

**CITY OF COLUMBIA TENNESSEE  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
STAFF REPORT**

**STAFF REPORT CONTACT INFORMATION**

Kevin McCarthy, AICP Planning Associate II, [kmccarthy@columbiatn.com](mailto:kmccarthy@columbiatn.com), 931-560-1560

APPLICATION NUMBER  
**22-0077**

APPLICANT/PROPERTY OWNER  
**Scott Bernick/ Gary and Nancy  
Connelly; Donald Blair**

PUBLIC HEARING DATE  
**N/A**

PROPERTY ADDRESS/LOCATION  
**Tax Map 92 Parcels 11.01 & 11.02**

**SUMMARY OF REQUEST: Comprehensive Plan Amendment,  
Annexation, and Rezoning**

The applicant requests annexation with a plan of services of approximately 106 acres off Rock Springs Road with a zoning designation of RS-10. Additionally, the applicant requests to amend Connect Columbia to remove the subject property from the Interstate Gateway Special Area. The applicant seeks these changes in order to subdivide the site into 209 single family lots.



MAP SOURCE: City GIS

EXISTING ZONING	EXISTING LAND USE	SURROUNDING ZONING & LAND USE	SITE IMPROVEMENTS PROPOSED	SIZE OF PROPERTY
Unincorporated	Undeveloped/Single Family	Undeveloped/Single Family	Single-Family Homes	106 ± acres

**COMPATIBILITY with the COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

The future land use character area designation of the subject property is Rural Countryside. The property is also located in the Interstate Gateway Special Area (IGSA) and within an Area of Change (Connect Columbia Maps 4 and 3). Connect Columbia provides contradictory guidance for development of properties within the IGSA with a character area designation of Rural Countryside. In effect, development of this parcel requires a plan amendment to either 1) increase the intensity of potential zoning categories and land uses; or 2) remove the property from the IGSA. The applicant proposes the latter option. With that change, the proposed development implements the Rural Countryside Character Area Matrix and is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan (Connect Columbia p. 20).

**PROPERTY HISTORY**

The property consists of two adjacent parcels. In July 2021, the City of Columbia annexed property immediately to the north of the subject parcels, making them contiguous with the city. The larger of the two tracts is comprised of more than 99 acres of undeveloped land acquired by the current owner in 2016. Improvements on the smaller tract consist of a single-family home constructed in 1979. The property was acquired by its current owner in 2000.

**COMPATIBILITY with the ZONING ORDINANCE**

**Zoning Ordinance Referenced:** (Proposed Zoning of RS-10)

As required by Section 3.18.5.C of the Zoning Ordinance, the applicant submitted a concept plan in support of the annexation and zoning request. The concept plan depicts 209 residential lots. As proposed, the gross density of the development would be less than two dwelling units per acre. The concept also depicts landscape buffers, stormwater facilities, and internal streets with connections to adjacent properties.

**Sections 6.1.2 and 8.1.1 Land Use and Housing Type**

The Zoning Ordinance limits development of properties in an RS-10 zone to single-family detached residences and their subordinate accessory structures. The concept indicates the applicant's intent to subdivide the property into lots which would accommodate detached single-family structures.

**Sections 6.2.6 and 6.3.8 District Development Standards**

The standards for conventional residential development in an RS-10 zone include:

- Minimum lot size of 10,000 square feet with a lot width minimum of 75 feet;
- 30-feet minimum street yard setback;
- 10-feet minimum side yard setback; and
- 20-feet minimum rear yard setback.

The applicant's concept plan generally conforms to these standards. The smallest lots depicted are 75 feet wide with a depth of 135 feet. The concept depicts five cul-de-sacs. Lots with frontage on the cul-de-sacs have street frontages and lot widths which generally appear to conform to the standards of 6.2.6, which regulate such lots.

**Sections 11.2.7 and 11.2.6. Landscape Buffers**

The applicant's concept plan depicts landscape buffers along boundaries and rights-of-way that exceed the minimums prescribed in Sections 11.2.7 and 11.2.6. The Ordinance requires the following landscape buffers:

- Local Road (i.e. Rock Springs Road): a 10-foot wide buffer with an opacity of 10% is required; the concept depicts a 22.5-foot buffer;
- RS-10 adjacent to undeveloped RS-40/Unincorporated (i.e. southern and eastern portions of concept plan): a 10-foot wide buffer with an opacity of 20% is required; the concept depicts a 25-foot buffer; and
- RS-10 adjacent to undeveloped residential PUD (i.e. northern portion of concept plan): a 15-foot wide buffer with an opacity of 40% is required; the concept depicts a 25-foot buffer.

