



ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS STAFF REPORT

**Zoning Board of Appeals Public Hearing
June 16, 2026**

PETITION NUMBER:	V26-000002
APPLICANT:	Adolphus Armstrong <i>for</i>
OWNER:	New Birth Missionary Baptist Church
PROJECT LOCATION:	6370 Woodrow Road, Stonecrest, GA 30038 <u>16 106 01 015</u>
CURRENT ZONING:	MU-3 – Mixed-Use Medium Density
ACREAGE:	+/-33.67
STAFF RECOMMENDATION:	Approve
VARIANCE REQUEST:	The applicant is requesting a variance from Sec. 3.5.7 of the city’s code which states, “ <i>Any lot within the Stonecrest Area Overlay District that is contiguous to any lot outside of the Stonecrest Overlay District zoned for a residential use, must maintain a 50 foot transitional buffer zone</i> ”.

Current Use

The subject property located at 6370 Woodrow Road is a heavily wooded and vacant parcel totaling approximately +/-33.67 acres. The site contains no existing buildings, structures, or active operations. The site is approved for a mixed-use development including micro homes, townhomes, apartments and commercial/retail uses.

Zoning and Case History

The subject property was approved by Mayor and City Council for a rezoning from R-100 (Residential Medium Lot) to MU-3 (Mixed-Use Medium Density) zoning district in October of 2025. The rezoning request was approved with four (4) conditions. Condition #2 states: “*Developers shall maintain an undisturbed buffer between the proposed development and the adjacent community along the length of the property to help with mitigating sounds from the development buildout and amphitheater and limit the intensity and scale of uses closest to developed residential communities.*” The applicant is requesting to amend this condition to allow the construction of a wall in place of the buffer in the center portion of the rear property line. The property has approval to develop a mixed-use development including micro-homes, townhomes, apartments, and retail/commercial uses.

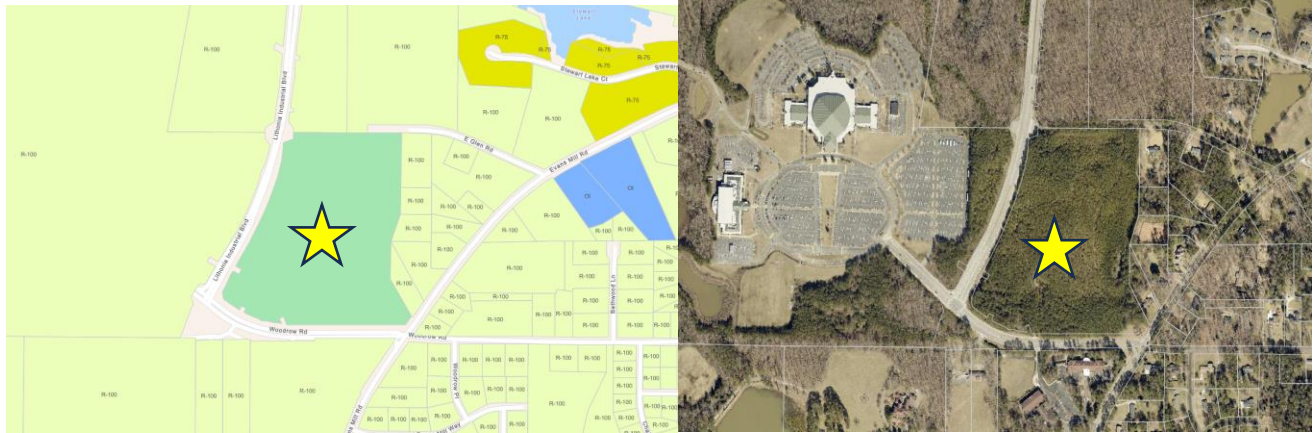


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IMAGES

6370 Woodrow Road

City Map of Stonecrest, GA GIS & DeKalb County GIS Map Viewer Systems



Existing Conditions

The subject property comprises of approximately +/-33.67 acres located at the intersection of Woodrow Road and Lithonia Industrial Blvd. The site was previously clear cut for development in or around 2006 but never developed. It is heavily wooded, with no existing structures, or paved surfaces. It is boarded to the east by a few large-lot residential homes and New Birth Missionary Baptist Church on the West. The property does not have any wetlands or flood areas. Access is provided along both frontages of Lithonia Industrial Blvd. and Woodrow Road.

Variance Request

The applicant is requesting a variance to reduce the rear buffer from 50 feet as required by Section 3.5.7 of the city's code which states, "Any lot within the Stonecrest Area Overlay District that is contiguous to any lot outside of the Stonecrest Overlay District zoned for a residential use, must maintain a 50-foot transitional buffer zone," to 20 feet.



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Figure 1: View of the subject property showing ongoing development activities.



