



## Stonecrest Zoning Code Update Project Comments, Questions & Answers

Community Meeting – Virtual Platform

Thursday = October 22, 2020

Over 130 participants joined the community meeting. The Project Team thanks all participants for attending and providing comment. The Team provides answers to zoning code questions below in **colored font**.

### Questions from the “chat” box:

I would like to see a project that gathered input from residents, landowners, civic associations, business owners, industrial park landowners and other stakeholder BEFORE spending a year developing the revisions.

Correct, no revisions to the code will begin until stakeholder input continues to be gathered and discussed with officials and policy direction received.

100 ft should be the minimum between residents and commercial/industrial.....IMO

[Buffer is] Not sufficient as it does not deal with noise.

That supplemental planting should be specific - types of trees and at what age for the vegetation. Also are the buffers undisturbed?

Yes. The code requires undisturbed buffers, allowed to be enhanced if existing plantings are insufficient for screening. The code currently requires:

C. *Buffer planting and materials....*

1. *Planting height.* Proposed planting as part of an enhanced transitional buffer shall have a height of at least six (6) feet at the time of planting and planted in a minimum of two (2) rows, with staggered on center spacing such that a continuous opaque screen is created within two (2) years of planting.
2. *Plant types.* Plant species in an enhanced transitional buffer shall be evergreen, native, naturalized or other species well-adapted to the local climate and rainfall patterns, disease and pest-free, healthy and vigorous, and meet standard for American Nursery Stock, ANSI Z60.1.

3. *Plant functions.* Plants shall be approved from a list made available from the planning department, but shall not be exclusive of other plants which may be suitable, provided they can provide a continuous opaque screen.

Much of area shown in box is also buffered by Swift Creek tributary, so there's a minimum 150+ foot buffer there.

My question is the proposal recommended getting rid of Tier 5. A lot of us in district 4 prefer less suburban and more rural life due to traffic and environmental issues. In particular Brownsmill and Panola intersection and south river. My question is what happens to tier 5 area once removed to ensure resident aren't having undesired real estate property without circumventing residence voice.

If these properties were removed from the overlay, then the rules that govern their use follow the R-100 (large lot residential) zoning designation. Any other, non-residential use would require a rezoning and go through the public notice and hearing process, which is not the case now. Currently, retail and office are allowed – without resident comment – because the overlay grants these uses.

How can the poll of a sampling of people account for a needs study, which would presumably be based on a thorough and approved economic development plan?

In addition to stakeholder input, polling, and interviews, the project relies on research and analysis. While market trends inform the Update - such as the demand for film industry sites - the scope of the project is really limited to refining the functionality of the ordinance and not intended to substantially re-direct land use or development.

The comprehensive plan requires that we create an Economic Development Plan by the end of 2019?

The City continuously studies economic trends and analyses and is in the process of developing an economic development strategic plan. However, the scale of the current economic downturn makes historic trends unreliable predictors. A plan from 2019 would not really speak to today's context. In response to the economic uncertainty, since March 2020, the City shifted Economic Development priorities to Business Recovery, Business Stabilization, Business Retention, Business Development, Business Recruitment and Business Attraction in that order.

The Design Guidelines are already part of the Zoning Code. They just need to be posted on the City website, and included with the Municode standard code.



Yes, the zoning code requires compliance with the design guidelines. However, the actual standards are in a separate document. The City does not currently use Municode for the codification of the zoning ordinance. The proposal is to incorporate the standards into the body of the code so applicants and staff have all the requirements in one place.

Are there any companies who represent a potential public private partnership on the call? were any invited?

The notice for the meeting did not target specific developers. We will share your comment with the Economic Development office.

Will there be different zoning restriction around opportunity zones

The City of Stonecrest has no Opportunity Zones.

Have we looked at the current use table and evaluated the need to reclassify current uses designated for commercial and industrial?

Yes, this is part of the analysis process. We seek your input regarding this.

Have we looked at what uses require certain permits and which ones do not to re-evaluate those?

We will work with Staff to assess, based on community input.

Will the Arabian Mountain Overlay change?

