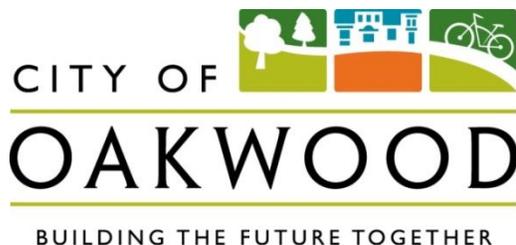


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CITY CLERK
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NEWS ARTICLE: Gainesville Times on September 20, 2015

Townhomes planned across from Johnson High School Land development firm seeks zoning change

Plans for up to 105 townhouses are proposed across from Johnson High School in Oakwood on a site considered for condominiums before a bad economy several years ago killed the project.

Rochester & Associates, a Gainesville land development firm, is set to ask the Oakwood Planning Commission Monday to change zoning on the nearly 13-acre site off Poplar Springs Road that would allow development of Hawthorne Village Townhomes.

Completion is expected in 2018.

“Without this change in zoning (from residential to planned residential development), the property will most likely remain partially developed and continue to be an eyesore for the city,” Rochester’s application states.

The site, which is also near Redwine United Methodist Church and less than a half-mile east of Ga. 13/Atlanta Highway, originally was zoned to allow for 82 condominiums.

Development started in 2006, but, “due at least in part to the real estate downturn, no homes were constructed,” Rochester says.

Today, trees and other vegetation cover the otherwise vacant property. Beyond a locked gate at the entrance are hints of previous work, including roads and street lights.

“A portion of the roads and utilities are in” the development, but not much else, City Manager Stan Brown said.

“Definitely, some work needs to be done for (the neighborhood) to be brought up to standard,” he said.

Rochester’s executive vice president, Brian Rochester, who filed the application, couldn’t be reached for comment Friday.

“As currently zoned, condominium development is the only option and the market is not good for condominiums at this time, and therefore the property value will be diminished if the current zoning remains,” Rochester says in the application.

At one point, the property was bank-owned, as was the case with many developments, residential and otherwise, following the Great Recession.

The new owner, REO Funding Solutions of Atlanta, has tried to market the property for condos “to a number of builders/developers with no success,” Rochester says.

“The townhome (development), though similar in size, is in more demand and easier to finance and purchase.”

Rezoning meeting

What: Oakwood Planning Commission

When: 7 p.m. Monday

Where: Oakwood City Hall, 4035 Walnut Circle

Contact: 770-534-2365