Existing Conditions:

1. Developers shall conduct a noise decibel or acoustic analysis test to ensure that amplified sounds are mitigated to an acceptable level so as not to cause unreasonable disturbance to the neighboring residential community. Establish maximum decibel levels at property boundaries.
2. Developers shall maintain an undisturbed buffer between the proposed development and the adjacent community along the length of the property to help with mitigating sounds from the development buildout and amphitheater and limit the intensity and scale of uses closest to developed residential communities.
3. Developers shall submit a lighting plan to show there will be no excess outdoor lighting or the creation of light pollution.
4. A construction mitigation plan shall be submitted and approved by the Community Development Divisions Director, including limits on construction hours, dust control measures, and truck routing to minimize neighborhood disruption.



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Figure 2: Site Plan for V-26-000012 – 6370 Woodrow Road





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APPLICABLE CODE REQUIREMENTS

City of Stonecrest Zoning Ordinance (Chapter 27):

DIVISION 5. - STONECREST AREA OVERLAY

Sec. 3.5.7. - Transitional buffer zone requirements.

Any lot within the Stonecrest Area Overlay District, that is contiguous to any lot outside of the Stonecrest Area Overlay District zoned for a residential use, must maintain a 50-foot transitional buffer zone. The transitional buffer zone cannot contain any structures, impervious surfaces, or water retention ponds and cannot be used for permanent parking, loading, or storage. Trees may not be removed from the transitional buffer zone, other than dead, decayed, dying, or hazardous trees. Additional trees and plant material may be added to the transitional buffer zone.



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STAFF ANALYSIS

Following are the specific considerations listed in Sec 7.5.3 of the Stonecrest Zoning Ordinance that must be considered by the Board of Zoning Appeals to grant a variance. These considerations include:

- (1) By reason of exceptional narrowness, shallowness, or shape of a specific lot, or by reason of exceptional topographic and other site conditions (such as, but not limited to, floodplain, major stand of trees, steep slope), which were not created by the owner or applicant, the strict application of the requirements of this chapter would deprive the property owner of rights and privileges enjoyed by other property owners in the same zoning district.**

The subject property does not have unique physical constraints such as narrowness, shallowness or irregular shape. The site was cleared and graded in the early 2000's, but was never developed. Strictly applying the zoning standards would not deny the owner reasonable development enjoyed by other property owners.

- (2) The requested variance does not go beyond the minimum necessary to afford relief and does not constitute a grant of special privilege inconsistent with the limitations upon other properties in the zoning district in which the subject property is located.**

The applicant is not requesting a buffer reduction along the entire length of the rear property line. The buffer reduction appears to make up approximately 1/2 of the length of the rear buffer, located in the middle section. This request would allow the applicant to proceed with a development plan similar to what was originally approved and would prevent the applicant from losing half of the residential lots within the development.

- (3) The grant of the variance will not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the property or improvements in the zoning district in which the subject property is located.**

The effect of granting this variance could have lasting negative impact on the nearby properties. The use of an outdoor stage with amplified sound could be an issue for the surrounding neighborhood. Reducing the required transitional buffer between the proposed development and the adjacent residential homes will likely cause an issue with noise, if not constructed with the recommended wall.

- (4) The literal interpretation and strict application of the applicable provisions or requirements of this chapter would cause undue and unnecessary hardship.**

The strict application of the buffer requirements would cause the applicant to either lose half of the single-family lots in the development or require the developer to redesign the site. If the



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applicant redesigns the site, the project would be required to gain approval a second time from the Mayor and Council which could create an undue and unnecessary hardship.

(5) The requested variance would be consistent with the spirit and purpose of this chapter and the Comprehensive Plan text.

The requested variance does align with the intent of the City of Stonecrest Comprehensive Plan, in that the Comp Plan promotes mixed use developments; however, the Zoning Ordinance and the Stonecrest Overlay District Tier 4 requires the transitional buffer. While the intent and the spirit of the Comprehensive Plan would be met, the requirements of the zoning ordinance would not be met.

RECOMMENDED FINDINGS

Staff recommends **Approval with the following conditions**, to ensure compliance with applicable safety standards, compatibility with adjacent residential properties, and consistency with the intent of the zoning ordinance and Comprehensive Plan:

1. Eastern Boundary (Rear) Buffer

The applicant must submit a detailed plan showing how the area of the buffer that is reduced to 20 feet will provide protection for the adjacent neighboring homes. The applicant must provide enhancing landscaping to ensure this area does not pose an unsightly view to the neighbors. This plan shall be submitted and approved by the Planning and Zoning Division.

2. Amplified Sound Systems

An approved time for use of amplified sound systems and noise decibels monitoring system shall be agreed upon to protect the surrounding communities. This plan shall be submitted and approved by the Planning and Zoning Division prior to the issuance of any permits.

4. Site Plan

A revised site plan shall be submitted to the Planning and Zoning Division showing all proposed changes to the development including buffers, new lot configurations, greenspace/open space and tree preservation calculations.

5.. Compliance with All Other Applicable Regulations

Except for the specific standards modified by this variance approval, the development shall comply with all other applicable City of Stonecrest codes, ordinances, and development regulations, including but not limited to stormwater, erosion control, lighting, and utility standards.