



# City of Auburn, Maine

Office of Planning & Permitting

Eric Cousens, Director

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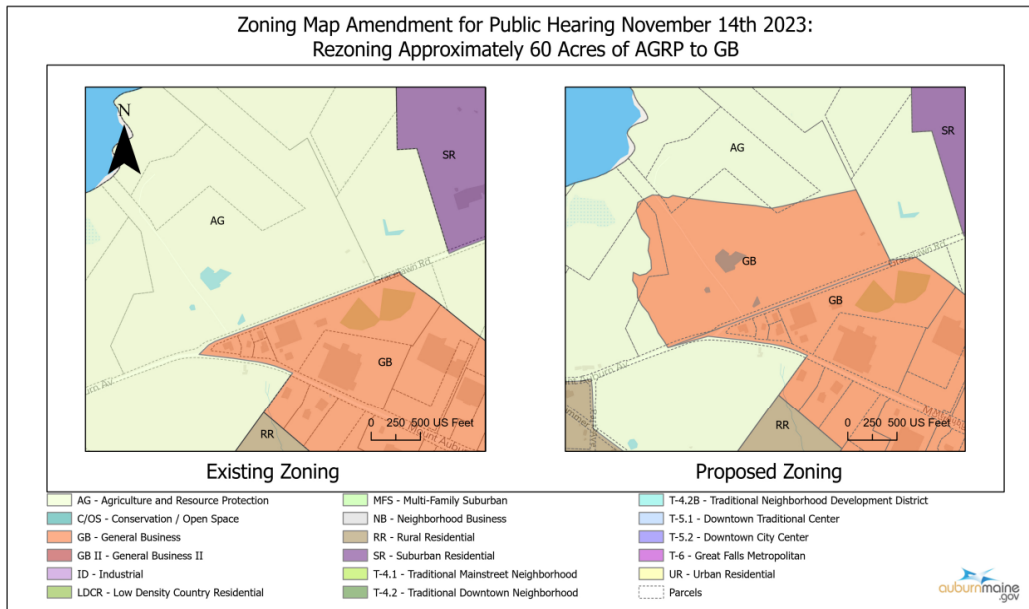
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Date: November 11, 2023

To: Auburn Planning Board

From: John Blais, Deputy Director of Planning and Permitting

Re: **Staff Report on Proposed Map Change from Agriculture and Resource Protection (AGRP) to General Business (GB)**



\* City of Auburn, Zoning Map, dated May 16, 2016

- I. **Public Hearing/ Map Amendment:** New zone considerations for area along Gracelawn Road amending approximately 60 acres in parts of Parcel ID 289-001, 289-002, and 277-026 from the Agriculture and Resource Protection (AGRP) zoning district to the General Business (GB) zoning district.
- II. **Background:** The proposal was initiated by the planning board in a workshop on October 10, 2023, and is pursuant to Chapter 60, Article XVII, Division 2 Amendment to the Zoning Ordinance or Zoning Map. Early today, the planning board will consider updating the Lake Auburn Watershed Overlay zoning map to match the “DWP Potential Boundary” that was agreed upon by the City of Auburn, Auburn Water and Sewer District, and Lewiston Water Division.

The land area that is removed from the watershed, approximately 80 acres, is currently zoned AGRP 20 acres will remain as AGRP. Staff believes that General Business (GB) would be the most appropriate option to apply in this area based on direction from the 2021 Comprehensive Plan. The Future Land Use Plan for the area near Gracelawn to be changed to the Commercial Development District, which is synonymous with the General Business District in its allowed uses and densities. An important goal for the city is listed in Strategy I.2.3.c in the Comprehensive Plan: to “Investigate opportunities for high quality, creative use of vacant land and/or buildings in and around commercial/ industrial centers.” This includes rezoning Gracelawn Pits as a planned development site to be used

for a mix of office, retail, and residential space, while assuring that the water quality of Lake Auburn is protected (page 73, Comprehensive Plan) because of its proximity to the abutting GB zone across Mount Auburn Ave.

*COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT (CDD)(Excerpt from Comprehensive Plan)*

*Objective – Allow for the development of a wide range of uses including those that involve the sales of motor vehicles and/or that generate significant truck traffic. The district will allow for both existing and new residential use at a density of up to 16 units per acre.*

*Allowed Uses – The Commercial Development District generally follows the boundaries of the General Business and General Business II (Minot Avenue) Zoning Districts, in effect at the time of the 2021 Comprehensive Plan update. The following general types of uses should be allowed in the General Business Development District:*

- *Low and High Residential Density Uses*
- *Retail uses including large-scale uses (>100,000 square feet)*
- *Personal and business services*
- *Business and professional offices*
- *Medical facilities and clinics*
- *Restaurants*
- *Hotel, motels, inns, and bed & breakfast establishments*
- *Low and High-Density Residential Uses*
- *Community services and government uses.*
- *Research, light manufacturing, assembly, and wholesale uses*
- *Truck terminals and distribution uses*
- *Contractors and similar activities*
- *Motor vehicle and equipment sales*
- *Motor vehicle service and repair*
- *Recreational and entertainment uses and facilities.*

*Development Standards – The City’s development standards for the Commercial Development District should provide property owners and developers flexibility in the use and development of the property. The standards should include provisions to manage the amount and location of vehicular access to the site, minimize stormwater runoff and other potential environmental impacts, require a landscaped buffer along the boundary between the lot and the street, and provide for the buffering of adjacent residential districts.*

III. Environmental considerations for this zone change include having the ability to converting an existing active gravel pit to what could be a mixed-use development that could range from multi-family homes and multifaceted businesses found in the General Business District. If development occurs the site would revegetate in areas where structures and supporting infrastructure is not planned. The area would have the ability to plan for a sustainable development that would address stormwater and site law that has not been addressed in the last 60 years as grandfathered gravel pit.

IV. Utilizing the federal government’s Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 5 modeling for reporting Clean Water Act, 319 Grant projects staff ran a hypothetical model to redevelop the proposed 60 acres compared to what is existing today. Assumptions include the following: 40 acres of commercial development, 12 acres of vacant undeveloped land, 8 acres of open space revegetated. Compared to the 46 acres of open gravel pit, 4 acres of gravel roads, 10 acres of vacant land. Below is the overall annual pollutant load and runoff volumes for before after implementing permanent Best Management Practices such as Low Impact Development techniques to stabilize the site and treat stormwater runoff for a significant net reduction in nitrogen, phosphorus, bio-oxygen demand, sediment, and volumes of water.

Overall annual pollutant load and runoff volume before and after BMPs				
Pollutant	Pre-BMP	Reduction	After BMP	Percent Reduction
TN (lb/yr)	727.33	363.66	363.66	50%
TP (lb/yr)	72.73	36.37	36.37	50%
BOD (lb/yr)	3,230.77	2,220.85	1,009.92	69%
Sediment (lb/yr)	27,974.09	23,752.65	4,221.44	85%
Flow Volume (ac-ft/yr)	138.50	119.79	18.72	86%

**Planning Board Action/Staff Suggestion:** Staff suggest a planning board discuss the proposals and hold a Public Hearing on November 11, 2023. Staff then recommends that the Board forward a positive recommendation to the Council supporting the proposed change, to include that the General Business Boundary be adjusted to include the 60 acres shown on the map based on the following findings.

**SUGGESTED FINDINGS AND REASONS:**

1. The 2010 and now the 2020 Comprehensive Plan recommend expanding the Commercial zoning in this area. This can be accomplished without creating a new district by using the existing General Business Zone.
2. The new lake auburn watershed overlay district boundary is supported by the watershed boundary has been reviewed and agreed upon through studies by FB Environmental Associates, Comprehensive Environmental Inc. (CEI), CDM Smith, The Maine Drinking Water Program and the Lake Auburn Water Quality Ad-Hoc Committee. This zone change carefully follows this new adjusted boundary but excludes the 20 acres that make up the abutting property known as the City of Auburn landfill.
3. The proposal can be implemented without detriment to Lake Auburn and is recommended by the Comprehensive Plan.