



**Forest Acres Planning Commission  
Minutes  
January 23, 2018 6:00 P.M.  
Forest Acres Council Chambers  
5205 N. Trenholm Rd.**

**1. Call to order - determination of a quorum.**

Joe Gentry, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:05 P.M. and a quorum was determined by the presence of Ellis Creel, Will Dillard, Jack Cantey, Stephen Powell, Ralph Bailey and Joe Gentry. Pendleton Grove was absent.

Mr. Gentry noted that, while not required, the Planning Commission would entertain public comment at a certain point later in the meeting. He encouraged those speaking (whether for or against the proposal) to try to aggregate comments, allowing one speaker to represent like concerns, and to engage one another respectfully.

Mr. Gentry noted that Mr. Lee Holloway, City Attorney, was present at the meeting but that he was not acting in an official capacity (i.e., that this was not a public hearing).

Mr. Gentry asked and Mr. Shaun Greenwood, City Administrator, confirmed that proper notice had been given for this meeting and corresponding map amendment.

**2. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes: December 19, 2017**

Mr. Cantey made a motion to approve the December 19, 2017 minutes; Mr. Creel seconded. Minutes were approved unanimously.

**3. New Business**

**1. Map Amendment No. PDD-2018-01 A request by the owner to amend the approved Forest Acres Gym Planned Development District at S/S Forest Drive and 4114, 4132, and 4018 Forest Drive (TMS 14009-01-15, 02, 14, and 16) to rezone properties at 1514, 1510, 1500, and 1450 Brentwood Drive (TMS 14009-02-01, 25, 24, and 23) from Residential District 2 to Planned Development District.**

**A. Opening Statement –**

Mr. Greenwood introduced this item which is a proposal from Cason Development Group that would constitute a major amendment to an existing PDD. Mr. Greenwood noted that all properties had been properly posted. There are two “parcels” in the proposal – parcel 1 being the existing PDD (i.e., with Muv Fitness) and parcel 2 (Brentwood properties that would be rezoned from R-2 to PDD, adding them in to the existing PDD as delineated in the descriptive statement in PDD application). Mr.

Greenwood noted that the proposal would include approximately 15,000 sq. ft. of commercial space on the front of the Brentwood properties with 13 townhomes on the back of the property. Staff's review of the descriptive statement showed that the Cason Group adopted many of the City's existing parking and landscaping requirements for other zoning districts (aside from PDD). Further, residential parking would be consistent with current residential zoning requirements, particularly if two or more units have garages. Staff believes that this is a suitable use for the property and has not identified any red-flags, planning and zoning-wise.

Frank Cason with Cason Development Group introduced himself and his colleagues on the proposed project. He noted that they were looking forward to cleaning up an eyesore in Forest Acres with a high-end development. He noted that they are a small development group based in Columbia that focuses in part on in-fill redevelopment and that several of the employees drive by the property every day going to work. He noted that he's aware of the concern that rezoning (particularly from residential to something with a commercial component) can generate. He noted that they've held meetings with stakeholders, including neighbors on Brentwood and adjoining properties on Greenhill. He noted that they've proposed a conceptual plan to the City and that their intent would be to develop the project with an eye to managing it well into the future.

Mr. Cason presented a PowerPoint with pictures of the existing condition of the properties, consistency of the proposal with the Forest Acres Comprehensive Plan (2009), and a site-plan of the proposed project. Mr. Cason:

- Confirmed that the commercial space will be 14,000-15,000 sq ft. and there will be 13 townhomes (all of which will replace the existing 18 rental units). The commercial square footage will be divided among 3 smaller buildings rather than one large building in keeping with the general scale of buildings in the neighborhood.
- Reiterated that at least some of the units will have garages, making parking for the residential section at least 2 spaces per unit (in keeping with the City's zoning requirements for residential properties).
- Noted that the number of driveways to the property (all of which are on Brentwood) would be reduced from 8 to 3. The Driveway closest to Forest Drive will be closed, which will help traffic turning at the intersection of Brentwood and Forest.
- Noted that, as a PDD, specific requirements for what can be built, signage, future upgrades will be laid out in the PDD document. The Cason Group will have to abide by the PDD plan, if adopted.
- Asserted that they've received 9 letters of support from residents on Brentwood and Greenhill.

