

Public Hearing: YES  NO

Department: Planning & Sustainability

**SUBJECT:**

**COMMISSION DISTRICT(S): All Districts**

**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: D6-2024-0635 TA-24-1247028 (from September agenda)**

**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: (August 2024) CC-1: Deferral; CC-2: Deferral; CC-3: Denial; CC-4: Approval w/condition; CC-5: Denial. (June 2024) CC-1: Deferral; CC-2: No vote; CC-3: Full cycle deferral; CC-4: Full cycle deferral; CC-5: Full cycle deferral.**

**PLANNING COMMISSION: (September 12, 2024) Full-cycle deferral. (July 11, 2024) Two-cycle deferral.**

**PLANNING STAFF: (September recommendation) Approval.**

**STAFF ANALYSIS:** The proposed text amendment seeks to establish clarity and consistent application of regulations for commercial campground facilities. The need for this amendment was prompted when Ramsden Lake, a camping operation, sought to expand its business to include additional camping opportunities. They are currently unable to do so due to the lack of specific code provisions, which would also apply to future campgrounds seeking to establish operations in DeKalb County. This text amendment aims to fill that gap by establishing regulations specifically for commercial camping while facilitating business opportunities in line with the DeKalb Unified Plan by ensuring safety, environmental protection, and harmony with surrounding residential communities. This proposal is designed as a Special Land Use Permit (SLUP) for R-100 and RE zoned districts, rather than permitting campgrounds as a standard allowed use. This approach allows the county to evaluate the appropriateness of individual campgrounds on a case-by-case basis, ensuring that their location and operation are suitable for the specific residential area in question. By requiring a SLUP, the community, planning staff, and the Board of Commissioners can consider the unique context of each proposal and mitigate potential negative impacts on neighboring properties. The amendment defines key terms such as "Commercial Campground," "Campsite," and the distinctions between temporary, semi-permanent, and permanent structures. These definitions establish a common understanding and ensure the consistent application of the regulations. For example, maximum densities vary based on structure type, and the ordinance stipulates that campgrounds are only permitted on parcels zoned R-100 and RE, with a minimum lot size of 35 acres. These requirements are based on the availability of parcels within the county and other jurisdictions' campground regulations. Notably, the number of proposed regulations has been reduced by cutting redundancies and ensuring consistency with existing code. This refinement simplifies

the ordinance while still providing the necessary safeguards to protect county residents and the environment. The amendment focuses exclusively on commercial campgrounds and does not apply to public or private camping operations. The amendment sets limits on the number of individuals and structures per acre of habitable land to prevent overcrowding and ensure safety. Temporary camping is limited to five (5) structures per acre, while semipermanent and permanent structures are limited to two (2) per acre, with dimensional requirements as imposed by R-100 and RE zoning. These limits are intended to strike a balance between providing recreational opportunities and preserving the land's character and usability while protecting surrounding residential areas. Planning staff does not anticipate this ordinance will create a camping boom, as it is unlikely that companies will prioritize camping over other business ventures, and the available stock of suitable land is limited by the proposed parcel requirements layered with the dimensional requirements and land development standards as it stands currently in the code. Buffer requirements mandate a 200-foot landscaped buffer from surrounding single-family residential lots, providing visual screening and mitigating potential impacts, such as noise, on adjacent properties. Emergency access and fire prevention measures are also mandated, 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, with options for alternative sewage measures such as composting toilets. The amendment regulates the duration of stays and the hosting of events by setting maximum stay limits of 15 days within a two-month period. These guidelines are designed to prevent long-term occupancy and ensure that events do not disrupt the surrounding community or create excessive noise and traffic. Accountability for the impacts of events remains with the operators, who are responsible for managing their impact. By establishing clear definitions, zoning requirements, occupancy limits, and operational standards, this amendment aims to promote safe, responsible, and environmentally conscious campground operations. These regulations will help preserve the quality of life for county residents while allowing for recreational activities in a controlled and sustainable manner. Planning staff recommends "[Approval of this amendment](#)".

