

Avilla Friendship Trails Project Narrative

LOCATION – 5342 & 5354 Thompson Mill Rd

ACREAGE – 13.97 acres +/-

APPLICANT – Rochester | DCCM

Summary

The accompanying application seeks zoning district change from AR-IV (Agriculture-Residential) to PRD (Planned Residential Development) for 13.97 acres +/- of undeveloped property located at 5342 & 5354 Thompson Mill Road in unincorporated Hall County. The site is approximately 600' east of the Spout Springs Road & Thompson Mill Road intersection and within the Gateway Corridor Overlay District. It is transitional between long-standing commercial uses to the west and residential. It is our understanding that the GCOD requirements would not apply to development of this property for residential uses. The intent is to develop a 133-unit build for rent community, at a density of 9.52 units per acre. The site is within walking distance of the Duncan Crossing retail development and pedestrian connectivity will be provided to the existing multi-use trail along Friendship Road, subject to GDOT approval. The proposed development will provide additional housing opportunities to major employers in the area including the Northeast Georgia Medical Center only 2 miles away. The proposed use is appropriate for Hall County's Mixed-Use designation and for this location. Completion of development is anticipated by 2025.

Planned Residential Development

The proposed community will consist of a combination of individual one bedroom attached duplexes as well as two and three bedroom cottages. The community will be designed specifically as rental units with no fee-simple ownership of any individual homes. Professional on-site management for the community will be provided by the Developer/Owner and will be responsible for all building and landscape maintenance. A grill pavilion, fire pit, resort style pool, a dog park and outdoor gathering areas will provide the amenities for the community. There will be limited garage parking but non-designated surface parking will serve the majority of units, similar to other multi-family communities.

Site Description

The site has approximately 600 feet of frontage along the northern right-of-way Thompson Mill Road. The north end of the site fronts along Friendship Road. There are currently three single-family homes and several outbuildings located on the seven parcels that form the site. There are no jurisdictional streams on the property. Domestic water is provided by the City of Gainesville through a 12" water main located in the Thompson Mill right-of-way and the Town of Braselton has agreed to serve the site with sanitary sewer through a gravity line that is located in the Friendship Road (SR 347) R/W. Service letters are attached. All other dry utilities are located within a reasonable distance for service extensions. There are no known impediments to its successful development for the purposes intended.

Adjacencies

The property is surrounded primarily by AR-IV zoning (Hall County) and G-C zoning (Braselton) to the west. Areas north of Friendship Road include primarily AR-IV & PRD zonings. The adjacent property to the east is a 150' wide strip of Right-of-Way owned by GDOT and to the west is the Duncan Corners Shopping Center.

Access

Access to the property is proposed from Thompson Mill Road, which, at this location, is classified as a minor collector by Hall County. Thompson Mill Road connects directly to Spout Springs Road approximately 0.1 miles to the west and to SR 347 approximately 0.6 mile to the east and north. Entrance to this project is planned to be opposite the entrance to the Noble Vines Complex and Oaks Senior Living Complex. A traffic study has

been completed and is attached for reference. It is proposed that the entrance align with the existing entrance on the south side of Thompson Mill Road and utilize the previously installed left turn lane (re-striping required). Additionally, a deceleration lane will be added for westbound traffic entering the site. A gated entrance will provide access control onto the property.

Comprehensive Plan Consistency

The project is consistent with the “Mixed Use Corridor Character Area” designation of the 2017 Comprehensive Plan and Future Land Use Map. Primary Future Land Uses include “higher density residential only where the same is found on adjacent properties”. This use will provide a transitional buffer between a major commercial node at SR 347 and Spouts Springs to the west and growing lower density residential to the east. Surrounding densities that support the Comprehensive Plan’s reference to “higher density residential” include densities of; 26.9 units per acre (The Chateau – 2023), 11.3 units per acre (The Wren – 2021) and 16.1 units per acre (The Phoenix – 2015), all within less than 1 mile of the site. Additionally, within the Town of Braselton, Harrison at Braselton (FKA Noble Vines) has a density of 20.2 units per acre.