Mr. Cason and his colleagues fielded questions from Planning Commission members:

- Mr. Creel asked if there had been discussion with DOT about a traffic light at Brentwood and Forest. Mr. Cason said that they have not had conversations with the DOT, noting that conversations with City staff largely ruled out that possibility. Mr. Greenwood said that he has spoken with DOT engineers who, due to the intersection's proximity to lights at Atascadero and Falcon, noted that such a light is "highly unlikely". Further, many of the existing intersections, as they're configured, wouldn't be allowed by the DOT today.

- Mr. Dillard asked about the townhome management. Mr. Cason confirmed that an association would be established to manage the residential units. Further, Mr. Dillard asked who would manage the detention pond identified in the plan. Mr. Cason noted that they would likely create a maintenance agreement between the management of the commercial component and the residential component for maintenance of the detention pond, as runoff would come from both parts of the property. It would be subject to DHEC regulation. The Cason Group noted that they don't know yet what the depth of the detention/dry pond would be.
- Mr. Gentry asked about square footage and pricing for the townhomes. Mr. Cason noted that, while the design and price hasn't been finalized, the concept would be for 2,000 – 2,500 sq ft. per unit at a price point of high \$300Ks – low \$400Ks.

## B. Public Testimony

Mr. Gentry opened the floor to public comment, asking that those in favor of the project speak first, limiting comments to a few minutes:

- Michael Marsha noted his excitement about the project and the replacement of an “eye-sore”. He did mention concern about the orientation of the commercial buildings with the rear of those buildings abutting Brentwood and he asked about whether the townhomes fronting Brentwood would be oriented with the front facing Brentwood. Mr. Cason confirmed that, design-wise, the commercial buildings fronting Brentwood would indeed appear to be store-fronts even though they'll be the rear of the buildings. The townhomes would have porches facing Brentwood. The emphasis in site layout has been proper scale for the neighborhood.
- Mr. Gregory from Brentwood Dr., who plans to live in the neighborhood for years to come, likes the plan/concept.
- Jonathan Strouse, Brentwood Dr., who just bought his house in June but also plans to be there for a long time noted that he thinks this will add potential to the area and noted his appreciation for the Cason Group.
- Dan Dialberto, Creek Vista Way, noted that the site plan seems very well thought out with a transition/buffer between commercial and residential. He noted that other projects in the Columbia area by the Cason Group have been very well thought out.
- Jack Oliver (Forest Acres resident, business owner, president of Forest Acres Restaurant and Merchant Association) noted that he's in favor assuming good aesthetic frontage on Forest and Brentwood. He noted that many current Forest Acres residents have indicated their desire to sell their current home and move into a townhome, without having to leave Forest Acres. He thinks there's a great market for the type of housing planned for this project.
- Jeff Crane, Brentwood Dr., noted that initially he was not in favor of this because he has three small children and he was concerned about traffic. However, he has changed his mind as he's learned more about the plan and Cason Group. He thinks the benefits outweigh any downsides.
- Pete Balthazor, Brentwood Dr., noted that he's generally in favor of the project, but feels like he needs more information. There are a lot of unknowns and he

thinks the plan should be better developed at this point in the process. Mr. Gentry addressed this concern by noting that something at this conceptual stage meeting City criteria is appropriate at this point because of the expense incurred for more developed plans and engineering. He noted, however, that a final fully-developed PDD plan will have to be in place before City Council votes on the plan.

- Carolyn Cook, Forest Acres resident (Monterey Ct.), noted how bad the property is currently and she's happy about the prospect of redevelopment. She asked about the possibility of a right-hand turn lane off of Brentwood onto Forest. The Cason Group noted that the traffic volume on Brentwood is 1,500 trips per day which doesn't meet DOT specifications for a turn-lane.
- Mary Teaster noted that she's been involved with the owners of the property and their heirs. She said that they were selective about who they wanted to buy the property and wanted to make sure that the property was improved. She noted that Mr. Cason and his family are from the area and that "he's in it for the long haul". She also noted that the Cason Group has spent many hours with City staff making sure that they're complying with Forest Acres ordinances and are in keeping with the tenor of the community.
- Will Owens, Brentwood Dr., said that we know the property needs to be developed and that the Cason Group is a good, local developer. He noted that they've held good meetings and have been receptive to ideas. He said the key question is whether the Cason Group is the right group for the project and he said that he thinks they are. He said he can't imagine that any project a whole lot better would come along.

