

MINUTES

Valdosta-Lowndes Zoning Board of Appeals
*Valdosta City Hall Annex Multi-Purpose
Room 300 North Lee Street, Valdosta,
Georgia*

July 11, 2023, 2:30 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Nathan Brantley
Nancy Hobby
Dr. Samuel Clemmons
Victoria Copeland
Allan Strickland

MEMBERS ABSENT STAFF PRESENT

John “Mac” McCall Lauren Hurley
Marion Ramsey Denada Jones
John Hogan

VISITORS PRESENT

Jimmy Cone

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Allan Strickland at 2:30 pm. It was determined that a quorum of members was present. Allan Strickland thanked everyone for coming and reviewed the meeting procedures with those in attendance today.

Allan Strickland

Okay, ladies and gentlemen, I'm going to call the July meeting for the Lowndes County Valdosta Zoning Board of Appeals. First case we're going to call is Valdosta City case, APP - 2023 -04, HM Valdosta, LLC.

City of Valdosta Cases:

HM Valdosta

APP-2023-04

Lauren Hurley

Good afternoon. HM Valdosta, LLC is requesting a variance to LDR Section 218-13(V) (5)(b) as it relates to architectural standards in the multifamily residential zoning district. The properties are currently being prepped for the construction of an apartment complex, three different buildings with apartments consisting of 132 dwelling units, the complex will consist of four different buildings, which vary from the two-story amenities building, three story apartment building, and 2 four story apartment buildings. The apartments will be a mixture of two bedroom and three-bedroom units. The subject property is located along both sides of Baytree Drive, east of Wainwright Drive in Valdosta. That zoning district is not reflective yet in our mapping system. Everything with the black box around it is now multi-family residential. That is what was there before the demo. This is the site plan for the new development.

LDR Section 218-13 (V)(5)(b) states, buildings must have pitched roofs with a minimum of 4:12 pitch. Each of the proposed buildings have one fourth inch incline per 12 inches of length 1:48 pitch, resulting in a lower pitched roof that is required by the Land Development Regulations. This is for the regulations for multifamily residential buildings. Each of the proposed buildings have a one fourth inch incline for 12 inches in length. It's supposed to be a 4:12 and it is a one fourth and 12 or a 1:48 if you want to do that math resulting in a lower pitch than required by the Land Development Regulations. The intent of this section of the LDR is to maintain a residential appearance in residential zoning districts for multifamily apartment buildings. Four story apartment buildings are not necessarily residential in appearance. Therefore, the design choice matches the scale of the buildings. For consistency between buildings, all ranges of heights included, the architect and owner have chosen a design where all the buildings have the same roof pitch. You can see here; this is the two-story amenities building on the bottom. Right there in the lower left corner, that's their roof pitch. It is slight. Typically, if you're looking at plans, the roof pitch would be obvious. Then there is the three-story apartment building elevation. You can see from the side, to relay what the roof is going to look like, and there are the four-story elevations. The full profile of pitch roof at that height would not be visible from the street on the tall buildings. All the existing apartment buildings in residential zoning districts have a 4:12 pitch roof but are two stories in height. I have several examples of apartment buildings in Valdosta with lesser pitch roofs, all of which are in commercial zoning districts. Two examples are Corley Court on West Hill Avenue and that was a motel that was turned into an apartment building. Then The Ashbury has a very low pitch truth as well. Mr. Cone added examples of an apartment buildings with four stories that have a lower pitch truth

than what is required in different municipalities. One example being the Drury Inn which is in a commercial zone in district as well. So, there's no hardship here. The design does not meet the variance criteria and it is a design choice. So, staff finds it inconsistent, and recommends a soft denial, as this is a design choice variance request. Anybody have any questions?

Dr. Samuel Clemons

Yeah, I have a couple of questions. The pitch is not within compliance. Did the builder know that from the beginning?

Lauren Hurley

Yes, the builder was aware of the standard.

Dr. Samuel Clemons

And another question, I guess, and it may be for the building. Is the pitch lower because of the height?

Jimmy Cone

That's a good question for Mr. Cone.

Dr. Samuel Clemons

Okay, thank you.

Allan Strickland

Any other questions?

Nancy Hobby

I understand the ruling for 4:12 pitch to fit into a residential, but it seems like everything around there is apartments. There was one that appeared to be a residence, but it looks like duplexes, if not a triplex that would be right behind the north side of Wainwright. The others would back up to the creek, which is heavily wooded. That was not taken into consideration?

Lauren Hurley

They all have 4:12 pitch roofs or greater. But there are no examples in that neighborhood of four-story buildings. The apartments in the neighborhood are all two-story buildings, and they have pitch roofs.

Nancy Hobby

Did they give a reason for wanting that one, whatever it is, one pitch?

Lauren Hurley

It's a design choice. Mr. Cone can answer more about that, as he is the architect.

Nancy Hobby

Is it a cheaper way of building?

Lauren Hurley

I would assume so.

Jimmy Cone

It is. It a cost cutter.

Allan Strickland

Any other questions, discussion? Thank you very much. Mr. Cone?

