



METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION

"Planning the Future - Respecting the Past"

M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: May 2, 2023
TO: THE MAYOR AND ALDERMEN OF THE CITY OF SAVANNAH
FROM: METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION
SUBJECT: MPC RECOMMENDATION

PETITION REFERNCED:

Petitioner: John D. Northrup III, Agent for Capital Development Partners

Owner: Capital Development Partners

Aldermanic District: 5 - Alderman Dr. Estella Shabazz (unofficially)

County Commission District: 5 - Commissioner Tanya Milton (unofficially)

Neighborhood/Subdivision: Red Gate Farms

Current Zoning District: R-A-CO (Residential-Agriculture-County)

Future Land Use (FLU) Category: Residential-Suburban Single Family

File No. 23-000304-ZA

Location: 343 Buckhalter Road

PINs: 10942 01003, -01002A, -01002B, -01002C, -01002D, -01002F, -001002E, -01007, -01008, and -01009

Acreage: 52.86 acres

MPC ACTION:

Approval of the request to rezone the subject ten parcels from R-A-CO to I-L with the following conditions:

1. The Applicant applies for an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan prior to moving this agenda item to the City Council for final approval.
2. A 200-foot densely landscaped buffer around the residentially zoned properties.
3. A recombination plat would be required.

MPC STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Denial of the request to rezone the subject ten parcels from R-A-CO to I-L. If the MPC Board decides to approve the requested map amendment than staff recommends the following conditions:

1. The Applicant applies for an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan prior to moving this agenda item to the City Council for final approval.
2. A 200-foot densely landscaped buffer around the residentially zoned properties.
3. A recombination plat would be required.

MEMBERS PRESENT: 10 + Chairman

Dwayne Stephens -Chairman
Laureen Boles
Karen Jarrett
Wayne Noha
Jeff Notrica
Michael Kaigler
Joseph Ervin
Tom Woiwode
Travis Coles
Jay Melder
Joseph Welch

PLANNING COMMISSION VOTE: Approval staff recommendation (7-4)

APPROVAL Votes: 7	DENIAL Votes: 4	ABSENT
Welch Coles Ervin Noha Kaigler Woiwode Melder	Boles Stephens Notrica Jarrett	Coleman Epstein Watkins

Respectfully submitted,



Melanie Wilson
Executive Director

MW/sh

Enclosure

cc: Mark Massey, Clerk of Council
Lester B. Johnson, Assistant City Attorney
Jennifer Herman, Assistant City Attorney
Zarina Davis, Department of Inspections
Bridget Lidy, Department of Inspections



CHATHAM COUNTY-SAVANNAH METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION

"Planning the Future, Respecting the Past"

STAFF REPORT

File No. 23-000304-ZA

Location: 309, 311, 313, 315, 323, 325, 331, 335,
and 343 Buckhalter Road

PIN: 10942 01003, -01002A, -01002B, -01002C,
-01002D, -01002F, -001002E, -01007, -01008 and -01009.

Acreage: 52.86 acres

Prepared by Melissa Leto, Senior Planner



Figure 1 Location Map

Petitioner: John D. Northup III, Agent for Capital Development Partners

Owners:

Parcels 10942 01003 & -01002A owned by J. Chatham Howard, JR

Parcel 10942 01002B owned by Zane N. Brock & Elizabeth Brock

Parcel 10942 01002C owned by Eva Nicole Smith

Parcel 10942 01002D owned by Chelsea Watson & Michelle Sapp

Parcel 10942 01002F owned by Rusty Davis

Parcel 10942 01002E owned by Judy Mikell Alderman

Parcels 10942 01007 & -01008 owned by Jennifer Wells & Gerald W. Wells

Parcel 10942 01009 owned by Matthew D. Jeffcoat & Janet Jeffcoat

Aldermanic District: 5 - Alderman Dr. Estella Shabazz (unofficially)

County Commission District: 5 - Commissioner Tanya Milton (unofficially)

Neighborhood/Subdivision: Red Gate Farms

Current Zoning District: R-A-CO (Residential – Agriculture - County)

Future Land Use (FLU) Category: Residential-Suburban Single Family

Request:

The petitioner, John D. Northup III, Agent for Capital Development Partners, is requesting a rezoning of ten (10) parcels that recently were annexed by the City of Savannah from a R-A-CO (Residential – Agriculture - Annexed) district to a I-L (Light-Industrial). The ten parcels face Buckhalter Road. The applicant's intent is to allow the proposed I-L parcels to be developed as a part of the Rockingham Farms Industrial Development, which is already being developed on adjacent parcels to the south, on parcels that have already been annexed into the City of Savannah.