It is generally feasible to develop the site as depicted in the concept in conformance with the Zoning Ordinance. Greater detail will be required at time of Preliminary Plat. Staff will review any subsequent development proposal to ensure adherence with the standards prescribed in the Zoning Ordinance.

OTHER (DESCRIBE) :  
Zoning Ordinance  
3.19.6

### Comprehensive Plan Amendment:

Staff reviewed the request for an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan for consistency with the standards listed in the City of Columbia Zoning Ordinance. The relevant provisions of the Ordinance are listed below, followed by staff analysis.

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#### 3.19.6 CRITERIA FOR PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations of the Planning Commission to the City Council shall show that the Planning Commission has studied and considered the proposed change in relation to the following, where applicable:

- A. Whether the proposed change would be consistent with the intent, goals, objectives, policies, guiding principles and programs of any adopted plans;
- B. Whether the proposed change would be compatible with the existing land use pattern and designated future land uses;
- C. Whether the proposed change would create substantial adverse impacts in the adjacent area or the City in general; and
- D. Whether the subject parcel is of adequate shape and size to accommodate the proposed change.

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Staff's review of Section 3.19.6 in relation to this request finds the following:

- A. Whether the proposed change would be consistent with the intent, goals, objectives, policies, guiding principles and programs of any adopted plans;

*The proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendment is consistent with the guiding principles of Connect Columbia. The staff finding is based on three observations: 1) the Plan's direction for development of the site is contradictory and impossible to implement; 2) the guiding principles of Connect Columbia suggest that it is no longer appropriate to include the subject property in the Interstate Gateway Special Area (IGSA); and 3) the site functions as a liminal space between high-intensity uses and the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB).*

#### ***Connect Columbia Provides Contradictory Guidance for Development of the Parcels***

*It is impossible to develop the subject property in a manner consistent with the Plan. The Comprehensive Plan designates this property Rural Countryside. The character area*

*supports Low-Density Residential zoning, including the RS-10 classification requested by the applicant. The Plan also places this property inside the IGSA. The special area reserves land for “high intensity nonresidential uses and some limited high density residential development” (Connect Columbia p.48). In particular, the Plan encourages industrial and “freight-intensive” land uses. Residential development in the IGSA is limited to mixed-use PUDs and extensions of established land uses. The Rural Countryside Character Area does not support the high-intensity zoning which would permit the land uses necessary to implement the IGSA. Therefore, a plan amendment is necessary to either reclassify the parcel to a higher intensity character area, or to remove the parcel from the IGSA so that it can be annexed with an implementing zone appropriate to Rural Countryside.*

### ***Guiding Principles of Connect Columbia***

*Removing the subject property from the IGSA is consistent with the guiding principles of Connect Columbia. The Future Land Use Plan explicitly references the “transect model” developed by the architectural firm Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company (Connect Columbia p.11). The transect model is a conceptual understanding of how cities form in a pattern of gradual transition from urban core to rural countryside, with special districts accommodating unique high-intensity land uses. Connect Columbia identifies seven such special districts, including the IGSA. The Subject Property is a Peripheral Portion of the IGSA.*

*The IGSA includes the most of the area surrounding the I-65 interchange at Bear Creek Pike within the UGB. Although the outlying portions of the IGSA have an underlying future land use classification of Rural Countryside, the Plan designates the properties which form the core of the Special Area as either Center or Employment District. Clearly, the intent of the plan, as drafted in 2017 and adopted in 2018, was to reserve this core area for freight-intensive commercial land uses. The inclusion of adjacent properties within the UGB provided flexibility to expand the Center and Employment Character Areas in order to accommodate anticipated commercial development. That development has not materialized. At the same time, residential development has progressed outward from the inner portions of Columbia.*

### ***Low-Density Residential Use of the Site is Consistent with the Connect Columbia***

*The Rural Countryside Character Area defines the natural edge of development and prevents the “leap-frogging” of higher-intensity and incompatible land uses. Maintaining the character area designation of the subject site and allowing it to develop as low-density residential is consistent with the transect model which forms the guiding principle of the Plan. Removing the property from the IGSA is necessary to allow the development of the parcel as Rural Countryside. Therefore, the proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendment is consistent with the intent, goals, objective, policies, and guiding principles of Columbia’s Land Use Plan.*