There does not appear a need to change the Overlay. The Future Land Use Map of the Comprehensive Plan identifies an intersection where neighborhood-scale (small scale) retail might be appropriate within the Overlay. If that is the policy desire, the zoning would need to be amended to allow that use. Feedback to date has not supported this.

Why would the zoning regulations be more "user friendly for developers when we are experiencing issues with polluting industries coming in or near residential areas?

A user-friendly code should make it easier to enforce rules and make sure developers comply with city ordinances.

Question: what changes have you recommended to the rezoning and SLUP processes to ensure more public knowledge about applications and hearings and meetings?



The Team will prepare options for expanding public participation in the rezoning and SLUP process.

Q: There isn't sufficient clarity on the Airbnb, Bed and Breakfast, etc. We need more information on how the existing land use would be impacted. While there is a proposed change, the actual impact on the zoning isn't visual in any way.

Short Term Vacation Rentals (Airbnb) were recently reviewed. There was some concern presented about the differences between these and Bed and Breakfast establishments (if any). It might be helpful to have clearer definitions for these two uses.

With regard to development, has anyone looked at the development in Decatur at North Decatur Rd and Church street as an example of how Stonecrest may want to develop to enhance its commercialization?

The Team will review these examples.

I totally agree with you. It appears that Stonecrest is preparing the way for industrial businesses to be near residential areas.

The City inherited zoning decisions from the County that allow some residential near some industrial. The presentation aimed to make attendees aware of those existing conditions, not to promote that practice.

Have we looked at the current process for SLUPs and rezoning to re-evaluate the requirements for community engagement and developers requirements alike? I.e notifying residents (city and county residents included) within a longer distance than we currently require?

The Team will prepare options for expanding public participation in the rezoning and SLUP process.

Q: The current zoning doesn't appear to deal with transit ways to and from a lot of the various lots. Where is the road capacity with respect to the roads that pass through these various zoning areas. How do we deal with road standards to handle the zoning standards.

The City's Transportation Master Plan takes the land use into account when planning for infrastructure needs. This link takes you to the assessment and plan: <https://www.stonecrestga.gov/ViewTransportationMasterPlan.aspx>

Unless I missed it, have we identified who is on the team that has evaluated this process up to this point?



The project is an update to address definitions, organization and compliance with the Future Land Use map, not a comprehensive rewrite. As such, City Staff directs the project Team. The process includes meeting with stakeholder groups, Planning Commission, and interviews with elected officials.

Just curious does anyone go out to examine the physical zone of an application to see what the changes the applicant wants prior to the board's approval ? Like a claims adjuster is there a way a zoning adjuster could go out to the live location prior to just approval or is this already apart of the process?

Yes, a field visit to the subject property is part of the process.

Where are the requirements for sidewalks and lighting in the area with respect to zoning.

Article V of the Zoning Ordinance addresses sidewalk and lighting requirements. Chapter 14 Land Development also addresses street improvement standards.

Is there any zoning for proposed green space anywhere?

Yes for private development, the code requires a certain percent of each property to be dedicated to open space.

If a property required a Slup when it was in unincorporated DeKalb, how can that property not require a slup when it came in to Stonecrest?

The Zoning Ordinance had some amendments made at the time of adoption and has been amended several times since incorporation.

## **Additional Comments from the “chat” box to Consider:**

Some specifics of the changes we need are: - force developers to publicly advertise community meetings and send notices to a greater than 250 foot radius - require the planning department to create a web site with all applications and to post them within 48 hours of receipt, including all paperwork - use Community Councils the way DeKalb does - expand the areas subject to the already-adopted Stonecrest Overlay design guidelines to other commercial areas. These have kept the mall area attractive and kept signage attractive and not over-large - do not water down the design guidelines - make sure that we don't have any more problems like Metro Green. Increase buffer size to ensure that sound, dust, and pollution do not travel into residential areas. - do nothing to make it easier to have retail or commercials in the Arabia Overlay - require much more in the way of public spaces, green spaces, and public art in



commercial, retail, or mixed use - make it easier to have a sit down restaurant and harder to have

The current Stonecrest Overlay District ordinance was adopted by City Council in November of last year. It's brand new.

