

MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 15, 2021

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Commissioners

VIA: James Slaton, City Manager

FROM: Mark J. Bennett, Development Services Director
Autumn Cochella, Development Services Manager

SUBJECT: Preliminary Subdivision Plat Approval / Special Exception Use Permit Approval for a Residential Planned Development Project (PDP)
PID: 283006000000031010
"Belle Lago"
PUBLIC HEARING requirements have been met.

SYNOPSIS: *ECON, agent for Tri Ben Groves, owner, is requesting approval of a 84-lot single-family Preliminary Subdivision Plat and a Special Exception Use Permit for a Residential PDP on 47.62 acres of land west of Scenic Highway, with a peninsula extending into Lake Belle.*

RECOMMENDATION

Approval of an 84-lot single-family Preliminary Subdivision Plat and a Special Exception Use Permit for a Residential PDP, with conditions of approval recommended by the Planning and Zoning Board at a regular meeting on May 25, 2021.

BACKGROUND

General:

The 47.62-acre vacant grove land is located on the west side of Scenic Highway, with a peninsular extending into Lake Belle.

The proposed single-family subdivision is designed as a Planned Development Project, including requested Waivers of Strict Compliance and elevated design standards.

Maximum density allowed on the site is calculated at 5 units per gross acre under the updated Comprehensive Plan for LDR Low-Density Residential; a density of only 1.78 dwelling units per acre is proposed. A portion of the site extends into the lake, leaving 33.28 acres of developable land. This creates a net density of 2.52 units per acre.

Typical lot sizes range from 6,250 square feet, to 8,125 square feet, and 50 to 65 feet wide.

Roadways & Access:

One entrance to the site is shown from Scenic Highway. Initial design for the site included two access points from Scenic Highway; however, the Florida Department of Transportation determined that only one would be permitted. An access permit for Scenic Highway must be obtained from FDOT, as it is a State Road.

State Road 17 is classified as an Urban Collector per the Polk Transportation Planning Organization 2020 Roadway Network Database. Currently, this roadway has an estimated Annual Average Daily Traffic of 6,600 trips, with 231 peak hour trips northbound and 241 southbound. The level of service standard of this roadway is LOS "D" with a maximum of 896 peak hour trips, and currently operates at LOS "B".

A 5-foot-wide sidewalk will be constructed along the perimeter of the development on Scenic Highway, as well as on both side of the streets interior to the development.

Landscaping and Buffering:

A landscape plan will be required during the Site Development review process, which must demonstrate compliance with the City's Landscape Code.

Flexibility in the perimeter buffer design is requested, with options to include a landscaped subdivision wall or berm. The Planning Board requested that an effort be made by the developer to design around and preserve existing significant trees site-wide.

Residential tree density requirements will be enforced at building permit issuance, pursuant to section 23-307.2.a.3: *a minimum of two, two-inch caliper shade trees, minimum of eight feet at planting.*

Recreation:

The project is designed with an emphasis on green open space. At least twenty percent of the site, or 9.52 acres in this case, is required by code for a PDP. Over 16 acres of the site is proposed to remain as recreation and open space, meandering around Lake Belle. A .60-acre neighborhood park is proposed with a private fishing dock, and the mini-park requirement has been satisfied with a 9.24-acre linear park.

Waivers of Strict Compliance:

The applicant requests the following Waivers of Strict Compliance from certain dimensional and area standards in the R-1C zoning district:

- 1.) Minimum lot area: 6,250 square foot interior lots is requested where 8,000 SF is required by code.
- 2.) Minimum lot width at building line: 50 feet wide is requested where 65 feet wide is required by code.
- 3.) Side building setback: 5 feet is requested where 10 feet is required by code.
- 4.) Corner lot functional side yard setback: 15 feet is requested where 25 feet is required by code.
- 5.) Increase in the allowable lot coverage not to exceed 70% where 40% is required by code.

Proposed Superior Design Standards:

In exchange for the consideration of the above-mentioned Waivers of Strict Compliance requested, the applicant proposes the following elevated design elements in order to demonstrate a superior product:

1. The installation of sidewalks on both sides on interior streets (only one side is required by code).
2. Increased open space and recreation area.

Staff Comments and Findings:

1. The Plan meets the Residential PDP standards found in Section 23-443.
 - a. 23-443.1.a. Density does not exceed the maximum allowed.
 - b. 23-443.1.b. Open space makes up a minimum of twenty percent of the site.
 - c. 23-443.2.b. Natural features of the land are preserved and integrate into the overall design, parks and open space are incorporated into natural features, and streetscapes will include enhanced landscaping.
2. The use is compatible with the intentions of Policy 2.11: Low Density Residential of the City's Comprehensive Plan.
3. This site is located within the City's utility service area and will connect to municipal water and sewer. Reclaim water is also available for connection.
4. The proposed plan demonstrates design elements that are superior to the requirements of a standard subdivision.

The Planning and Zoning Board recommends the following conditions of approval:

- a. Street Tree Plan is required.
- b. Fences must be setback a minimum of 15 feet behind the front building expression line.

At the Planning and Zoning Board hearing on Tuesday, March 25, 2021, County residents from the nearby Ridge Manor neighborhood were present and expressed opposition and concerns regarding allowing additional development along Lake Belle, as well as additional traffic on Scenic Highway.

Lake Belle, which experienced high water levels nearly 17 years ago during an active hurricane season, has not since posed a flooding threat to residents. Lake Belle is pumped by Polk County when water rises to a certain level, a practice that proved effective during recent storms.

The project will be designed with onsite storm water ponds to support the new development. According to John McVay, a licensed surveyor working on the project, the Belle Lago site is 10 feet above lake elevation; Lake Bell did not flood during Hurricane Irma, a 20" storm event.

Staff also looked into other expressed concerns, including the condition of the City's Rapid Infiltration Basins (RIBs) just south of this site. According to the City's Utilities Director, the City's RIBs, which are permeable earthen basins, are designed and operated to treat and disperse municipal wastewater. RIBs are typically operated in conjunction with either a primary wastewater pond, or a primary and secondary wastewater pond system, in addition to a public access reuse system.

Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays the Rib "Gates" are changed. This changes the Rib into which the reuse water is wasted. Only the Scenic Ribs are utilized. They are Mowed on an as-needed basis. Additionally, the Disc is used on them approximately once per month, and they are Rototilled twice a year.

OTHER OPTIONS

Decline to approve the preliminary subdivision plat and PDP.

FISCAL IMPACT

Approval of the preliminary plat and PDP would enable the development of this property and the potential increase in property value. Specifically, estimating an average of \$200,000 in taxable value per unit, it could potentially result in over \$17 million in taxable value, and generate \$115,555 in ad valorem taxes.

*Adjusted values for potential homesteaded properties have not been factored into this estimate.

ATTACHMENTS

Plan: Belle Lago, revised May 11, 2021, prepared by ECON.