back to the drawing board and have revised our site plan to reduce the number of lots from 87 homes to 77 homes. As you can imagine, that represents a significant financial impact to the project. We have also re-sited the plan so that all of the lots that share a border with neighboring communities fit the existing RS100 zoning code. Our development is now just 2.8 homes per acre, which is significantly below the permitted density of 3.7 homes per acre under the current RS100 zoning code. Approximately 5 acres of the 27.72-acre property will be undisturbed, and our site plan now has a community park as a resident amenity. In a nutshell, the City, through this process, would only be allowing Elmington to build an additional 17 homes and in return the City not only adds 77 high-quality homes, that are professionally maintained to its inventory, but the development would be agreeing to all of the Conditions below, which it would not have to abide by if it only builds the 60 homes as currently zoned. This is clearly a huge win for the City.

While the Council made it clear that their only concern was density, we didn't ignore the fact that the two individuals who spoke against the project during the public hearing were opposed due to it being a rental community. We understand that there is an unfounded belief held by many "traditional" homeowners that rental homes will somehow be bad for their property values or bring lesser quality neighbors. I believe that we have demonstrated to this Council that our product is not anything like what they perceive. Our intent is to manage and own the community for long-term residents. The average tenancy of single-family renters is 3.5 years, so we expect the neighborhood to be occupied by Sugar Hill residents that either prefer the flexibility of renting, have not yet found a home to purchase due to market competition, or are not yet financially ready for the high cost of homeownership. Currently, there are no new construction, detached single family homes for-sale or on the market in Sugar Hill, our community will fill that immediate demand for quality single family housing at market rates.

Elmington manages over 30,000 homes and units throughout the United States and is committed to providing Class A services to its communities including but not limited to all-inclusive home maintenance, talented staffing, community programming, and landscaping services. With average rents of \$2,500 per month, we will require household incomes of at least 3 times the rent (\$90,000/year), thorough background checks, employment verification, and credit history reports for prospective residents. Across our communities, we have a diverse range of renters from young professionals to empty nesters. Despite their differences, our residents have the same desires for high-end, new construction housing with private yard space, garages, and larger floor plans than multifamily apartments.

As noted above, we agree to all the conditions that were proposed by Planning Staff and the Council. These are significant Conditions that truly will benefit the neighboring properties and the City that it would not otherwise enjoy if the property is not rezoned. The condition for private roads itself in return for an additional 17 homes is a huge cost saving for the City. The landscape buffers and increased lot sizes likewise are huge benefits to the neighboring properties. As a summary, below are the recommended Conditions and our response.

Conditions:

1. Condition #1

Proposed condition: Maximum number of lots shall be limited to 87. All proposed lots adjoining the Sugar Hill Plantation subdivision shall be subject to the minimum lot width and rear setback for the RS-100 zoning district.

Response: We have revised our site plan to a density of only 77 homes. All lots within our development that border a neighboring community will conform to the minimum lot width and rear setbacks for the RS100 zoning district. In addition to the condition, we will maintain a 20' landscape buffer between our lots and the Sugar Hill Plantation homes.

See Exhibit A for the revised concept plan.

2. Condition #2

Proposed Condition: All streets, alleys, sidewalks (except those required within the Sycamore Road public right-of-way), storm water facilities and other common areas or facilities shall be privately owned and maintained.

Response: We agree to privately own and maintain all streets, alleys, sidewalks, storm water facilities, and all other common areas or facilities.

3. Condition #3

Proposed Condition: Buildings shall be constructed to substantially resemble the elevations attached as Exhibit 1. The builder(s) shall be required to use at least four distinct house plans and elevations subject to approval by the City Manager. Variations in materials, color and architectural details shall be required such that no elevation is used on more than 30% of the total homes in the project.

Response: We agree to construct four distinct house plans and elevations. Our in-house design team has drafted four unique house plans that will be built and painted with unique facades, materials, and color packages. We will offer seven modern color packages among the four elevation options.

Please see Exhibit B for the drafted elevations and two sample renderings.

4. Condition #4:

Proposed Condition: A 10' enhanced landscape strip and no-access easement shall be incorporated into the Sycamore Road frontage subject to approval by the City Manager. Enhanced landscape strip is to consist of at least a wooden privacy fence (six foot minimum height) as well as a staggered row of evergreen and semi-evergreen trees and shrubs which are native or adapted to the area. Trees shall be 6' tall at time of planting. Plantings shall be arranged to provide an effective visual screen of at least 20' in height at maturity. Landscape strip must not contain more than 1/3 of a single species and must be shown on a landscape plan to be approved by the city manager prior to receiving any permits. Developer shall install the landscaping prior to the first certificate of occupancy issued for a dwelling in the subdivision.

