

City of Sugar Hill
Planning Staff Report
ZOA 25-004

DATE: October 29, 2025
TO: Mayor and City Council
FROM: Planning Director
SUBJECT: Zoning Ordinance Amendment ZOA 25-004
Addition of Permitted Animals and associated enforcement methods.

BACKGROUND

On August 3, 2025, City Council requested for staff to investigate the keeping of chickens on private residential properties for domestic use.

RECOMMENDATION

The extent of this ordinance amendment includes the creation of Section 615, the relocation of language associated with the keeping of rabbits and pot bellied pigs from Section 614 – Prohibited Uses, and the introduction of language associated with the keeping of chickens.

The language and principles associated with the keeping of chickens is generally aligned with Gwinnett County’s regulations. A professor with the University of Georgia Department of Poultry Science was consulted on the language as well.

It should be noted that private neighborhood covenants will supersede these regulations, where applicable and more restrictive. No variances to the regulations shall be permitted. The keeping of chickens shall be prohibited within the Town Center Overlay and Central Business District. No roosters shall be permitted in any case. Standards are also established for the location and maintenance of chicken coops and runs, as well as enforcement methods. A \$50 application fee is proposed to obtain a permit and keep a record of chicken coops in place.

Staff recommends approval of the following ordinance amendments:

Deleting Section 614. Prohibited Uses in its entirety and replacing with language found in the redlined ordinance.

Creation of Section 615. Keeping of Certain Animals with language found in the redlined ordinance.

ORDINANCE

ZOA-25-004

The Mayor and Council of the City of Sugar Hill hereby ordain that the 2000 Zoning Ordinance of the City of Sugar Hill is hereby amended in the following manner:

By deleting Section 614 in its entirety and replacing the language to read as follows:

Section 614. Prohibited Uses

Uses of land and buildings which are incompatible with existing and future development within the city limits of the City of Sugar Hill and are prohibited in all districts. The Planning Commission and the Board of Zoning Appeals do not have the authority to grant variances or special exceptions for these prohibited uses. Prohibited uses are as follows:

1. Vape Store.
2. Yards for the sale, transfer, or temporary holding of livestock.
3. Poultry killing, plucking, and dressing.
4. Meat packing, slaughtering, eviscerating, and skinning.
5. Rendering of by-products of slaughtering and killing animals or poultry.
6. The use of equipment which causes off-site radio or television interference.

By creating Section 615, to read as follows:

Section 615. Keeping of Certain Animals

The below listed animals are permitted to be kept for domestic purposes, so long as all pre-requisites are met. The Planning Commission and the Board of Zoning Appeals do not have the authority to grant variances or special exceptions for these uses:

1. The keeping of no more than five (5) rabbits, the keeping of no more than one (1) pure bred Vietnamese pot belly pig, provided said animals are kept purely for domestic purposes to be used as pets, and shall not be prohibited by this Section provided that the animals are maintained in accordance with the following provisions:

- a. The animals may not be raised for, or offered for, sale to the public.
- b. The property on which the animal is being kept or raised must be located in an AF, RS-100, RS-150, RS-175, or RS-200 Zoning District, must be used for single-family residential purposes or agricultural purposes. **The keeping of all aforementioned animals shall be prohibited within the Town Center Overlay and Central Business Districts.**
- c. The pens, hutches or other facilities in which a rabbit or pure bred Vietnamese Pot belly pig are maintained must be maintained in a clean and sanitary manner in accordance with all health department regulations. All such facilities must be set back at least ~~30~~ **20** feet from all property lines **and 50 feet from any residence on an adjoining parcel.** Each rabbit must have separate quarters. All rabbit quarters or hutches shall have a minimum floor space of at least four (4) square feet and a maximum floor space of sixteen (16) square feet per rabbit. The floor surface shall consist of half solid wood and half rabbit wire.
- d. Anyone raising or maintaining rabbits or pure-bred Vietnamese pot belly pigs must keep all such animals in the rear yard and the rear yard of the property on which said animals are maintained must be separated from adjacent properties by a six foot high solid wood or chain link fence. Offspring may be kept a maximum of six weeks.