- B. Whether the proposed change would be compatible with the existing land use pattern and designated future land uses;

*The proposed change, removing the subject property from the IGSA, is compatible with the existing land use pattern and designated future land uses. The property borders the UGB and forms the transition between the City and the rural areas of unincorporated Maury County. The property could not be developed in a manner consistent with the IGSA and retain its current character area designation of Rural Countryside.*

- C. Whether the proposed change would create substantial adverse impacts in the adjacent area or the City in general;

*The applicant's intended use of the property will be subject to the standards contained in the Zoning Ordinance which mitigate potential adverse impacts upon adjoining property owners and the City in general. The proposed use is consistent with the Character Area and the Area of Change designation for the property.*

- D. Whether the subject parcel is of adequate shape and size to accommodate the proposed change:

*The applicant has provided a concept plan depicting a 209-lot subdivision. It is generally feasible to develop the site as depicted in the concept in conformance with the Zoning Ordinance. Greater detail will be required at time of Preliminary Plat. Staff will review any subsequent development proposal to ensure adherence with the standards prescribed in the Zoning Ordinance.*

### **Rezoning:**

Staff reviewed the request for an amendment of the Official Zoning Map for consistency with the City of Columbia Zoning Ordinance. The relevant provisions of the Ordinance are listed below, followed by staff analysis.

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#### **3.18.7.B ACTION BY THE PLANNING COMMISSION FOR REZONING**

The Planning Commission in its review and recommendation shall make specific findings with regard to the following grounds for an amendment and shall note the same in the official record as follows:

1. The rezoning is in agreement with the general plan for the area;
2. It has been determined that the legal purposes for which zoning exists are not contravened;
3. It has been determined that there will be no adverse effect upon adjoining property owners unless such effect can be justified by the overwhelming public good or welfare;



4. It has been determined that no one property owner or small group of property owners will benefit materially from the change to the detriment of the general public; and
5. It has been determined that conditions affecting the area have changed to a sufficient extent to warrant an amendment to the area's general plan or other applicable local plans, and consequently, the zoning map.
6. The availability of adequate school, road, parks, wastewater treatment, water supply, and stormwater drainage facilities.

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Staff's review of Section 3.18.7(B) in relation to this rezoning request finds the following:

1. The rezoning is in agreement with the general plan for the area;

*Three elements of Connect Columbia are relevant to the consistency analysis of the proposed Zoning Map Amendment: 1) the Area of Change designation; 2) the zoning classifications supported by the character area matrix; and 3) the special area matrix.*

#### ***Area of Change***

*The property is located within an Area of Change. Connect Columbia establishes the designation at Map 3 of the Future Land Use Plan. The text of the Plan indicates that the Area of Change designation is an analytical tool and the first item of review for any proposed development (Connect Columbia p.19). The designations were developed through a process of public input during the drafting of Connect Columbia. This feature of the Plan identifies areas where the community anticipates new development (Connect Columbia p. 14). The Area of Change Map relates to the Development Pattern criterion in each Character Area Matrix. The review criterion "ensure[s] that the context of the area surrounding the subject property is included fully in the review process" (Connect Columbia p. 14). The Rural Countryside Character Area Matrix indicates that "changes to the area are likely" and that development of the subject property is anticipated "as infrastructure improvements occur" (Connect Columbia p.20).*

#### ***Rural Countryside Character Area Matrix***

*The current Comprehensive Plan designation for the subject property is Rural Countryside. The character area matrix supports residential uses in low-density residential districts (Connect Columbia p.20). Sections 5.1.1 and 5.5.3 of the Zoning Ordinance establish RS-10 as one of three implementing zone districts for this land use. Therefore, the proposed rezoning to RS-10 is consistent with the existing future land use character area.*

#### ***Special Area Matrix***

*As discussed above, the subject property is located within the IGSA. The proposed rezoning to RS-10 is inconsistent with the IGSA, which discourages residential*

*development outside of a mixed-use PUD. The proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendment removes the subject property from the IGSA. With this change the proposed rezoning will implement the Plan.*