Response: We agree to provide this landscape strip and no-access easement on Sycamore Road. We will construct a fence, and we agree to maintain or plant trees consistent with the proposed condition. Our concept plan has been revised to meet this condition.

See Exhibit A for the revised concept plan.

5. Condition #5

Proposed Condition: Prior to final plat approval, a dedicated left turn lane shall be provided at the project entrance on Sycamore Road. Project access improvements shall be subject to Gwinnett County and City of Sugar Hill approval.

Response: We will provide a dedicated left turn lane at the community's entrance on Sycamore Road.

6. Condition #6

Proposed Condition: Developer shall provide a minimum of three gas appliances in each unit.

Response: We agree to provide three gas appliances in each home.

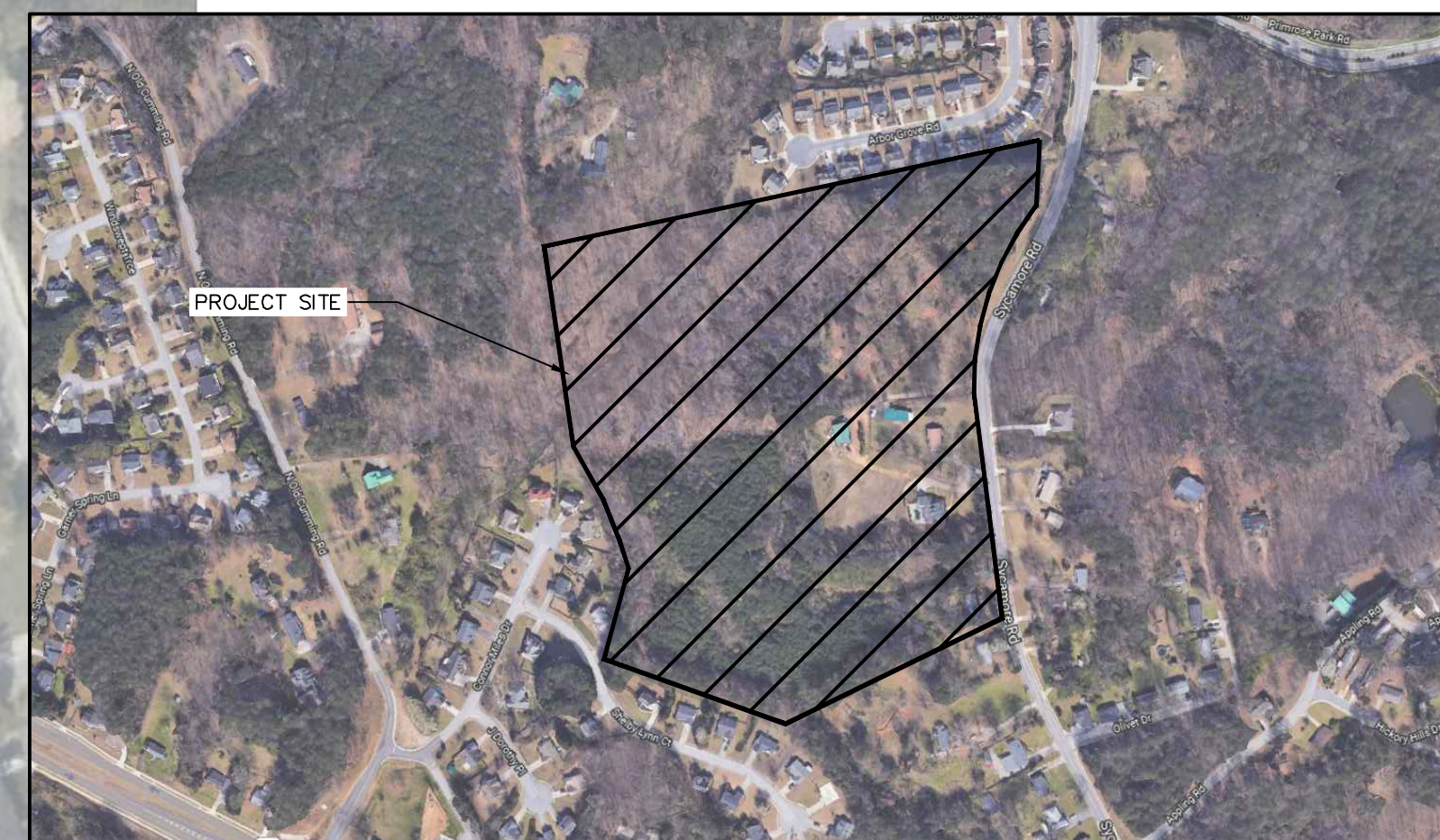
7. Condition #7

Proposed Condition: If required, rock blasting shall be conducted only between the hours of 9 AM to 5 PM, Monday through Friday or state regulated times, whichever is more restrictive.