The subject properties consist of approximately 52.86 acres, is located southwest of Buckhalter Road and a little more than a half mile from the Veterans Parkway ramp. The property identification numbers are the following:

10942 01003, -01002A, -01002B, -01002C, -01002D, -01002F, -01002E, -01007, -01008, and -01009.

- The proposed I-L zoning parcels have frontage to Buckhalter Road. The rear of the subject parcels back up to an approximately 100-acre parcel zoned as M-CO (Manufacturing-Annexed) which is considered the Rockingham Farms Industrial Development.
- A site plan for the proposed I-L portion of the parcels has not been submitted by the applicant.

Background:

On January 12, 2023, the subject parcels were annexed into the City of Savannah, and are currently zoned R-A-CO, reflecting their former R-A zoning classification under the Chatham County zoning ordinance. The area has historically been rural in character with large lot sizes including the subject parcels. The adjacent parcels east of the subject parcels have a variety of lot sizes from 5 acres to .45 acres in sizes with single-family residences. Directly across the street from Buckhalter Road are large tracts with single-family homes with one that has a barn, and horse stables.

Facts and Findings:

Public Notice: As required by the City of Savannah Zoning Ordinance, all property owners within 300 feet of the subject property were sent notices of the proposed rezoning. Public notice was posted on site.

Neighborhood meetings: The petitioners' first meeting was prior to January 26, 2022, at Red Gate Farms. In the meeting, representatives from the developer, Capital Development Partners, and the property owners of the subject parcels discussed the existing plans for the development of Rockingham Farms. The developer expressed a desire to expand the existing development into the adjacent properties. The meeting included property owners in the proposed "phase one" and "phase two." Phase one includes the ten (10) parcels that were annexed into the City of Savannah and are being requested to be re-zoned to I-L. Phase two includes the remaining R-A parcel that have not been annexed and are located on Buckhalter Road along Buckhalter Road Extension and Veterans Parkway.

The second meeting occurred on March 30, 2022, the developer conveyed that they would attempt to acquire, annex, and rezone the properties west of Old Buckhalter Road initially the properties east of Old Buckhalter Road as a second phase. Mr. JW Smith, whose lot is west of Old Buckhalter Road, was initially ready to join the assemblage, due to personal reasons, he declined. The agent, Richard Smith, and Mr. John Raders met with Mr. JW Smith numerous times in 2002 and in March and April 12th of 2023. The petitioner is hoping to include his parcel into "phase two". Mr. JW Smith mentioned that he does not object to the development.

On April 10, 2023, the developer met with the property owners in "phase one." The petitioner expects to move forward with "phase two" shortly after the development of "phase one" begins.

Existing Zoning and Development Pattern: The existing zoning is R-A-CO (Residential-Agriculture-Annexed). The subject parcels are large tract rural lands with single-family residences. The parcels adjacent to the east and across the street on Buckhalter Road are residential single-family residences within the rural character of the west side of Chatham County and parcels that have been annexed by the City of Savannah. The subject parcels rear property lines face the M-CO (Manufactured – Annexed) zoned 100 acres parcel which is the applicant for the Rockingham Farms Industrial Development.

There are eighteen (18) residential parcels zoned R-A (Residential Agricultural) to the east of the ten (10) subject parcels which the applicant is attempting to annex in the future that are not included in this re-zoning request. Each of these properties has single-family dwellings within the rural character of the County.

Site: The subject property consists of ten (10) parcels, together they make up approximately 50 acres in the area facing Buckhalter Road. The parcels are in the R-A-CO (Residential-Agricultural-Annexed) zoning classification. The parcels are currently developed pieces of property with large tracts of landscaped greenery with a line of trees to the rear where one can view the manufactured warehousing through the trees from Buckhalter Road.

The land uses and zoning districts surrounding the subject site include the following:

Location	Land Use	Existing Zoning
North	Single-family agricultural	R-A & R-A-CO
South	Manufactured warehousing	M-CO
East	Developed single-family and agricultural parcels. (Phase 2 by the applicant to be annexed at some point in the future)	R-A, R-A-W-T
West	Undeveloped County Manufacturing	M