Proposed Minimum area, setback and buffer requirements

- Front Setback from Thompson Mill Road – 50’
- Side Setback from Duncan Crossing – 15’
- Side Setback to GDOT R/W – 15’
- Rear Setback from Friendship Road – 15’
- Building Separation – 10’ (foundation to foundation)
- Maximum Height – 35’
- Minimum Open Space – 30%
- Exterior Planted or Structural Buffer – 15’

Product Mix

The Owner is a corporate entity with 10 years experience on 50 similar projects. This community is planned for single story homes with a variety of architectural treatments. The approximate proposed mix of unit types include; 30% - one bedroom, 41% - two bedroom and 29% - three bedroom. This housing product provides an increasingly popular alternative to multistory apartment complexes in areas adjacent to and transitional from commercially developed areas.

Typical Resident Demographics

Typical residents are "renters by choice" and most have the financial resources to buy a home, but choose not to at this time. The majority are professional millennials, mid-life singles, dual income couples and empty nesters, with average HHI's of \$132,000+. Age distribution is typically 19% under 35, 58% are 35 to 55 and 23% are over 55. On average, only 20% of the residents have minor children.

Lighting, Signage & Graphics

All outdoor lighting and signage will follow the guidelines and requirements of Hall County code. Low spill fixtures, up lighting and low impact signage will be utilized to mitigate negative impacts. All exterior street and directional signage will be coordinated to promote a unified and coordinated plan.

Landscaping & Hardscaping

Appropriate landscaping will be required including sodded turf areas, shade trees and foundation plantings. Parking lot landscaping will include tree islands and breaks in order to soften long runs of paved areas and parking spaces.

Amenities

Planned amenities include; a grilling pavilion, resort style pool, fenced Dog Park, passive open space areas that may include pathways, seating areas and an event lawn.

Parking

Parking is planned at a ratio of at least 2.0 spaces per unit. This ratio will include handicap spaces, garage parking and regular surface parking areas. Drive aisles are planned for a 26' width back of stall to back of stall or 26' back of curb to back of curb in non-parking areas.

Architecture & Materials

See attached exhibits for typical architectural style and materials.

Sales and Construction Trailers

Applicant is requesting permission to install one sales trailer and one construction trailer with associated parking areas in locations to be determined at the time of street paving and possible ahead of final plat approval.

Conceptual Master Plan

The development of the community shall be controlled by the Conceptual Master Plan (the "Plan") attached as exhibit "A". The plan is considered conceptual in nature, and as such may require minor modifications during the engineering and development process. Modifications to the locations and arrangement of lots, roads, amenities, and other improvements that do not conflict with specific standards and requirements of these conditions may be made by the Developer, so long as such modifications do not change the land use, increase the overall density of the project or reduce any established exterior buffers or setbacks.

Proposed Variances from PRD Requirements

- 17.180.060.B.5 – **Buffers** – Exterior Buffers shall be reduced to 15', except along the R/W of Thompson Mill Road where a 50' buffer and building setback will be maintained. Applicant may substitute a structural buffer where the adjacent land use is more intense.
- 17.180.060.6 – **Landscape Requirements** – The requirement for two trees per lot shall be modified to one tree per unit (133) plus any trees necessary to satisfy the development's tree density requirements.
- 17.180.060.8 – **Open Space** – Open Space shall be required at 30% of the gross acreage but without the requirements of sections 17.430.100 through 17.430.150.
- 17.270.040.E – **Signs** – Free standing permanent signs shall be allowed with 5' of the Right-Of-Way.