2. The legal purposes for which zoning exists are not contravened;

*All future development will be required to conform to the Zoning Ordinance standards in effect at that time; therefore, legal purposes for which zoning exists will not be contravened.*

3. There will be no adverse effects upon adjoining property owners;

*All adjoining properties are currently vacant or single-family residential. Entitlements have been approved for residential development to the north of the property. The property to the south is outside the UGB and is unlikely to develop. The parcel immediately to the east has a future land use of Center and is within the IGSA. It is possible that an adjacent residential use could limit the development potential of this site for freight-intensive commercial development. However, this risk can be mitigated by adequate buffering and by obtaining direct connectivity to Bear Creek Pike across the property to the north rather than to Rock Springs Road across the subject property.*

4. No one property owner or small group of property owners will benefit materially from the change to the detriment of the general public;

*The proposal will benefit a single property owner; however, any potential detrimental effects on the general public can be mitigated through the standards in the Zoning Ordinance.*

5. Conditions affecting the area have changed to a sufficient extent to warrant an amendment to City's Zoning Map.

*Demand for housing in the City of Columbia has increased to a sufficient extent to warrant the addition of RS-10 zoned property to the City's zoning map. The demand for owner-occupied housing in Columbia has increased faster than supply. Between the decennial censuses of 2010 and 2020, the city's population grew at nearly twice the rate of its housing inventory.*

*According to data compiled by the Tennessee Housing Development Agency (THDA), the median sales price of single-family homes in Maury County increased by more than 20% between 2015 and 2020. The volume of home sales increased by more than 70% during the same period. These figures indicate that both supply and demand are increasing. However, supply has not expanded fast enough to satisfy the increase in demand, resulting in rising prices.*

*Data reported by the Southern Middle Tennessee Association of Realtors (SMTAR) confirms that this dynamic has continued through March of 2022. Within the eight-county area served by SMTAR, the inventory of homes on the market has declined by more than 50% year-over-year. At the same time, median prices have increased by more than 27%. The average time it takes for a listing to sell has fallen from one month to just two weeks as the market rapidly absorbs new inventory.*

*Demand for single-family detached housing in low-density developments in Columbia is strong. Residents seeking to purchase a home face difficulty finding affordable and available homes. Even in the event of a market correction, demand for housing in Columbia is likely to remain above historic precedents. For these reasons, the Planning Commission may find that conditions affecting the area have changed to a sufficient extent to warrant an amendment to City's Zoning Map.*

6. There are adequate schools, roads, parks, wastewater treatment facilities, water supply, and stormwater drainage facilities to support this zoning change.

*Section 5.5 of the Zoning Ordinance establishes the residential districts used to implement Connect Columbia. The requested R/RS-10 zoning designation permits the highest density of the three low-density residential districts. The R/RS-10 designation is distinguished from the least-dense R/RS-40, in part, by the need for complete urban services. The Ordinance establishes that "these districts shall be served by complete urban services and facilities" and that they "include community facilities, public utilities, and open uses."*

*Technical comments from public service providers generally indicate that services are in place to support the zoning change. However, upgrades to the wastewater system may be necessary to support development on this site and other properties in the area. Additionally, some question remains about the availability of water for both domestic use and fire protection. Greater detail will be required before the conceptual development can proceed to subdivision.*

- *The City of Columbia Public Works Department has indicated that it will provide sanitation, as well as maintain streets and drainage systems, for any future low-density residential development of the site.*
- *Duck River Electric has indicated that it will provide electrical service to future residential development on the subject property.*
- *The City Engineer will require a traffic impact study at the time of Preliminary Plat which will identify any improvements necessary to maintain the current level of service.*
- *Maury County Schools did not provide comments regarding impacts to the school system or concurrent expansion of facilities.*
- *The City of Columbia Wastewater System indicated that the subject site is located in an area of concern. Upgrades to pump stations which serve the area may be*



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*required in the near future. Consulting engineers are evaluating the extent of upgrades necessary to expand service and handle additional flow expected to result from the cumulative impact of proposed development in the area.*

- *Columbia Power and Water Systems (CPWS) indicated that the property is currently in the service area of Maury County Water. The established best practice is for residences located in the city to be served by CPWS. The applicant will need to confirm that CPWS can serve any potential development on the site prior to Preliminary Plat.*
- *The Fire Marshal has requested that the developer verify adequate fire flow is available at the site.*