**PLANNING COMMISSION VOTE: (September 12, 2024) Full-cycle deferral 9-0-0.** Jan Costello moved, Deanna Murphy seconded for a full-cycle deferral to the November 2024 zoning agenda. **(July 11, 2024) Two-cycle deferral 6-0-0.** Jan Costello moved, Sarah Zou seconded for a two-cycle deferral to the November 2024 zoning agenda.

**COMMUNITY COUNCIL VOTE/RECOMMENDATION: (August 2024) CC-1:** Defer 2-1-0 for more information; **CC-2:** Deferral 7-1-0; **CC-3:** Denial 8-0-0; **CC-4:** Approval 7-1-0, with the condition that the applicant better define the regular pickup of sanitation and waste; **CC-5:** Denial 6-1-1. **(June 2024) 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: September 12, 2024**

**Board of Commissioners Hearing Date: September 26, 2024**

**TEXT AMENDMENT ANALYSIS**

**AGENDA NO.:**  
**D6-2024-0635**

**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.**

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**REASON FOR REQUEST:**

The proposed text amendment seeks to establish clarity and consistent application of regulations for commercial campground facilities. The need for this amendment was prompted when Ramsden Lake, a camping operation, sought to expand its business to include additional camping opportunities. They are currently unable to do so due to the lack of specific code provisions, which would also apply to future campgrounds seeking to establish operations in DeKalb County. This text amendment aims to fill that gap by establishing regulations specifically for commercial camping while facilitating business opportunities in line with the DeKalb Unified Plan by ensuring safety, environmental protection, and harmony with surrounding residential communities.

This proposal is designed as a Special Land Use Permit (SLUP) for R-100 and RE zoned districts, rather than permitting campgrounds as a standard allowed use. This approach allows the county to evaluate the appropriateness of individual campgrounds on a case-by-case basis, ensuring that their location and operation are suitable for the specific residential area in question. By requiring a SLUP, the community, planning staff, and the Board of Commissioners can consider the unique context of each proposal and mitigate potential negative impacts on neighboring properties.

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

Notably, the amount of proposed regulations has been reduced by cutting redundancies and ensuring consistency with existing code. This refinement simplifies the ordinance while still providing the necessary safeguards to protect county residents and the environment. The amendment focuses exclusively on commercial campgrounds and does not apply to public or private camping operations.

The amendment sets limits on the number of individuals and structures per acre of habitable land to prevent overcrowding and ensure safety. Temporary camping is limited to five (5) structures per acre, while semi-permanent and permanent structures are limited to two (2) per acre, with dimensional requirements as imposed by R-100 and RE zoning. These limits are intended to strike a balance between providing recreational opportunities and preserving the land's character and usability while protecting surrounding residential areas. Planning staff does not anticipate this ordinance will create a camping boom, as it is unlikely that companies will prioritize camping over other business ventures, and the available stock of suitable land is limited by the proposed parcel requirements layered with the dimensional requirements and land development standards as it stands currently in the code.

Buffer requirements mandate a 200-foot landscaped buffer from surrounding single-family residential lots, providing visual screening and mitigating potential impacts, such as noise, on adjacent properties. Emergency access and fire prevention measures are also mandated, 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, with options for alternative sewage measures such as composting toilets.

The amendment regulates the duration of stays and the hosting of events by setting maximum stay limits of 15 days within a two-month period. These guidelines are designed to prevent long-term occupancy and ensure that events do not disrupt the surrounding community or create excessive noise and traffic. Accountability for the impacts of events remains with the operators, who are responsible for managing their impact.

By establishing clear definitions, zoning requirements, occupancy limits, and operational standards, this amendment aims to promote safe, responsible, and environmentally conscious campground operations. These regulations will help preserve the quality of life for county residents while allowing for recreational activities in a controlled and sustainable manner. Planning staff recommends approval of this amendment.