There are a lot of yes/no type questions when this is really a complex process. There needs to be much, much more committee type interactive meetings to explore the background and really involve all stakeholder (residents, business owners and the likes). What specifically is not working and why it needs changing. Considering unintended outcomes. This needs a very thorough review.

One thing that definitely needs to be discussed is putting in proper notifications for residents. This should include anyone who is near a proposed site regardless if they are in Stonecrest.

Well said George-I'm certain that more than 1/2 of resident, business owner concerns and advancement goals for the city are not fully represented here

That's why a broader audience is needed here. I would add to transit parks and rec

Why is there only 10 minutes given to proponents, and 10 to opponents for developments that may impact the quality of life for hundreds or more of residents.

You're right about notification, but it should go both ways -- there should be a joint agreement with the County to assure that Stonecrest residents and businesses are notified about development in nearby areas of unincorporated DeKalb.

I am concerned about the residents. We were not notified with Metro Green. Decatur AND Stonecrest residents were left in the dark. Putting signs down desolate roads, and ads in obscure papers, is not sufficient.

I agree with you that better means of notifying of all adjacent and nearby property owners should be instituted. To start, City Council should adopt Community Council as part of zoning procedure. DeKalb has community councils. They were not included in Stonecrest's zoning code. That was a mistake. Community councils would help get the word out.

This work is such a heavy lift that I would want to make sure that citizens get more than this opportunity to ask questions and get answers.

Why not just ask for feedback in the city organ and on the city website?



It might be a good idea to shift some uses from light industrial to heavy industrial. For example, Metro Green Recycling-type operations should be heavy industrial. But to Pyper Bunch's point about notice, every current light industrial property owner should be notified individually that this shift is being considered.

Metro Green is most definitely a heavy industrial business. How they were classified as "light" is a mystery to me. The Metro Green disaster should be a lesson learned for Stonecrest. South DeKalb residents are watching everything that Stonecrest does now.

Let me propose something not yet discussed here, which is that individual notice should be sent to adjacent and nearby property owners about every land disturbance permit application, and every granted land disturbance permit. Subject property should be posted too, with big signs. Those measures would go a long way toward ensuring that residents and businesses won't be surprised when the bulldozers show up.

I think classifying Metro Green Recycling's type of operation as light industrial was a mistake.

"Green Space" question is great!

I'd love to preserve the amount of greenspace. the amount of development happening on Browns Mill Rd between Panola Rd and Evans Mill Rd is concerning. I see a lot of homes that will increase the traffic.

We should be notified prior to permits. As soon as any business wants to come near residences, the people should be notified. it should not be when bulldozers arrive. The community should have sufficient notice so that we can fight if necessary. I also really want Stonecrest to please take into account that we want more green space in Stonecrest. There is plenty of undeveloped land that could be used for the community.

Existing industrial areas have been zoned that way for decades. There has been no expansion of industrial areas since Stonecrest was established, and not for long before that. City Council has added much green space since the City was created, on top of what we already had, including Arabia Mountain.

It doesn't matter if it was zoned that way already. Some industrial businesses should not be allowed, or stricter restrictions should be added which will deter those types of businesses from coming near our homes.

We don't want Stonecrest to be a dumping ground for industries. Take that somewhere else.



## Additional Information Provided in the Chat:

If people want a browsable way to see that map, view it in the stonecrest GIS:

<https://stonecrestga.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=a2541fc698b64334a63f4cf36f4aefa0&entry=4>

Here's the link to the 2016 Urban Land Institute study - Link:

<https://ulidigitalmarketing.blob.core.windows.net/ulidcnc/2019/06/ULI-Atlanta-East-Metro-DeKalb-Final-Report.pdf>

Another study (not mentioned by Ms. Alexander): DeKalb County Industrial land & Economy Study. Here's the link: <https://www.decidedekalb.com/core/fileparse.php/112/urlt/DeKalb-Industrial-Land-and-Economy-Study-Full-Document.pdf>

Hi everyone. Thank you to all who have attended. If we were not able to answer your question tonight, please visit the project webpage:

<https://www.stonecrestga.gov/StonecrestZoningOrdinanceUpdate.aspx>

And email any questions to Nikki Washington, [nwashington@tcfatl.com](mailto:nwashington@tcfatl.com)