Mr. Gentry then asked for those opposed to the project to speak, limiting comments to a few minutes:

- Ralph Owings, Greenhill Rd, agreed that the property is currently an eyesore but that he's opposed to anything that would increase traffic, particularly on Forest Dr.
- Claudia Baker, Juarez Ct., noted that she's speaking on behalf of several neighbors. She noted that she's not objecting to the "eyesore being taken care of" but to the means by which it is being taken care of. She noted concerns about:
  - Traffic and pedestrians associated with A.C. Flora (She encourages the placement of a sidewalk to encourage A.C. Flora students to stay on one side of the road, keeping them from having to cross the road)
  - Increased traffic indicated by the number of parking spaces in the plan. She'd like to see a proposal that doesn't try to put so much into the space, as proposed.
  - Existing traffic from Muv Fitness.
  - High proposed price point of townhouses; she'd like to see more affordable housing in Forest Acres. (Mr. Gentry noted that that's driven by economics and the developer's analytics)
- Sandy Moseley, Brentwood Dr., who is a real estate broker who owns property adjacent to the proposed redevelopment. She's concerned about traffic and parking. She wanted to know if the PDD would allow them to use/count parking spaces from the Muv Fitness side of the PDD. She was then concerned about

overflow of the proposed detention pond (Mr. Gentry and the developer noted that the DOT dictates how much must be detained and for how long until runoff can enter the street). She then asked about setbacks from the Commercial buildings to Brentwood (Mr. Greenwood noted that setbacks are 20 ft from the Commercial and 15 from the face of the townhomes to the property line). She then asked about guest parking for the residential component of the development. She then asked about limitations on the type of businesses that could go into the commercial component (Mr. Gentry noted that what can go in is dictated by the PDD and Mr. Greenwood noted that the limited parking would practically limit the mix of businesses that could “fit” in the commercial parcels as planned and that use of off-site parking [e.g., Muv Fitness] would have to be approved by the Zoning Board of Appeals).

- Dick Jenkins, Cedar Ridge Rd. (not in Forest Acres, but he was raised in Forest Acres), noted that he was not necessarily in opposition to the project, but that he would like to make 3 points:
  - There needs to be a study by a registered traffic engineer, to see the effects on Forest Dr. and Brentwood Dr. traffic.
  - Left turn situations on Forest Dr., between Brentwood and Atascadero, are a disaster and that this development may make it worse unless parallel left turn lanes could be put in
  - This intersection is too close to other traffic signals for the DOT to allow another one here
- Betty Hilliard, 4135 Forest Dr., noted that she’s directly across the street from the existing PDD and is concerned about traffic. She also wants to make sure that her block stays residential and she’s worried about safety of drivers and pedestrians in this area.
- John DeLoach, Furman Ave., noted that he’s not opposed and agrees that something should be done at this site and that the Cason Group is a great developer to do it. He’s concerned, though, with how this fits in with the city’s Comprehensive Plan and the current process to reevaluate it. He noted that this is a “key” corner in Forest Acres just like the intersection of Coker and Trenholm. Mr. DeLoach is concerned that these types of “one-off” redevelopment proposals aren’t well guided. He asked about the status of the Comprehensive Plan. (Mr. Gentry noted that the next step would be a public hearing for the Comprehensive Plan update. Mr. Gentry also noted that the current meeting was about the proposed redevelopment and that we needed to address that, but also that in the original development of the Comprehensive Plan (2009) there were several public hearings and opportunities for input, but very few residents participated.).
- Nonie Price, Greenhill Rd., asked about the timeline for the project. Mr. Gentry noted that the Planning Commission would vote tonight with a recommendation (for or against the proposal) to City Council and that Council would put it on their agenda at their discretion. He noted that there would be a public hearing once Council takes up the matter.
- Josh Livingston, Brentwood Dr., noted that he’s not necessarily opposed or for the project, but he did have a concern about the detention pond and who would keep it up and who would enforce that upkeep. The Cason Group noted that DHEC requires that they maintain the pond and that that would be accomplished by some mutual agreement between the commercial and residential management components of the property.