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**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 and RE zoning districts subject to certain supplemental regulations; and

By adding to Section 27-9.1.3 – Defined Terms *of the Code of DeKalb County, as revised 1988, as follows:*

- a) **Commercial Campground:** A designated land use for temporary accommodation in structures such as, but not limited to tents and yurts for recreational purposes operated by a licensed entity.
- b) **Campsite:** Designated land within a commercial campground for a specific camping structure type. Each campsite shall only host one (1) structure.

- CODE OF DEKALB COUNTY  
Chapter 27 - ZONING  
ARTICLE 4. – SUPPLEMENTAL USE REGULATIONS  
27-4.2.62 CAMPGROUND SUPPLEMENTAL REGULATIONS

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- c) **Temporary Structures:** Temporary structures include tents and other structures which are easily assembled and disassembled and/or moved, without permanent foundations. All locations shall be clearly marked, such as with flags, signage, stakes, etc.
- d) **Semi-Permanent Structures:** Semi-permanent structures include canvas or membrane-covered frame structures such as yurts, teepees, and covered wagons.
- e) **Permanent Structures:** Permanent structures encompass cottages and cabins constructed with durable materials and are fixed in place by a permanent foundation.

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

1) **Permitted Locations**

- a. Campgrounds shall be permitted only on parcels zoned R-100 and RE with a minimum lot size of 35 acres.

2) **Buffer Requirements**

- a) Campgrounds shall maintain a minimum transitional buffer of 200 feet from surrounding lots following the guidelines outlined in Section 27-5.4.5 (B) (2)

3) **Maximum Occupancy**

- a) The maximum number of campsites shall be determined by campsite type:
  - i) Temporary Camping: 5 temporary structure campsites per acre
  - ii) Semi-Permanent and Permanent Structures: 2 semi-permanent and/or permanent structures per acre

4) **Maximum Stay Limits**

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

5) **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.

