



BULLOCH COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Office of The County Manager

DATE: September 30, 2022

FROM: Tom Couch, County Manager
Cindy Steinmann, Assistant County Manager
Jeff Akins, County Attorney
James Pope, Planning and Development Director
Brad Deal, County Engineer

TO: Bulloch County Moratorium Steering Committee
Bulloch County Board of Commissioners
Bulloch County Planning and Zoning Commission
Bulloch County Citizens and Interested Parties

SUBJECT: Interim Report #1 – Bulloch County Zoning Moratorium

On August 16, 2022, the Bulloch County Board of Commissioners acted to adopt a residential zoning moratorium for Southeast Bulloch County for six months, until February 2023. This moratorium is intended to address the nature of sprawling growth and to plan for anticipated future growth resulting from the inevitable demand for development created by the Hyundai Motor Group development in nearby North Bryan County.

In its finding of facts associated with the moratorium resolution, the County land use and development codes are being reviewed and aligned with a proposed amendment to Smart Bulloch 2040 Joint Comprehensive Plan's Future Development Map. Though the plan is jointly adopted with Brooklet, Portal, and Register, this particular amendment does not affect any potential future development proximate to any municipal limits, including Statesboro.

Based on Hyundai's employment projections, staff analysis and findings make it reasonable to conclude that Southeast Bulloch's population will grow by an additional 5,000 residents more than its usual volume of growth of 8,000 residents by or before 2030. To address this growth, and upon the announcement of the Hyundai development, Bulloch County and Bryan County had already been looking at ways to partner to expand regional water and sewer infrastructure whereby a county operated public utility could serve Southeast Bulloch. Particularly, public sanitary sewer is essential to forming more compact development, and a preliminary utility service boundary has been established in lower Southeast Bulloch where it seems logical to

stage future growth. The proposed utility service boundary is not final and is subject to change. However, as it approaches becoming final, it is intended to serve as map overlays for existing character area categories that are in the current Smart Bulloch 2040 Comprehensive Plan – Suburban Neighborhood, Suburban Corridor (along selected road segments), and possibly Interstate Gateways at Exits 132 and 137 on Interstate 16.

Meanwhile, the County continues to perform necessary planning and engineering on the water utility while addressing land use policies, regulations, and codes. In doing so, a steering committee was formed consisting of nine stakeholders appointed to study these matters. Assisted by County staff and consultants with the requisite expertise, this committee will provide findings or recommendations that can be used by the Board of Commissioners to act as the moratorium proceeds and concludes. The stakeholder committee met on September 12, 2022 in Statesboro for orientation and briefing on these matters and was given their charge.

Charles Wilson, Superintendent, County Board of Education
Benjy Thompson, Development Authority of Bulloch County
Will Groover, Agriculture Representative
Wade McEleveen, Agriculture Representative
Jeanne Anne Marsh, Chair, County Planning and Zoning Commission
Charles Chandler, Vice-Chair, County Planning and Zoning Commission
Anthony Simmons, County Commissioner
Curt Deal, County Commissioner
Roy Thompson, County Commission Chairman

It should be noted that no real estate developers are a part of this committee, although Chairman Roy Thompson and several county staff met with three local developers prior to this meeting to hear their concerns. These local developers wanted consideration to extend the proposed character areas further north on State Route 67 toward Statesboro.

Consistent with state rules and regulations regarding comprehensive planning, a public input element is required anytime a comprehensive plan is updated or amended. The first of two mandated public hearings were held in Statesboro on September 19, 2022. 30 citizens representing portions of the moratorium area attended. Tom Couch, County Manager, moderated the meeting. James Pope, Planning and Development Director, made an initial presentation, and then he and the County Manager fielded questions and concerns. Much citizen concern questioned the need to change the comprehensive plan, with a preference to follow the existing rural character areas throughout Southeast Bulloch County. Those citizens present also expressed concern that no county commissioners were present at the hearing. To address these concerns, the Planning and Development Department has created a web page featuring frequently asked questions (FAQs), and an archive of documents for public review, including this report. The Board of Commissioners has scheduled a Listening Session on Monday, October 10, 2022, at 5:30 P.M., at 115 North Main Street in Statesboro. While extended primarily as an invitation to concerned citizens of Southeast Bulloch County the general public is invited to attend. An additional public hearing opportunity is scheduled for

Tuesday, November 1, 2022, at 5:30 P.M., at 115 North Main Street in Statesboro, and will be part of the regularly scheduled Board of Commissioners meeting agenda. A final public hearing prior to the comprehensive plan amendment adoption and transmittal to DCA is scheduled for January 10, 2023. It should be noted that other groups such as Habitat for Humanity and the Ogeechee Riverkeepers are showing formal interest with these matters.

The priority ordinance work necessary includes updating and amending the zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations. These ordinances have become outdated or have deficiencies. The County staff, the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Board of Commissioners have relied heavily on attaching conditions to new development that are difficult for the staff to track and enforce, and for developers to follow or comply with. The goals for updating these ordinances are to reduce the number of routinely approved zoning conditions by embedding them in the existing ordinances, reflect new trends in construction and land uses, and align the previous two goals with the policies and design principles of the Comprehensive Plan.