- Dottie Reynolds, Coker St., is concerned about the lot size and the amount of construction for the site. She asked how many stories the townhouses would be (Cason Group: 2-3 stories); total commercial sq. ft. (Cason: 14-15k sq ft). She noted that she thinks this is a lot of development for 2 acres. (Mr. Gentry noted that the Planning Commission's job is not to govern the size, but to make sure it complies with current ordinances.)
- Deborah Goodwin, Greenhill Rd., noted that she's concerned that with 3-story townhouses, people could easily see into her property on Greenhill. Mr. Greenwood noted that the maximum height in the PDD is 35 ft., which is the same height dictated by the zoning ordinance for residential structures, so a single-family house of the same height could be built there under existing zoning. Ms. Goodwin asked about a brick wall and lighting. The Cason Group noted that there are currently no plans for a brick wall, lighting would be appropriate for residential in the residential section, and the townhouse buildings are oriented such that the sides of the buildings (which typically have no or few windows) would face the rear of the Greenhill properties.
- Carole Cash, Greenhill Rd., noted her concern about the commercial component of the development and the loss of residential protection of neighborhoods.
- Sherri Love, Greenhill Rd., is likewise concerned about the commercial aspect and that there would be no buffer for the residential houses on Greenhill that back up to the site. She noted that Forest Acres is a great place and has improved and wants to see that corner redeveloped but that it doesn't have to be commercial.

Mr. Gentry confirmed that there were no other parties wishing to speak.

#### C. Motion

Mr. Gentry opened the floor to Planning Commission members.

Mr. Cantey asked Mr. Greenwood about whether PDD restrictions convey with new ownership as the townhouses get sold. Mr. Greenwood confirmed that new owners do indeed have to comply with the PDD as the zoning follows the property.

Mr. Cantey asked about the maximum density that would exist for this site under its existing zoning (i.e., can you put more duplexes and triplexes than what this PDD plan proposes?). Mr. Greenwood noted that that's hard to determine because of new regulations around parking, setbacks, and storm water, etc., without having a specific proposal for comparison, but that the existing arrangement would probably not be allowed under today's regulations. Generally speaking, "group housing" is allowed under the current zoning of the property.

Mr. Dillard asked whether the Planning Commission's task was to make recommendation based on the site plan included in the plan or just in concept with a return of a detailed plan to the Planning Commission. Mr. Greenwood noted that that determination was up to the Planning Commission, whether they felt they had enough information in their packets to make a "final" recommendation to Council. He noted that the Planning Commission could ask the developer to make specific amendments or for more details. He noted that they've addressed everything that we require in the PDD ordinance, so the Planning Commission could make a recommendation to Council if they

wished. He noted that with the adoption of the site plan in the packet (by Council) the developer would have to abide by it and any significant change they wished to make would have to come back to the Planning Commission and go through the process again.

Mr. Cantey asked the developer about the site lay out, particularly why they put the commercial buildings closer to Brentwood with their rear facing Brentwood. The developers noted that they went through a long iterative process to determine this arrangement, and based their layout on considerations such as proximity to existing residential. They noted that they thought this arrangement, while not the most cost-effective, was best for the neighborhood.

Mr. Gentry called for the question.

**Mr. Cantey made a motion to recommend approval of the developer's proposal to amend the approved Forest Acres Gym Planned Development District at S/S Forest Drive and 4114, 4132, and 4018 Forest Drive (TMS 14009-01-15, 02, 14, and 16) to rezone properties at 1514, 1510, 1500, and 1450 Brentwood Drive (TMS 14009-02-01, 25, 24, and 23) from Residential District 2 to Planned Development District. Mr. Creel seconded the motion.**

Mr. Dillard noted his approval of the work of the Cason Group and that he is glad they're involved, but he's got a few concerns (in addition to traffic): 1. the list of permissible uses, pulled from the original PDD, is too broad and would benefit by being restricted to office-type uses and 2. commercial "creep" down Forest Drive and the precedent this is setting. He likes that there's a buffer between commercial to single-family residential from Forest to Brentwood, but he would like to see a wider landscaping buffer between the new development and the rear of the Greenhill properties.

Mr. Gentry noted that the Planning Commission cannot redesign the project but can note their concerns. The Commission's job is to determine whether the proposal is consistent with the appropriate ordinances. They have to approve it or not (without caveats).

Mr. Ellis noted that this is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the anticipation that commercial uses would exist in this area.

Mr. Dillard noted that he thinks the Planning Commission does have the right and duty to give an opinion as to whether any given zoning map amendment is in the best interest of the city. Mr. Gentry noted that this sort of discretion didn't mean, though, that the Planning Commission could prolong the process and its advancement to the City Council.

The Planning Commission adopted the motion 6-0.

**4. Other Business – There was no other business.**

**5. Adjourn**

Mr. Cantey made a motion to adjourn at 7:45 pm, seconded by Mr. Creel.

Respectfully Submitted,

Andy Smith, Asst. City Administrator/Finance Director  
*(Administrative support of Planning Commission)*