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**6) Waste Management**

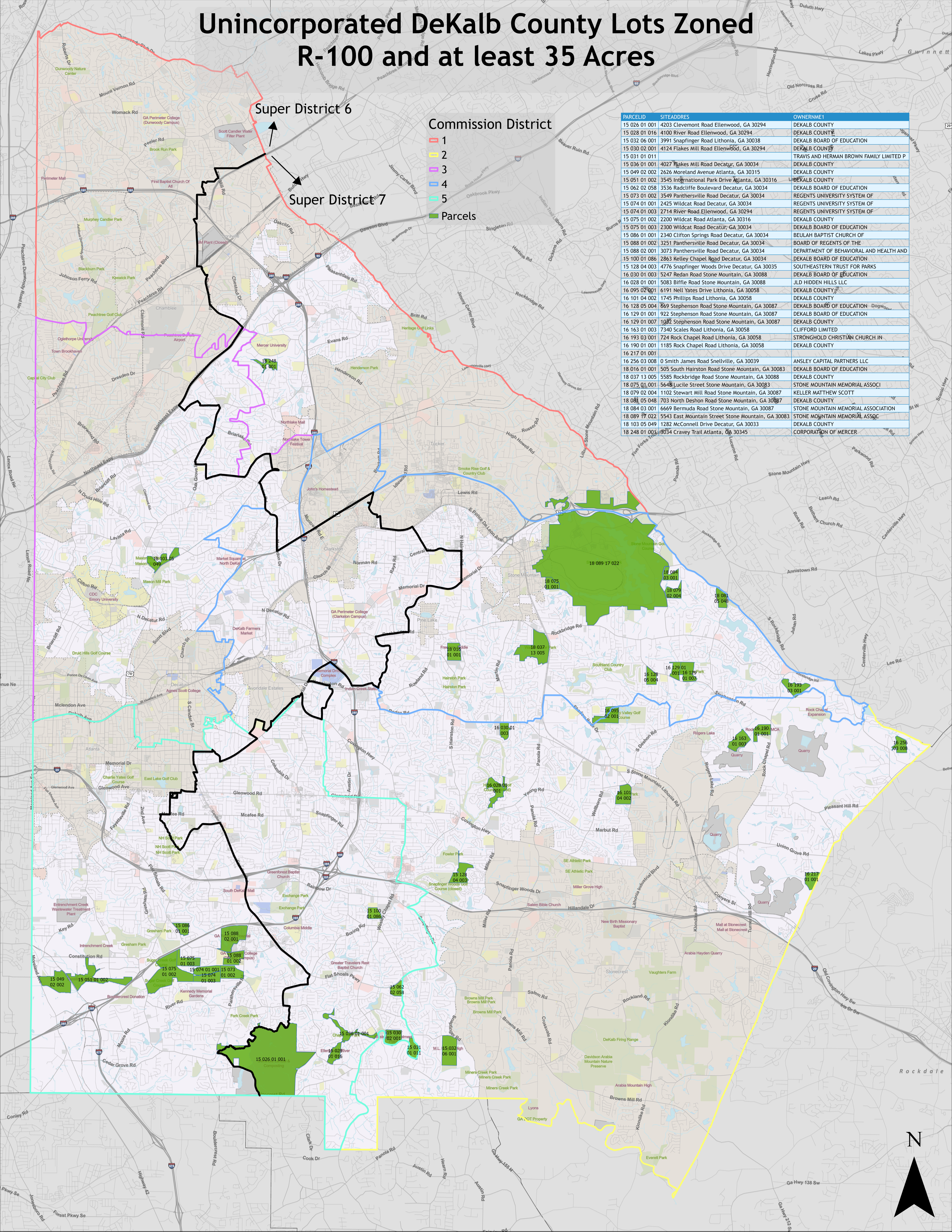
- a) Campground operators shall ensure that trash is managed on-site and removed from the premises regularly during the camping period and upon completion of camping activities.
- b) All sewage management systems shall be regularly maintained to prevent environmental contamination and public health hazards
- c) There shall be no dumping of waste materials including, but not limited to, sewage and cooking waste.
- 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.

**7) 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.

By amending Section 27-4.1.3 (Land Use Table) to allow campgrounds as uses allowed by a special land use permit (SLUP) in the R-100 and RE district subject to certain supplemental regulations;

