

# Waffle House interested in building a restaurant at Lake City location

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By Curt Yeomans



Waffle House real estate representative Sal Nappo, center, explains the restaurant chain's interest in opening a Lake City location to town officials Monday. (Staff Photo: Curt Yeomans)

LAKE CITY — A familiar restaurant chain may be headed to Lake City next year.

Waffle House real estate representative Sal Nappo made a presentation to the Lake City Council Monday about the chain's plans to build a restaurant in the city limits. The restaurant chain is in the process of buying a 7.7-acre, scalene triangle-shaped property from the owner of a Sonic on Ga. 54 and wanted to make the council aware of its intentions. #“We're interested in coming to Lake City,” said Nappo.

The city council unanimously approved the conceptual plans during a work session, but that was just a first step. The chain will have to come back before the council to get zoning variances for a 40-foot residential buffer and build-to line, said City Manager Joel Lanken.

While the property — which officials said used to house a SmartMart gas station — may look small, Waffle House is confident there is enough room to put in a nice facility.

Our biggest argument to the property owner has been, ‘Where else are you going to find a 16,000-square foot facility that is only 25-feet wide?’” said Nappo. “It was designed for a Waffle House.”

If all goes according to Waffle House's plans, a location would be built at a slight angle on the oddly shaped property, which Nappo said was the only way Waffle House's engineers could figure a way to fit a restaurant on the property. It would be built on the north side of the Sonic, 5192 Ga. 54 in Lake City. The two restaurants would share a common driveway.

Nappo said the restaurant chain likes the location, despite its shape, because of its proximity to a high-traffic area.

You're right there at the intersection of Forest Parkway and Highway 54, so a lot of people will see this restaurant," said Nappo.

Mayor Willie Oswalt raised some questions about whether lights on the property would bother people living in a residential area behind the site by shining into homes. Nappo said it should not because Waffle House has a lighting scheme that has worked at other locations which diminishes the amount of light pouring into neighboring homes.

They do it, he said, by putting specially-designed light fixtures that direct the light onto the restaurant building and its parking lot and not on nearby residential areas. He also told council members the restaurant chain would plant a buffer of red maple and arborvitae trees along the back of the property to help, along with an existing fence, diminish some of the noise and lighting.

The trees would also serve as a protection against erosion and their inclusion in the plan is based on what the Sonic has used on the backside of its property, said Nappo.

In addition to the trees and the restaurant building, Waffle House also plans to put 32 parking spaces and two retention ponds on the property. A row of three-foot tall shrubs would be planted along Ga. 54

Nappo also said the building will be built using green construction model for energy efficiency. One of those standards is to have the windows go all the way to the floor. That will also help with security at the building, he said.

It'll be very easy to see in those glass lines," Nappo said