2. The keeping of no more than ten (10) hens shall be permitted, provided that the animals are maintained in accordance with the following provisions:

- e. **Definitions.**
 - i. **Chicken: A domesticated bird kept for eggs or as a pet.**
 - ii. **Coop: A structure for housing chickens.**
 - iii. **Hen: A female chicken.**
 - iv. **Rooster: A male chicken.**
 - v. **Run: An enclosed outdoor area where chickens can roam.**
 - vi. **Sanitary Conditions: An animal living space, shelter, or exercise area that is not contaminated by health hazards, irritants, pollutants, items, or conditions that endanger or pose a risk to an animal's health.**
- f. **Permitted Zones.**
 - i. **The property on which the animal is being kept or raised must be located in an AF, RS-100, RS-150, RS-175, or RS-200 Zoning District, must be used for single-family residential purposes or agricultural purposes. The keeping of chickens shall be prohibited within the Town Center Overlay and Central Business Districts.**
- g. **Number of chickens per lot shall be as follows:**
 - i. **Lots 10,500 to 12,499 square feet: Maximum of 3 chickens.**
 - ii. **Lots 12,500 to 24,999 square feet: Maximum of 5 chickens.**
 - iii. **Lots 25,000 to 39,999 square feet: Maximum of 8 chickens.**
 - iv. **Lots 40,000 square feet or larger: Maximum of 10 chickens.**

- h. The keeping of roosters shall be prohibited.
- i. Chickens are only permitted as pets or for egg laying production; chickens cannot be kept for slaughter.
- j. Coop Requirements.
 - i. Chicken coops shall be located in the rear yard. Coops must provide at least 4 square feet of floor space per chicken. Coops must be at least 20 feet from any property line and 50 feet from any residence on an adjoining parcel.
 - ii. Runs must provide at least 10 square feet per chicken. Runs must be enclosed with a fence or other barrier to prevent escape.
- k. Sanitation and Nuisance.
 - i. Animals must not create a noise disturbance or nuisance to neighbors.
 - ii. Animals must be kept under sanitary conditions to prevent public health issues.
 - iii. Chicken coops and runs must be kept clean to reduce odors.
 - iv. Waste must be properly disposed of to prevent attracting pests.
 - v. Feed must be stored in a fully enclosed, rodent-proof container.
- l. Permits and Inspections.
 - i. A permit shall be issued prior to the construction of animal habitats and the keeping of animals.
 - ii. The permit fee shall be \$50. This fee shall be in addition to any and all other fees required for habitat construction.
 - iii. Applicable building permits for accessory structures are separate from this ordinance.
 - iv. The city may conduct routine inspections to ensure compliance.
 - v. Failure to comply with the listed regulations may result in revocation of permits, removal of animals, and/or fines.
- m. Enforcement.
 - i. The city's code enforcement officers are responsible for enforcing this ordinance.
 - ii. Violations of this ordinance may result in fines, removal of chickens, or other penalties as determined by the city council.
- n. Severability
 - i. If any section, clause, or provision of this ordinance is found to be invalid or unconstitutional, the remaining sections, clauses, and provisions shall continue in full force and effect.

IT IS SO ORDAINED, this ____ day of _____, 2025.

Those voting in favor:

Mayor Pro Tem Joshua Page

Council Member Gary Pirkle

Council Member Meg Avery

Council Member Alvin Hicks

Council Member Taylor Anderson

Those voting in opposition:

Mayor Pro Tem Joshua Page

Council Member Gary Pirkle

Council Member Meg Avery

Council Member Alvin Hicks

Council Member Taylor Anderson

ATTEST:

City Clerk

Submitted to Mayor: ____/____/____

Approved by Mayor, this _____ day of _____ 2025.

Brandon Hembree, Mayor