Response: If rock blasting is required, we will only blast during the above hours, and we will adhere to all state regulations regarding rock blasting.

We hope this amended submission meets to your agreement. We truly believe that this is a win-win for everyone involved. Please feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions or would like to further discuss our plan.

EXHIBIT A



DEVELOPMENT SITE DATA:

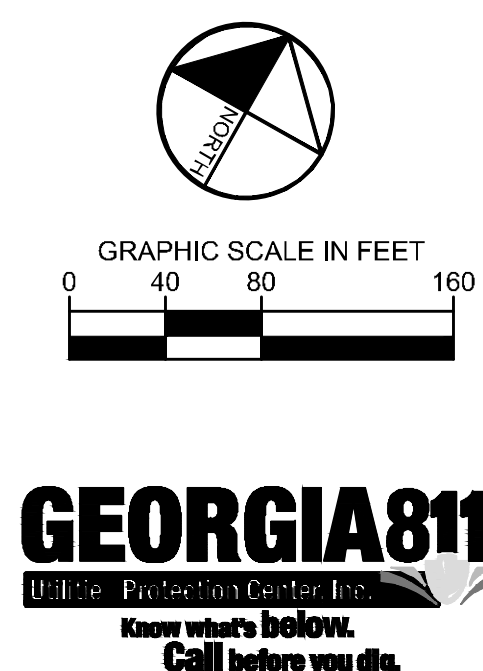
TOTAL ACREAGE:	+/- 26.8 AC
STREAM / BUFFERS:	+/- 3.7 AC
DETENTION PONDS:	+/- 2.0 AC
USABLE LAND:	+/- 21.1 AC
ALLOWED DENSITY:	6 UNITS / ACRE
PROPOSED DENSITY:	3.2 UNITS / ACRE (GROSS) 4.07 UNITS / ACRE (NET)
EXISTING ZONING:	RS-100
PROPOSED ZONING:	RS-72
PARCEL ID's:	7322-516 7306-75 7306-183 7306-062A
LOT SIZE:	55' X 131' TYP. +/- 7,200 SF (MINIMUM) (SOME LOTS ARE LARGER DUE TO SETBACKS OR LANDSCAPE
BUFFERS)	
	PER ZONING CONDITIONS: LOTS ADJACENT TO EXISTING SUGAR HILL PLANTATION SUBDIVISION SHALL MEET RS-100 LOT MIN. WIDTH REQUIREMENTS (70'). THESE LOTS ARE 26-35. ALSO RS-100 REAR YARD REQUIREMENTS, WHICH IS STILL 30'.
	LOTS ALONG SYCAMORE RIDGE SUBDIVISION ARE ALSO RS-100 LOT MIN. WIDTH (70'). THESE LOTS ARE 1-10.
BUILDING HEIGHT (TYP.):	29.0'
GROSS SQUARE FOOTAGE:	
HERITAGE:	2400 SF
BUFORD:	2048 SF
TOTAL FLOOR AREA:	
HERITAGE:	1949 SF
BUFORD:	1630 SF
TOTAL NUMBER OF LOTS:	77
PROPOSED LAND USE:	SINGLE FAMILY
SETBACKS:	
R/W SETBACK	35' ON MAIN ROAD
FRONT	30'
SIDE	10'
REAR	20'

LANDSCAPE BUFFER: 20' LANDSCAPE BUFFER
ADJACENT TO RESIDENTIAL

SEWER NOTE:

PARKING: 2 PER DWELLING

SEWER WILL BE TIED INTO EXISTING SEWER SYSTEM LOCATED NORTH OF PROJECT SITE



Kimley»»Horn

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**ELIMINGTON
RESIDENTIAL**
118 16TH AVE SOUTH, STE 200
NASHVILLE, TN 37203
PHONE: 615-902-3341

[illegible]

5060 SYCAMORE
ROAD
5060 SYCAMORE ROAD, SUGAR HILL GA 30018

12/06/2021	
GSWCC NO. (LEVEL II)	0000064358
DRAWN BY	TML
DESIGNED BY	TML
REVIEWED BY	TML
DATE	12/06/2021
PROJECT NO.	118129075
TITLE	
ZONING PLAN	
SHEET NUMBER	
C1-00	

EXHIBIT B







