City of Sugar Hill Planning Staff Report RZ 21-011

DATE:	March 2, 2022; <i>Updated 3/31/2022</i>
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.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Approval of RS-72 zoning with the following conditions:

- 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.

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.

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

Surrounding Land Use and Zoning

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)

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.

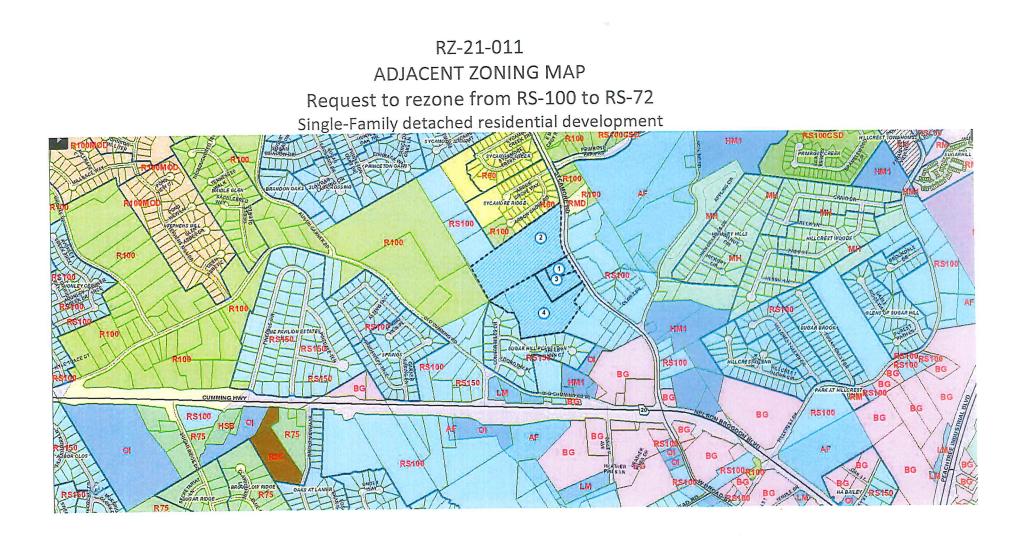
6. Are there other existing or changing conditions affecting the use and development of the property which would give support to an approval or disapproval of the rezoning request?

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.





Megan Peace Elmington Residential 118 16th Avenue South Nashville, TN 37203 November 30, 2021

City of Sugar Hill Planning & Development Department 5039 W Broad Street Sugar Hill, GA 30518

To the City of Sugar Hill:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit our application to rezone 5060 Sycamore Road, 5376 Sycamore Road, and 5404 Sycamore Road ("the Property") in Sugar Hill, Georgia. These properties are currently zoned RS-100, and Elmington Residential would like to formally apply for these properties to be rezoned to RS-72. Elmington is currently under contract to purchase the Property and has received approval from the Property's owners to apply to rezone the Property to RS-72.

Elmington Residential is a builder, developer, and designer of single-family communities throughout the Southeast. Founded in 2018, the company has completed 285 homes in the Nashville MSA, has 313 homes under construction, and has 937 homes in the pipeline throughout Tennessee, Georgia, and Alabama. Combined, the completed and under construction deals total \$174M in development value. Located in both urban and suburban neighborhoods, our communities offer residents modern, efficient homes that are designed with the latest features in technology and style.

The area surrounding the neighborhood can be generally characterized as residential. Elmington Residential would like the future residential community at the Property to blend within the existing character of the neighborhood and plans to build detached single-family homes on lots that are 55' wide and 131' deep. Each home will have its own private yard and driveway. We are proposing a total of 87 homes on site.

We have completed physical due diligence of the site and realize that there is an ephemeral stream that crosses through the northwest side of the site. Because of the stream, we are proposing density of only 3 units per acre although the current allowed density is 3.7 units per acre. For the portion of the stream that crosses through lots 12-15 and 85-87, we will apply for a nationwide permit through the US Army Corp of Engineers to eliminate that portion of the stream. The stream is not a buffered stream, so we will not need any buffer exemptions.

