

LOWNDES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM

SUBJECT: REZ-2024-03 Southern Gardens, 4609 Bemiss Rd. 5ac, C-G to P-D,  
County Utilities

DATE OF MEETING: March 12, 2024

Work Session/Regular  
Session

BUDGET IMPACT: N/A

FUNDING SOURCE:

- Annual
- Capital
- N/A
- SPLOST
- TSPLOST

COUNTY ACTION REQUESTED ON: REZ-2024-03 Southern Gardens, 4609 Bemiss Rd. 5ac, C-G to P-D, County Utilities

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HISTORY, FACTS AND ISSUES: This request represents a change in zoning on the subject property from C-G (General Commercial) zoning to P-D (Planned Development) zoning, in order to develop a 60-unit apartment complex with amenities. The subject property possesses road frontage on Bemiss Road, a state-owned Arterial Road, and is within the Corridor Overlay, Urban Service Area and Neighborhood Activity Center Character Area. Per Comprehensive Plan guidance, Neighborhood Activity Centers "should include a mix of retail, services, and offices to serve residents' day-to-day needs. Residential development should reinforce the center by locating higher density housing options adjacent to the center, targeted at a broad range of income levels, including multi-family town homes, apartments, and condominiums."

The neighboring properties along the east, northeast and northwest are zoned P-D, and are comprised of single family, two-family, and multifamily dwellings, with a portion fronting Bemiss Road zoned C-H. The properties to the west and south are vacant commercially zoned parcels, with development potential for high-density residential, office, commercial, or a combination of the three under a planned development approach.

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, noting the difference in parking proposed by the applicant of one and a half spaces, and the two spaces per dwelling unit of ULDC Table 6.01.03(A), which is allowed per 4.06.02(B). Staff offered alternative design considerations for the site's layout, aimed at providing greater separation and privacy to the existing 1-story dwellings abutting the property, including relocation of buildings and reductions in height. Staff found the request consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and surrounding land use pattern, and therefore recommended approval

At the GLPC meeting, the applicant spoke in favor, citing their 30 years of experience in developing similar projects in Lowndes County and other parts of the State, and stating that the reduction in parking is based on their experience and target markets, often being single vehicle family units. The opposition raised concerns about decreased property values and the adequacy of the buffering and setbacks on their privacy from the three-story buildings, in addition to a desire for the subject property to remain commercially zoned. The GLPC had a few followup questions for the applicant, before ultimately voting (5-1) to recommend Approval of the