

Public Hearing: YES  NO

Department: Planning & Sustainability

**SUBJECT:**

**COMMISSION DISTRICT(S): ALL DISTRICTS**

**TITLE: Application of the Director of Planning & Sustainability for a text amendment relating to campgrounds within residential areas, and for other purposes. The text amendment is county wide.**

**PETITION NO: N9-2024-0635 TA-24-1247028**

**PROPOSED USE: Addition of Section 27-4.2.62 – Commercial Campground Regulations.**

**LOCATION: County-wide.**

**PARCEL NO: N/A**

**INFO. CONTACT: Current Planning.**

**PHONE NUMBER: 404-371-4922**

**PURPOSE:**

Application of the Director of Planning & Sustainability for a text amendment relating to campgrounds within residential areas, and for other purposes. The text amendment is county wide.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**COMMUNITY COUNCIL: CC-1: Deferral; CC-2: No vote; CC-3: Full cycle deferral; CC-4: Full cycle deferral; CC-5: Full cycle deferral.**

**PLANNING COMMISSION: Pending.**

**PLANNING STAFF: Approval.**

**STAFF ANALYSIS: Approval. See attached staff report.**

**PLANNING COMMISSION VOTE: Pending.**

**COMMUNITY COUNCIL VOTE/RECOMMENDATION: CC-1: Deferral (3-0-0) to obtain more information; CC-2: No vote taken; CC-3: Full cycle deferral (9-1-0) to allow opportunity additional input to be considered from Community Council District 3 members, as well as other community councils via the Engage DeKalb portal; CC-4: Full cycle deferral 8-0-0; CC-5: Full cycle deferral 7-0-0.**



**DeKalb County Department of Planning & Sustainability**

**178 Sams Street**

**Decatur, GA 30030**

**(404) 371-2155 / [Planning and Sustainability | DeKalb County](#)**

**Planning Commission Hearing Date: July 11, 2024**

**Board of Commissioners Hearing Date: July 15, 2024**

**TEXT AMENDMENT ANALYSIS**

**AGENDA NO.:**  
**N92024-0635**

**ZONING CASE NO.:**  
**TA-24-1247028**

**COMMISSION DISTRICTS:**  
**ALL**

**APPLICANT:** Department of Planning & Sustainability

**SECTIONS OF ZONING ORDINANCE AFFECTED BY AMENDMENTS: Addition of Section 27-4.2.62 – Commercial Campground Regulations.**

\*\*\*\*\*

**REASON FOR REQUEST:**

The proposed text amendment seeks to establish clarity and consistent application of campground facilities. The need for the proposed text amendment was prompted when a camping operation known as Ramsden Lake sought to expand their camping business to include additional camping opportunities. They are currently unable to do so due to the lack of specific code provisions allowing such operations, which would also apply to any other future campgrounds seeking to establish business in DeKalb County. This proposed text amendment is designed to address this gap by establishing regulations specifically for commercial camping. This text amendment is also utilizing the opportunity to facilitate business in line with the goals of the DeKalb Unified Plan by ensuring safety, environmental protection, and harmony with surrounding residential communities.

The amendment defines key terms such as "*Commercial Campground*," "*Campsite*," and distinctions between temporary, semi-permanent, and permanent structures. These definitions are for establishing a common understanding and for the consistent application of the regulations. For example, density installations vary based on structure type. The ordinance stipulates that campgrounds are only permitted in parcels zoned R-100 and RE with a minimum lot size of 35 acres. These requirements were chosen based on the availability of parcels within the county and campground regulations from other jurisdictions.

To prevent overcrowding and ensure safety, the amendment sets limits on the number of individuals and structures per acre of habitable land. Temporary camping is limited to 10 structures per acre, while semi-permanent and permanent structures are limited to one per acre and the dimensional requirements as imposed by R-100 and RE zonings. These limits are designed to maintain a balance between providing recreational spaces and preserving the character and usability of the land while simultaneously protecting surrounding residential areas. Additionally, the total number of campgrounds in the county is capped at 10 sites to manage the environmental impact and integration with the county.

Proposed buffer requirements mandate a 200-foot landscaped buffer from surrounding single-family residential lots to provide visual screening and mitigate potential impacts, particularly noise, on adjacent properties. Emergency access and fire prevention measures are also mandated by requiring campgrounds to maintain clear emergency routes and implement fire safety protocols. Waste management standards are outlined in the proposal to prevent environmental contamination, including proper sewage disposal and regular trash removal and also addresses alternative sewage measures, such as composting toilets.

To regulate the duration of stays and the hosting of events, the amendment specifies maximum stay limits of 15 days within a two-month period and requires campground operators to obtain necessary permits for hosting events. These guidelines are intended to prevent long-term occupancy and ensure that events do not disrupt the community or create excessive noise and traffic. The operators' responsibility for the impacts of events is intended further accountability.

By setting clear definitions, zoning requirements, occupancy limits, and operational standards, the amendment aims to promote safe, responsible, and environmentally conscious campground operations. These regulations will help preserve the quality of life for county residents while providing recreational opportunities in a controlled and sustainable manner. Planning staff recommends the approval of this amendment but is open to feedback and considerations should this be deferred.

