



CITY OF FOREST PARK
URBAN DESIGN REVIEW BOARD MEETING

Friday, June 20, 2025 at 12:00 PM
Council Chambers

Website: www.forestparkga.gov
Phone Number: (404) 366.4720

PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
785 Forest Parkway
Forest Park, GA 30297

MINUTES

Rodney Givens, Chairman
Ron Dodson, Vice Chairman
Yahya Hassan, Member
Karyl Clayton, Member
Yoni Cortez, Member

CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME:

Rodney Givens called the meeting to order at 12:06 pm.

ROLL CALL:

PRESENT:

Rodney Givens
Ron Dodson
Yahya Hassan
Karyl Clayton

ABSENT:

Yoni Cortez

ALSO PRESENT:

Nicole Dozier, Director of Planning & Community Development
SaVaughn Irons-Kumassah, Principal Planner
Latemia Richards, Planner I
Latonya Turner, Planning & Community Development Office Coordinator

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

1. Approval of April 18, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Ron Dodson made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from April 18, 2025. Karyl Clayton seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS:

2. **Applicant Gaetan Gachelin requests approval for the conceptual design for a new multi-family duplex at 0 Ferguson Court, Parcel# 13049A A031, Ward 2. - Tabled Item from April 18, 2025**

Background/History

The applicant requests conceptual approval for a two-family duplex on a vacant parcel zoned for residential use (RM). The proposed Contemporary/Modern design features a mixed roof form, Hardie siding, architectural shingles, and modern entry and stair elements. Final construction documents and permits will be subject to further technical review following conceptual approval.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: (All Speakers will have 3 Minutes)

Clifford Pellegrine expressed concern regarding the narrow lot size and limited lane width at the proposed development site. He acknowledged the design was visually appealing but emphasized the potential for disruption to nearby residents during construction. He also questioned whether residents on Ferguson Court had appropriately been notified about the proposed project, noting that he lives nearby and had not received any notice himself.

SaVaughn Irons-Kumassah explained that the project was presented to the board in April but was tabled during that meeting. She mentioned that the current review serves as a follow-up to that discussion. Additionally, she noted that public notice was issued in accordance with all applicable requirements, which included placing a sign on the property and mailing notifications to nearby property owners when the property was rezoned in 2024.

Ron Dodson made a motion to approve the conceptual design for 0 Ferguson Court. Yahya Hassan seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARING:

3. **Applicant Kirk Dunn requests approval for the conceptual design for a new two-building data center campus development at 0 Fort Gillem, Parcel# 12210 210004, Ward 3.**

Background/History:

The applicant seeks conceptual design approval for a two-building data center complex on a 10-acre wooded parcel in the Gillem District (GZ). The proposed development includes a 1.6 million sq. ft. and a 200,000 sq. ft. two-story tilt-up concrete facility, both with modern glass curtain walls and defined entrances. Key design features include energy-efficient TPO roofing, aluminum curtain wall panels, aluminum-clad windows, and minimalist canopies. Site elements include an electrical substation, access drives, guard house, surface parking, utility infrastructure, stormwater facility, and landscaping to mitigate tree loss and soften the industrial character. To ensure compatibility and minimize impacts on adjacent residential properties, conditions include enhancing the west façade with mixed materials, collaborating with staff on residential-facing design improvements, and installing a fencing buffer for added screening and separation.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: (All Speakers will have 3 Minutes)

Kirk Dunn spoke in favor of the proposal, noting that the site is currently a landfill. He stated that as part of the land development process, the site will be cleaned up and all oil and contaminants will be removed. He also noted that environmental testing is currently underway to assess site conditions.

Nancy Howard, a 35-year resident, spoke in opposition to the proposal. She expressed concerns about the site's history as a landfill, potential contamination, and the environmental impact on nearby residents, particularly those with health conditions. She noted the significant water and energy demands of data centers and questioned whether the City Arborist had reviewed the proposed tree removal. While acknowledging the building's aesthetic appeal, she emphasized that environmental and public health impacts should take precedence.

Linda Jones stated that a data center is already being developed less than five miles from her residence. She referenced a 2014 environmental report detailing vapor intrusions in the Fort Gillem area and expressed concern that the proposed facility could exacerbate existing environmental hazards. Ms. Jones warned against unchecked industrial development turning the area into a "Clayton County Death Valley" if industrial development continues without mitigation.