Jimmy Cone

My name is Jimmy Cone. My office is located at 1804 Plum Street. I have some handouts. These are the pictures that you were shown on the screen. That way you can have them in front of you. A couple of things: The choice of flat roof is strictly a design. More and more apartments and hotels are going to that flat roof look. We've done several units that have that look. A picture one of them that is in there is the apartments in Thomasville. Those have what we call a flat roof even though it does slope to drain the rain off it's not a real flat roof or pitch roof that you can see because of the high character walls that go around the roof. But we're also doing similar projects. The guy that developed the ones in Thomasville is building the apartment complex that's going up behind Cass Burch. Those have a flat roof. Also, we're doing some in Macon. We got two projects in Macon that will have the flat roof look, Byron, and Perry. Then the pictures I showed you just showed some other locations around is where we're going with that flat roof look.

One advantage of the flat roof is that it allows us to put the condensing units, the air conditioning, condensing units. We put those on the roof. And when you've got these large four-story buildings and each one of them has an air conditioning unit, it takes up a tremendous amount of room. So, there is an advantage to it that way. With that, as far as the cost, I don't really think there's any difference to amount to anything. I really couldn't say either way regarding costs on it. Just as a way of information, we come before this board probably been about two years ago for some apartments that were going to be built at the end of Baytree. And

we asked for a variance for them to allow them to be a flat roof building, and that variance was granted at that time. So, apartments, when you get up to these four-story buildings, they start looking like the hotels, and there's no requirement for hotels to have to have a pitch roof. So, these apartments are becoming like that look of the hotels is where that's coming from. So, I'll be glad to answer any questions that you all may have at this time.

Allan Strickland

Anybody have a question?

Nathan Brantley

For the ones at the end of Baytree, was it the same variance that was being requested? Was it a variance for the same LDR requirement?

Jimmy Cone

Yeah. They were required to have that 4:12 roof pitch.

Nathan Brantley

But those hadn't yet been constructed? They have not been built. That's right.

Allan Strickland

I don't think they've even broke ground, have they? What was that? Two story, three story.

Jimmy Cone

They were three story buildings.

Allan Strickland

Okay. I was trying to remember. The biggest reason why they're specifying the 4:12 roof is because it is residential and they're trying to maintain a little bit of residential look. After saying that, how big a headache would it be and how big a difference in the look if the two-story building was built with the 4:12 pitches? Because at least, you would see that roof regardless. But the other four buildings were the flat roof, and at least when you drive up, you could see it through your windshield and it would give a little bit of residential look because the three story, I don't think you could probably see the roof line very well from in your vehicle. The four story, you got to get out and probably do like that to see it. What is your opinion?

Jimmy Cone

I don't think that would be a problem to change the amenities building.

Allan Strickland

Do you think by having the roof on the administration building. Would that throw it out of character with the three and the four story being flat?

Jimmy Cone

I don't believe it would. I will say when this ordinance was built, when they come up with this ordinance for 4:12 pitch apartment buildings. That was back when apartment buildings were being built, they were two story. 4:12 was a very popular roof pitch on houses at that time. I'm sure that's where that ordinance has come from, that we were building those two stories at one time. I'm sure that's where that comes from.

Allan Strickland

I can totally imagine if you we had all those AC units outside on the ground and two thirds of them are running, the noise, even though they're supposed to be silent, you get a bunch of them running, you're still going to hear them. But if they're up on that roof, sounds going that way and you're probably never going to know. Any questions from anybody on the board? Were there any comments to your office either in person or by phone?

Lauren Hurley

No Sir.

Allan Strickland

Nobody complaining. You're putting these monster big boxes in my neighborhood.

Lauren Hurley

I think you're already aware. This project had to go through public hearings and been rezoned, so everyone and a lot of property owners are acquired for this project. So, all the neighbors around that are well aware of what's happening.

Jimmy Cone

This project went through probably three or four developers before these guys went through with it. They were other developers that was looking at this same track of land and had already contacted the property owners. So, when these guys came along, everybody was fully aware of what was going on with it.

Victoria Copeland

They're probably ready for it to be built, to be honest.

Nancy Hobby

So, Jimmy, there's one building that's two stories.

Jimmy Cone

That's right. That's the amenities building.

Nancy Hobby

And all the others are three and four.

Jimmy Cone

Three and four stories. That's right.

Allan Strickland

Any other discussions or questions? Can I entertain a motion on this request?

Nancy Hobby

I make a motion.

Allan Strickland

Okay. Mrs. Nancy, would you make a motion?

Nancy Hobby

I make a motion to approve the proposed pitch for all the buildings except for the amenities building and that that have a 4:12 pitch.

Dr. Samuel Clemons

Second.

Allan Strickland

I have a second. All in favor? Unanimous? (4-0 vote) Thank you very much. Thank you, Jimmy.

Jimmy Cone

Thank you.

Allan Strickland

Everybody hopefully looked at the minutes. Anybody got any additions, deletions, corrections?

Allan Strickland

Can I get a motion on the minutes?

Nathan Brantley

I'll make a motion.

Allan Strickland

I have motion. Do I have second?

Nancy Hobby

Second.

Allan Strickland

All in favor raise a hand. Thank you very much. Unanimous. (4-0 vote) attendance review. We all know who's here. We know who's not here.

Lauren Hurley

Marion Ramsey has a work conference and Chairman McCall is on vacation.

Allan Strickland

Thank you for all of you all to show up so we had a quorum. Any other new business to talk about? Any other old business we need to talk about? Okay, we stand adjourned. Thank you very much for your attendance ladies and gentlemen.

_____ John "Mac" McCall, Chairman

_____ Date