\*\*\*\*\*

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION: APPROVAL**

**AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND CHAPTER 27, ARTICLE 4 OF THE DEKALB COUNTY ZONING ORDINANCE, BY CREATING A NEW LAND USE RELATING TO CAMPGROUND, AND BY AMENDING THE LAND USE TABLE OF ARTICLE 4 TO ALLOW CAMPGROUNDS AS A PRINCIPAL USE IN THE R-100 DISTRICT UNDER CERTAIN CONDITIONS, AND TO CREATE SUPPLEMENTAL REGULATIONS FOR CAMPGROUNDS, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.**

**WHEREAS**, the development of recreational campgrounds is a valuable economic and social benefit to the community; and

**WHEREAS**, the location and design of campgrounds can impact the surrounding environment and public health; and

**WHEREAS**, the public interest requires that campgrounds be designed and operated in a manner that minimizes noise, traffic, and other negative impacts on nearby residents; and

**WHEREAS**, the County desires to promote responsible tourism and recreation in the area, while also protecting the natural resources and environmental quality of the region.

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED** by the Governing Authority of DeKalb County, Georgia, and be it hereby ordained by the Authority of same, that Chapter 27 of the Code of DeKalb County, as revised 1988, is hereby amended as follows:

**PART I. ENACTMENT**

By amending Section 27-4.1.3 (Land Use Table) to allow campgrounds as principal uses in the R-100 district subject to certain supplemental regulations; and

By creating Section 27-4.2.62 -Campground Supplemental Regulations *of the Code of DeKalb County, as revised 1988, as follows:*

**1) Definitions**

- a) For the purposes of this ordinance, the following key terms shall have the following meanings:
- b) **Commercial Campground:** A designated land use for temporary accommodation in structures such as, but not limited to, tents, RVs and yurts for recreational purposes operated by a licensed entity.

- 
- c) **Campsite:** Designated land within within a commercial campground for a specific camping structure type. Each campsite shall only host one (1) structure.
  - d) **Temporary Structures:** Temporary structures include tents and other structures which are easily assembled and disassembled and/or moved, without permanent foundations.
  - e) **Semi-Permanent Structures:** Semi-permanent structures include canvas or membrane-covered frame structures such as yurts, teepees, and covered wagons.
  - f) **Permanent Structures:** Permanent structures encompass cottages and cabins constructed with durable materials and are fixed in place by a permanent foundation.
  - g) **RV's (Recreational Vehicles):** Motor vehicle or trailer that includes living quarters designed for accommodation.
- 2) **Permitted Locations**
- a) Campgrounds shall be permitted only on parcels zoned R-100 and RE with a minimum lot size of 35 acres.
  - b) Private camping shall be permitted on R-100 and RE lots between 10 acres and 35 acres by the owner and non-paying guests.
- 3) **Maximum Number of Campgrounds**
- a) The total number of campgrounds permitted in the county shall not exceed 10 sites.
- 4) **Buffer Requirements**
- a) Campgrounds shall maintain a minimum distance buffer of 200 feet from surrounding lots. This buffer shall be landscaped to provide visual screening and mitigate potential impacts on adjacent properties.
  - b) Locations for temporary structures shall be clearly marked.
- 5) **Maximum Occupancy**
- a) The maximum number of individuals per acre of habitable land within a campground shall not exceed 20 persons.
  - b) The maximum number of campsites shall be determined by campsite type:
    - i) Temporary Camping: 10 temporary structure campsites per acre of habitable land
    - ii) Semi-Permanent and Permanent Structures: 1 semi-permanent and/or permanent structures per acre of habitable land

---

6) **Maximum Stay Limits**

- a) Campground operators shall establish maximum stay limits for campers, which shall not exceed 15 days within a two-month period.

7) **Hosting Events**

- a) Campgrounds may host events, subject to obtaining the necessary permits and complying with applicable regulations governing event hosting, including noise ordinances, parking requirements, and occupancy limits.
- b) Operator of Campgrounds are responsible for events and any adverse impacts they may create.

8) **Emergency Access and Fire Prevention Measures**

- a) Campgrounds shall maintain clear and unobstructed emergency access routes to facilitate the ingress and egress of emergency vehicles. These access routes shall be regularly maintained and marked with appropriate signage.
- b) Campground operators shall implement fire prevention measures, including the provision of adequate firefighting equipment, the establishment of firebreaks or defensible space around the campground perimeter, and the implementation of fire safety protocols in accordance with local fire codes and regulations.

9) **Vehicle Requirements**

- a) Recreational vehicles, camp trailers, and fifth wheels used for camping purposes within the county must have current registration and be in an operable, road-worthy condition.

10) **Waste Management**

- a) Campground operators shall ensure that trash is managed on-site and removed from the premises regularly during the camping period and upon completion of camping activities.
- b) All sewage management systems shall be regularly maintained to prevent environmental contamination and public health hazards
- c) There shall be no dumping of waste materials including sewage and cooking waste such as bones, ashes, etc.
- d) Sewage generated within the campground must be disposed of in accordance with the following methods:
  - i) Connection to an off-site facility approved by the DeKalb County Environmental Health Department or the State of Georgia.
  - ii) Connection to a permitted and properly installed on-site wastewater disposal system.

- 
- iii) Utilization of incinerating, composting, or portable toilets that are properly maintained and disposed of in compliance with applicable regulations.

**11) Property Maintenance**

- a) The lot, parcel, tract, or mining claim on which camping occurs must be maintained in a safe, clean, and sanitary manner and must not create a nuisance or adverse impacts to surrounding property, land, or land uses.

**12) Property Access and Visibility**

- a) Property access, including driveways, must be permitted and approved by the relevant authorities. The property address must be clearly visible from the road to facilitate emergency response and navigation.

By amending Section 27-4.1.3 (Land Use Table) to allow campgrounds as principal uses in the R-100 district subject to certain supplemental regulations; and

DRAFT