# Unincorporated DeKalb County Lots Zoned R-100 and at least 35 Acres



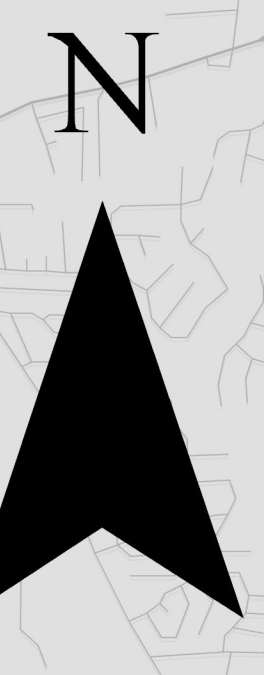
Super District 6

Super District 7

## Commission District

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- Parcels

PARCELID	SITEADDRESS	OWNER/NAME1
15 026 01 001	4203 CleveMont Road Ellenwood, GA 30294	DEKALB COUNTY
15 028 01 016	4100 River Road Ellenwood, GA 30294	DEKALB COUNTY
15 032 06 001	3991 Snapfinger Road Lithonia, GA 30038	DEKALB BOARD OF EDUCATION
15 030 02 001	4124 Flakes Mill Road Ellenwood, GA 30294	DEKALB COUNTY
15 031 01 011		TRAVIS AND HERMAN BROWN FAMILY LIMITED P
15 036 01 001	4027 Flakes Mill Road Decatur, GA 30034	DEKALB COUNTY
15 049 02 002	2626 Moreland Avenue Atlanta, GA 30315	DEKALB COUNTY
15 051 01 002	3545 International Park Drive Atlanta, GA 30316	DEKALB COUNTY
15 062 02 058	3536 Radcliffe Boulevard Decatur, GA 30034	DEKALB BOARD OF EDUCATION
15 073 01 002	3549 Panthersville Road Decatur, GA 30034	REGENTS UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF
15 074 01 001	2425 Wildcat Road Decatur, GA 30034	REGENTS UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF
15 074 01 003	2714 River Road Ellenwood, GA 30294	REGENTS UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF
15 075 01 002	2200 Wildcat Road Atlanta, GA 30316	DEKALB COUNTY
15 075 01 003	2300 Wildcat Road Decatur, GA 30034	DEKALB BOARD OF EDUCATION
15 086 01 001	2340 Clifton Springs Road Decatur, GA 30034	BEULAH BAPTIST CHURCH OF
15 088 01 002	3251 Panthersville Road Decatur, GA 30034	BOARD OF REGENTS OF THE
15 088 02 001	3073 Panthersville Road Decatur, GA 30034	DEPARTMENT OF BEHAVIORAL AND HEALTH AND
15 100 01 086	2863 Kelley Chapel Road Decatur, GA 30034	DEKALB BOARD OF EDUCATION
15 128 04 003	4776 Snapfinger Woods Drive Decatur, GA 30035	SOUTHEASTERN TRUST FOR PARKS
16 030 01 003	5247 Redan Road Stone Mountain, GA 30088	DEKALB BOARD OF EDUCATION
16 028 01 001	5083 Biffle Road Stone Mountain, GA 30088	JLD HIDDEN HILLS LLC
16 095 02 001	6191 Nell Yates Drive Lithonia, GA 30058	DEKALB COUNTY
16 101 04 002	1745 Phillips Road Lithonia, GA 30058	DEKALB COUNTY
16 128 05 004	669 Stephenson Road Stone Mountain, GA 30087	DEKALB BOARD OF EDUCATION
16 129 01 001	922 Stephenson Road Stone Mountain, GA 30087	DEKALB BOARD OF EDUCATION
16 129 01 007	1087 Stephenson Road Stone Mountain, GA 30087	DEKALB COUNTY
16 163 01 003	7340 Scales Road Lithonia, GA 30058	CLIFFORD LIMITED
16 193 03 001	724 Rock Chapel Road Lithonia, GA 30058	STRONGHOLD CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN
16 190 01 001	1185 Rock Chapel Road Lithonia, GA 30058	DEKALB COUNTY
16 217 01 001		
16 256 03 008	0 Smith James Road Snellville, GA 30039	ANSLEY CAPITAL PARTNERS LLC
18 016 01 001	505 South Hairston Road Stone Mountain, GA 30083	DEKALB BOARD OF EDUCATION
18 037 13 005	5585 Rockbridge Road Stone Mountain, GA 30088	DEKALB COUNTY
18 075 01 001	5648 Lucile Street Stone Mountain, GA 30083	STONE MOUNTAIN MEMORIAL ASSOCI
18 079 02 004	1102 Stewart Mill Road Stone Mountain, GA 30087	KELLER MATTHEW SCOTT
18 081 05 048	703 North Deshon Road Stone Mountain, GA 30087	DEKALB COUNTY
18 084 03 001	6669 Bermuda Road Stone Mountain, GA 30087	STONE MOUNTAIN MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION
18 089 17 022	5543 East Mountain Street Stone Mountain, GA 30083	STONE MOUNTAIN MEMORIAL ASSOC
18 103 05 049	1282 McConnell Drive Decatur, GA 30033	DEKALB COUNTY
18 248 01 001	8034 Cravey Trail Atlanta, GA 30345	CORPORATION OF MERCER