Applicant Responses to 17.380.060 C Questions

1. Whether the zoning proposal will permit a use that is suitable in view of the use, development and zoning of adjacent and nearby property. *Response: The zoning proposal is suitable given the context of the surrounding area.*
2. Whether the zoning proposal will adversely affect the existing use or usability of adjacent or nearby property. *Response: No, it is not anticipated that the proposed residential use will adversely affect adjacent properties.*
3. Whether the property to be affected by the zoning proposal has a reasonable economic use as currently zoned. *Response: The property does not have reasonable economic use as currently zoned, by virtue of the zonings and uses on adjoining and nearby properties,*
4. Whether the zoning proposal will result in a use which will or could cause an excessive or burdensome use of existing streets, transportation facilities, utilities, schools, police protection, fire protection, public health facilities or emergency medical service. *Response: The development will not cause an excessive or burdensome use of existing streets, transportation facilities, or utilities, or public services.*
5. Whether the zoning proposal is in conformity with the policy and intent of the future land use plan for the physical development of the area. *Response: The Hall County Comprehensive Plan update of June 2022 has identified this section of Friendship Road as a Mixed-Use corridor. These corridors include retail activities, office-base employment, civic uses, and residential uses. Although the proposed use is not explicitly identified, higher density residential adjacent to commercial uses is consistent and compatible with the intent of the mixed-use corridor.*
6. The extent to which property values are diminished by the existing zoning restrictions. *Response: The existing AR-IV zoning district severely restricts the property's use and substantially diminishes its value. It is a legacy holdover zoning from several decades ago and does not reflect changes in character and zonings of nearby and adjacent properties. It does not reflect economically viable uses of the land.*
7. The extent to which the destruction of the subject property's value under the existing zoning promotes the health, safety, morals or general welfare of the public. *Response: No clear objectives regarding the public health, safety, morals or general welfare have been described by the County as being promoted by the existing zoning district.*
8. The relative gain to the public as compared to the hardship imposed upon the individual property owner. *Response: No clear public gains are known, whereas the hardship to the owner can be clearly shown.*

9. The length of time the property has been vacant as zoned considered in the context of land development in the area in the vicinity of the property. *Response: The property does not have to be vacant as zoned to be a substantial hardship.*

10. Whether there are other existing or changing conditions affecting the use or development of the property which give supporting grounds for either approval or disapproval of the zoning proposal. *Response: Existing and changing conditions in unincorporated south Hall County and within the City of Braselton in proximity to this site are clearly shown by aerial photography, public records, media accounts and other means. In combination these changes clearly support approval.*

11. Whether the change would create an isolated district unrelated to the surrounding districts, such as "spot zoning." *Response: No true "spot zoning" would occur if the property is rezoned to the requested PRD district. The amount of AR-IV zoning in this part of south Hall County has steadily declined over time. Zoning to the west of the Site in Braselton is General Commercial, to the southwest is Planned Unit Development for the ALDI grocery store, and to the southeast is Neighborhood Commercial (the Oaks). If the property were to be annexed to Braselton, the GC, PUD and NC districts would be most relevant and must be considered. Other property in the vicinity of the Site which remains in unincorporated Hall County is zoned Office – Institutional (OI) for a dance studio, Suburban Shopping (two parcels approved for a Veterinary Clinic in 2004 remain undeveloped) and Planned Residential Development. The PRD zoning district in Hall to the north of the property across Friendship Road was approved for The Phoenix at Braselton (1929 Friendship Road). 139 independent and assisted living units were developed on 8.65 acres of land (16.07 un/ac). It was approved for rezoning eight years ago (2015) with conditions amended in 2016.*

12. Whether the present zoning district boundaries are illogically drawn in relation to existing conditions in the area. *Response: The present zoning district boundaries do not appear intentionally drawn to reflect changes (or public objectives) in the area. Instead, they reflect the net effect of a series of changes over time as other development approvals by two governments have been granted.*

13. Whether the change requested is out of scale with the needs of the county as a whole or the immediate neighborhood. *Response: No, the request is not out of scale with the needs of the immediate area or county as a whole.*

14. Whether it is impossible to find adequate sites for the proposed use in districts permitting such use and already appropriately zoned. *Response: No other already appropriately zoned, similarly situated parcels of comparable size, location, road access, topography and access to utilities can be found in south Hall County.*

15. Whether the need for rezoning could be handled instead by a variance request to the zoning board of adjustment. *Response: No, the request could not be handled instead by a variance.*

16. Whether there would be an ecological or pollution impact resulting from major modifications to the land if the request is granted. *Response: Major land disturbance activities on the property will be required to go through the land development permitting process and as a result are subject to local, state, and federal regulations. As a result, there should not be an ecological or pollution impact resulting from any modification to the land if the request is granted.*

17. Whether there is reasonable evidence based upon existing and anticipated land use that would indicate a mistake was made in the original zoning of the property. *Response: It is unclear how long ago the property was zoned to AR-IV, but it was evidently quite some time ago and may coincide with the original creation of zoning districts in Hall County. No indication that a mistake was made is known to the Applicant.*