We believe that the proposed rezoning of the property from RS-100 to RS-72 stays within the use and characteristic of the neighborhood, and our proposed site plan would result in less homes than the standard for the current RS-100 zoning code.

Thank you for your consideration,

Megan Peace Director of Development



April 4, 2022

To:	City Council
From:	Megan Peace – Elmington Residential
Subject:	Rezoning RZ 21-011, single-family detached homes 5060, 5376, & 5404 Sycamore Road

We at Elmington Residential would like to first thank the Mayor, City Council and Planning Staff for their time and efforts in reviewing this project, which we truly believe will be an immense benefit to the City. We especially appreciated your time in listening to our presentation and the thoughtful questions posed by Council. We also listened attentively to the comments from the public from both sides and took those to heart. We understand the rationale for the proposed additional conditions, and while they will result in additional development costs, we are nonetheless committed to being good neighbors and making this project an example of effective and equitable land planning.

We agree to the conditions and have prepared the below responses to each condition.

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 agree to limit the number of lots to 87. We have revised the community concept plan so all lots adjoining to the Sugar Hill Plantation subdivision meet the minimum lot width and rear setback for the RS-100 zoning district. In addition to the condition, we will maintain a 20' landscape buffer between our lots and the Sugar Hill Plantation homes. Condition #1 resulted in a loss of one lot to the concept plan. So, our concept plan now contemplates a total of 86 residential lots.

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.

EXHIBIT A

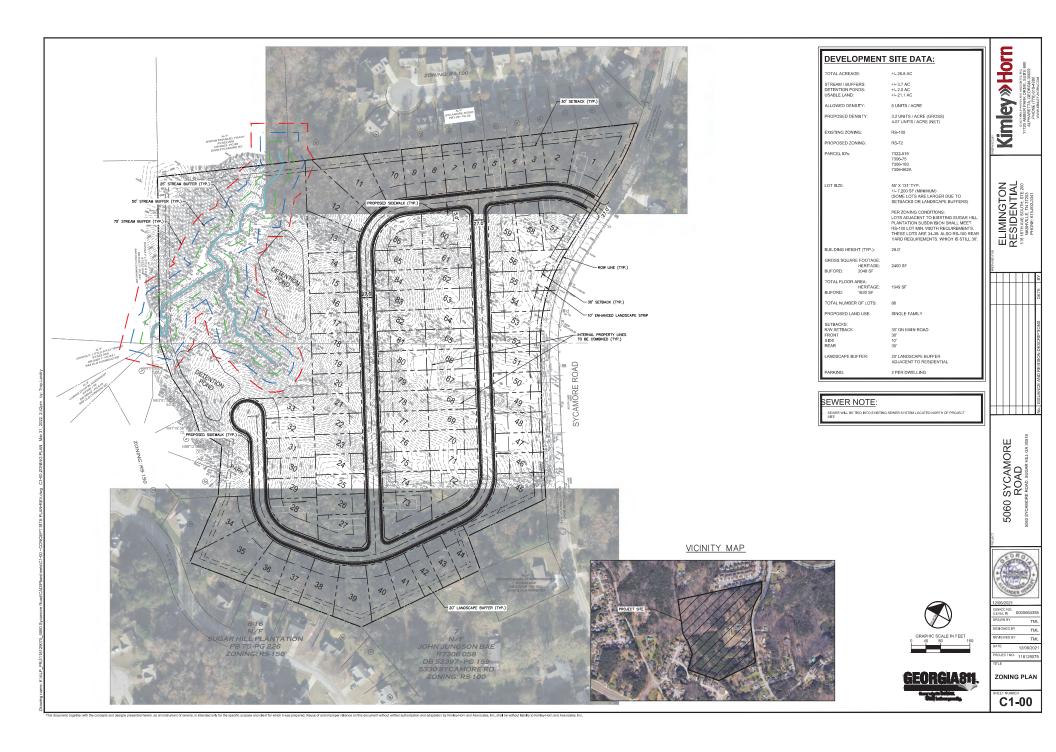




EXHIBIT B