Yellow = Unlikely to be developed as campground

Clear = Higher Potential to become campground

Parcel ID	Use	Site Address
18 089 17 022	Stone Mountain Park	5543 East Mountain Street Stone Mountain, GA 30083
15 026 01 001	Landfill	4203 Clevefont Road Ellenwood, GA 30294
15 075 01 002	Golf Course	2200 Wildcat Road Atlanta, GA 30316
18 037 13 005	County Park	5585 Rockbridge Road Stone Mountain, GA 30088
15 051 01 002	Undeveloped - County owned	3545 International Park Drive Atlanta, GA 30316
15 088 02 001	Department of Behavioral and Health Disabilities	3073 Panthersville Road Decatur, GA 30034
15 049 02 002	Undeveloped - County owned	2626 Moreland Avenue Atlanta, GA 30315
15 032 06 001	School	3991 Snapfinger Road Lithonia, GA 30038
16 095 02 001	Golf Course	6191 Nell Yates Drive Lithonia, GA 30058
16 028 01 001	Undeveloped - Private Owned	5083 Biffle Road Stone Mountain, GA 30088
15 128 04 003	Undeveloped - Private Owned	4776 Snapfinger Woods Drive Decatur, GA 30035
15 073 01 002	Undeveloped - Private Owned	3549 Panthersville Road Decatur, GA 30034
16 101 04 002	County Park	1745 Phillips Road Lithonia, GA 30058
16 163 01 003	Granite Storage	7340 Scales Road Lithonia, GA 30058
18 103 05 049	Nature Conservation	1282 McConnell Drive Decatur, GA 30033
16 129 01 007	Undeveloped - County owned	1032 Stephenson Road Stone Mountain, GA 30087
16 193 03 001	Church; Mostly Undeveloped	724 Rock Chapel Road Lithonia, GA 30058
15 036 01 001	Undeveloped - County owned	4027 Flakes Mill Road Decatur, GA 30034
15 030 02 001	County Water Treatment Plant	4124 Flakes Mill Road Ellenwood, GA 30294
18 016 01 001	School	505 South Hairston Road Stone Mountain, GA 30083
15 075 01 003	School	2300 Wildcat Road Decatur, GA 30034
15 088 01 002	School	3251 Panthersville Road Decatur, GA 30034
15 074 01 003	Undeveloped - Private Owned	2714 River Road Ellenwood, GA 30294
15 074 01 001	Undeveloped - Privated Owned	2425 Wildcat Road Decatur, GA 30034
16 190 01 001	County Park	1185 Rock Chapel Road Lithonia, GA 30058
16 217 01 001	Undeveloped	
18 079 02 004	Undeveloped - Private Owned	1102 Stewart Mill Road Stone Mountain, GA 30087
15 028 01 016	Undeveloped - County owned	4100 River Road Ellenwood, GA 30294

15 031 01 011	Undeveloped - Private Owned	
18 081 05 048	Undeveloped - County Owned	703 North Deshon Road Stone Mountain, GA 30087
16 256 03 008	Undeveloped - Private Owned	0 Smith James Road Snellville, GA 30039
18 084 03 001	Undeveloped - Private Owned	6669 Bermuda Road Stone Mountain, GA 30087
16 128 05 004	School	669 Stephenson Road Stone Mountain, GA 30087
16 129 01 001	School	922 Stephenson Road Stone Mountain, GA 30087
15 086 01 001	Church	2340 Clifton Springs Road Decatur, GA 30034
16 030 01 003	School	5247 Redan Road Stone Mountain, GA 30088
15 062 02 058	School	3536 Radcliffe Boulevard Decatur, GA 30034
18 075 01 001	Undeveloped - Private Owned	5648 Lucile Street Stone Mountain, GA 30083
15 100 01 086	School	2863 Kelley Chapel Road Decatur, GA 30034
18 248 01 001	Undeveloped - Private Owned	3034 Cravey Trail Atlanta, GA 30345