Beginning with significant staff revisions in early September, a working draft for the subdivision regulations changes has been circulated among internal staff for review. The primary changes have involved adding or modifying definitions, re-ordering criteria from narrative to tabular form to make it easier to follow, introducing language consistent with as many as 20 routinely approved zoning or development conditions, and adding higher standards for the placement of infrastructure items, plan submissions and performance guarantees. Though these criteria typically address residential subdivisions, some address site design issues for non-residential development. Regular staff meetings will begin the first week of October to vet these changes.

In late September, a working draft of zoning ordinance changes began. The zoning approach will differ in some ways from the subdivision regulations but have overlapping themes or requirements. Before updating entirely obsolete definitions, tables for uses, signage, parking, and buffer requirements, the most significant work will require establishing supplemental development standards for as many as 40 new and existing uses that are commercial and industrial. While basic development standards typically involve dimensional requirements (height, bulk, and setback) for all uses and structures, these supplemental standards may exceed basic standards with additional requirements for buffers and landscaping, architectural features, or reducing other potential negative impacts on nearby properties. The supplemental development standards concept is used by peer counties in Georgia including Jackson, Troup, Lowndes, and Bryan. If time permits, consideration will also be given to establishing additional overlay districts suggested by the comprehensive plan. A working draft of the zoning ordinance is not likely to be ready until mid-October.

Two additional ordinances are contemplated. A new stormwater and drainage ordinance are being contemplated to deal with new development that has a higher rate of stormwater runoff and pollution, where man made drainage solutions may be needed. Our County Engineer, Brad Deal, developed a draft ordinance that will likely be vetted in early November after the zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations are substantially complete. Though it is not likely to be started or finished before the conclusion of a moratorium, but is needed by

mid-2023, is a water and sewer service ordinance. This ordinance establishes the engineering, environmental and policy standards necessary to run a responsible wet utility function. Ultimately, additional work will be needed in advance to develop service policies and standard operating procedures for operations and maintenance.

Bulloch County continues to seek leveraged funding and has applied for more than \$12 million to fund an estimated \$22.6 million in water and sewer infrastructure to serve Southeast Bulloch. In addition to \$7.8 million in local ARPA funds that have been committed, \$3.0 million has been applied for through Senator Warnock’s office for wastewater expansion, and \$9.8 million has been applied for to the Governor’s Office for state held ARPA funds. Additional funding is being contemplated through the Georgia Environmental Financing Authority for a subsidized low-interest 30-year loan under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. By or before 2030, if all funding is put in play, a new utility system could serve 2,000 water customers and 1,500 sewer customers.

Bryan County officials are planning to build an 8-million-gallon per day wastewater treatment plant to serve the Hyundai plant and surrounding area and have pledged 250,000 to 500,000 gallons per day of sewage capacity to Bulloch County. In the future, Bulloch County could explore buying additional capacity from the City of Statesboro, or build its own wastewater treatment plant. Both scenarios are projected to cost \$10-\$12 million to add 500,000 gallons-a-day capacity.

Rob Hosack, the former Cobb County Manager who has a firm called BH3, is assisting Bulloch County with the comprehensive plan amendment and land use code revisions. BH3 is also assisting Hofstadter and Associates, an engineering firm in Macon who is working on preliminary plans and cost estimates for the water and sewer infrastructure. BH3 will advise Hofstadter on optimal siting of infrastructure based on likely future development patterns.

The action agenda and schedule for the moratorium remains essentially the same. As these meetings and reports occur, the volume of information being issued to the stakeholders will increase and may become more technical in nature. In October and November, the staff, consultants, and the County Attorney will need to interact and execute final key ordinance drafts, robustly. Interaction with the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Board of Commissioners will be needed for acceptance, rejection or modification of all proposed changes. It is possible, though not likely, that some ordinance changes may be deferred for further deliberation after the moratorium concludes, or if the moratorium needs extending.

Proposed Action Agenda:

October 10:	Board of Commissioners Listening Session
October 17:	Stakeholder Meeting #2 (Tentative)
October 28:	Interim Report #2
November 1:	Board of Commissioners Public Hearing
November 3:	Stakeholder Meeting #3

	Begin Review of Water and Sewer Ordinance
December 10:	File Zoning Ordinance Revisions for January Planning and Zoning Meeting
December 30:	Interim Report #3
January 9:	Stakeholder Meeting #4
January 10:	Comprehensive Plan Public Hearing #2
January 12:	Planning and Zoning Commission Recommend Revised Ordinances and Map Amendment
January 17:	Board of Commissioners Approve Comprehensive Plan Map Amendment
February 7:	Board of Commissioners Approve Revised Ordinances (Zoning/Subdivision)
February 16:	SE Bulloch Moratorium ends (Applications Accepted for April Meeting)
February 21:	Board of Commissioners Approve a Stormwater and Drainage Ordinance and Tentative Water and Sewer Ordinance

In conclusion, it is fair to say that the staff, consultants, steering committee and other stakeholders are just keeping pace now that 25% of the moratorium period has elapsed. However, the pace needs to pick up before the demands of the holiday season are upon us. Most likely, the harder policy discussions will begin in November.

Please follow the link below for additional information:

<https://bullochcounty.net/comprehensive-plan-amendment/>