Name (inaudible) expressed concern that many residents were unaware of the project and missed the chance to provide input before the City Council. He emphasized the need for transparency and community involvement, particularly in light of rising property taxes. He warned about the environmental and infrastructure impacts of rapidly expanding data centers and called for an EPA review and increased safeguards. He also criticized the lack of a community benefits agreement, urging the city to require reinvestment in local resources, such as parks, libraries, and schools, in exchange for tax incentives.

Attania Jean-Funny pointed out that the portion of the property located within city limits is the only area under this board's purview. She requested clarity regarding the jurisdictional boundaries and the city's role versus that of the county in approving and overseeing the project, given that neighboring properties are located in unincorporated Clayton County. She stressed that the zoning code was created before the emergence of massive data centers. Ms. Jean-Funny questioned who pays for electricity from the on-site substation, suggesting that it ultimately burdens the community. She also brought up historical water contamination issues and cautioned that developers are unlikely to address environmental mitigation unless required to do so by the city.

Director Nicole Dozier explained that the Fort Gillem District is zoned for industrial use and that data centers are a permitted use by right. As a result, the project did not require review or approval by the Mayor and Council. She noted that, although the board's scope is limited to architectural design and aesthetics, additional conditions—including fencing, screening, and façade improvements—were recommended to reduce potential negative impacts on the surrounding community. She acknowledged the public's concerns and indicated that further discussions with the applicant would be held to address broader issues.

Clifford Pellegrine stated that, aside from the building's appearance, their concern was the broader presence of data centers in Forest Park. He referenced past decisions—such as allowing a waste transfer station—and warned against letting the city become a "dumping ground" for unwanted infrastructure. Mr. Pellegrine urged that the message be passed on to city leadership that residents are no longer willing to accept harmful developments without benefit to the community.

Brenda Harrison encouraged the board to table the item to allow for further review, noting that many in the audience have board experience and understand the complexity of such decisions. Ms. Harrison questioned whether the developer had considered incorporating solar panels or other sustainable energy sources, given Georgia Power's anticipated increased grid usage. She also raised concerns about significant water consumption by existing data centers—specifically referencing the facility in the former JCPenney outlet—and warned of its impact on water availability for county residents. She urged the board to conduct further research before making a final decision.

Name (inaudible) expressed concerns about the long-term impact of the proposed data center on future generations. He questioned claims of local economic benefit, noting that the project has reportedly been granted a tax abatement for over ten years. He emphasized the need for more proactive research by the county—particularly regarding water usage and environmental impact—and warned against accepting developers' proposals without independent analysis. He urged the city to establish a clear vision for its future rather than deferring to outside interests and referenced Atlanta's moratorium on data centers as a model worth exploring. He concluded by encouraging residents and officials alike to take full advantage of available resources to stay informed and make well-researched decisions.

Member Yahya Hassan inquired about the visual buffer proposed on the west and north sides of the development. He asked whether the buffer would consist solely of trees or if it would include additional features such as a berm with landscaping.

Director Dozier responded that both fencing and a landscaped buffer are planned for those sides of the property. The city is collaborating with a new landscape consultant to determine the maximum feasible buffer width, ensuring adequate screening between the development and nearby residential areas. The final design will incorporate fencing, landscaping, and possibly berms, depending on the site dimensions and input from the project architect. The goal is to mitigate negative visual impacts and ensure the project is aesthetically compatible with surrounding properties.

Joseph McLeod, design lead for the proposed data center, provided comments regarding noise mitigation and sound management. He stated that a sound study will be conducted to establish baseline noise levels and ensure compliance with all applicable sound ordinances. He confirmed that all mechanical equipment will be acoustically attenuated and designed to operate at approximately 60 decibels—comparable to the sound of a residential air conditioning unit—at a distance of 10 meters from the equipment. To further mitigate sound, the site will include screening walls and other design features. Mr. McLeod committed to providing the board with a copy of a previously completed sound modeling report for a similar project using the exact design specifications.

Vice Chairman Ron Dodson requested that sound attenuation measures be indicated in the architectural drawings and supporting materials. He clarified that documentation should include the thickness and type of materials used to ensure the facility will not create adverse impacts on the surrounding community. Additionally, he requested a detailed landscape plan to better understand how the buffer areas would be developed for both visual screening and sound absorption.

Chairman Rodney Givens expressed concern that the review had expanded beyond exterior aesthetics and emphasized the need for better communication between the applicant and the community. He acknowledged that a suggestion had been made to table the item to allow time for additional information and clarification.

Ron Dodson made a motion to table Agenda Item 3. Yahya Hassan seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT:

Yahya Hassan made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 1:04 pm. Karyl Clayton seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

DRAFT