Impact and Suitability

1. **Transportation Network:** The site has frontage access onto Buckhalter Road, a two-lane road. Buckhalter Road turns into Veterans Parkway.
2. **Public Services and Facilities:** The subject parcel has access to the City's public water, sewer, and stormwater systems.
3. **Chatham Area Transit (CAT):** CAT does currently not serve the property.
4. **Comprehensive Plan Land Use Element:** The Chatham County-Savannah Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map (FLUM) designates the subject property as Residential-Suburban Single Family. The proposed I-L zoning district is not *compatible* with the Residential-Suburban Single Family land use designations. The Residential-Suburban Single-Family designation identifies areas within this classification as single-family detached residential dwellings at a density of five (5) units per gross acre. This category includes non-residential uses that are compatible with the residential character and scale of the neighborhood. The proposed use would be for manufacturing, warehouse uses.
5. **Existing R-A-Annexed Zoning District:**
 - a. **Intent of the R-A-CO District:** "The purpose of this district is to protect rural areas within the urban expansion areas of the city for future urban development, and to protect certain rural highway roadside areas against strip

development, which can lead to traffic congestion, traffic hazards, and roadside blight.”

- b. **Allowed Uses:** The R-A-CO district is predominantly a residential agricultural zoning classification within a rural character. A list of the permitted uses allowed within the R-A district is attached to the agenda file.
- c. **Development Standards:** The development standards for the R-A-CO district appear and are attached in the agenda file for this item.

6. **Proposed I-L Zoning District:**

- a. **Intent of the I-L District:** “The IL district is established to provide for a wide range of research and development, light manufacturing and assembly, warehousing, and wholesaling activities as well as some support services. These uses are subject to standards intended to ensure such development is compatible with adjacent and nearby non-industrial areas. Development must be operated in a clean and quiet manner, with most activities occurring indoors, and should not be a nuisance to nearby non-industrial uses.”
- b. **Allowed Uses:** The I-L district allows for industrial and industrial-like uses with limited non-industrial uses. Light Industrial being the most limited and the Heavy Industrial district the most intense. A list of the permitted uses allowed within the I-L district are attached to the agenda file.
- c. **Development Standards:** The development standards for the I-L district appear in the attachment to the agenda file.

Zoning Ordinance Review

The following review criteria for rezoning are prescribed in the Savannah Zoning Ordinance Sec. 3.5.8

- a. Suitability and Community Need
 - i. Whether the range of uses permitted by the proposed zoning district is more suitable than the range of uses that are permitted by the current zoning district.

MPC Comment: The range of uses permitted under the current and proposed zoning classifications are very different. The R-A-CO classification which allows for single-family detached, two-family dwellings, garage apartments, manufactured homes, residential manufactured or mobile home as a second dwelling unit, caretaker quarters, accessory farm dwellings units, some home occupations, accessory buildings, public facilities or public parks for carnivals, rodeos, horse shows, shooting or athletic events, community fairs, or other events of public interest, golf courses including the club houses, churches and other places of worship, cemeteries, private family burial plot, schools, Child and adult care

centers, women's shelter, colleges and universities, hospitals and medical centers, homes for aged and for children, clubs or lodge, and a variety of agricultural type uses.

The proposed range of uses in the I-L classification are much more intense than the existing R-A-CO zoning district. The I-L zoning classification allows for personal agriculture, community gardens, parks, post office, police /fire substation, soup kitchen, shelters for emergency and transitional, colleges, , correctional , detention centers, offices both general and utility contractor, studio/multimedia production facilities, indoor firearm range, consumer fireworks retail, convenience store, fuel/gas station, garden and plant nursery, truck stop, warehouse or office showroom/flex space, crematorium, event venue, self-service storage facility, tour company terminal, distillery, craft, bar/tavern, food truck park, retail consumption dealer, ancillary retail dealer, winery, meadery, cidery, brewery, micro, heavy equipment/heavy vehicle sales, rentals, and leasing, vehicle service either with heavy equipment/ heavy vehicle; minor; major, vehicle towing and impound facility, vehicle wash, full or self-service, watercraft sales, repair and service, adult-oriented business, Commercial dock, boat yard, watercraft launch/ramp, container storage yard, outdoor storage yard, warehousing, dry cleaning/laundry plant, manufacturing from artisan craft, limited/light, general, research testing and development laboratory, mulch composting, recycling center, intermodal freight yard, passenger terminal, railyard, transportation dispatch and storage, vehicle and freight terminal, and utilities major and minor.

The proposed uses would require mitigation from noise, lighting, traffic, and the uses themselves especially to the adjacent and surrounding residential parcels. The subject parcels and the surrounding area have historically been rural in character.

At the time of writing this report, staff have not received any letters of support or denial from the properties that have received public notice for this rezoning request.

- ii. Whether the proposed zoning district addresses a specific need in the county or city.

MPC Comment: The Light Industrial classification would permit all manners of commercial business, warehousing, as well as a list of permitted uses that are not permitted in the R-A-CO within the ten (10) parcels requesting to be rezoned.

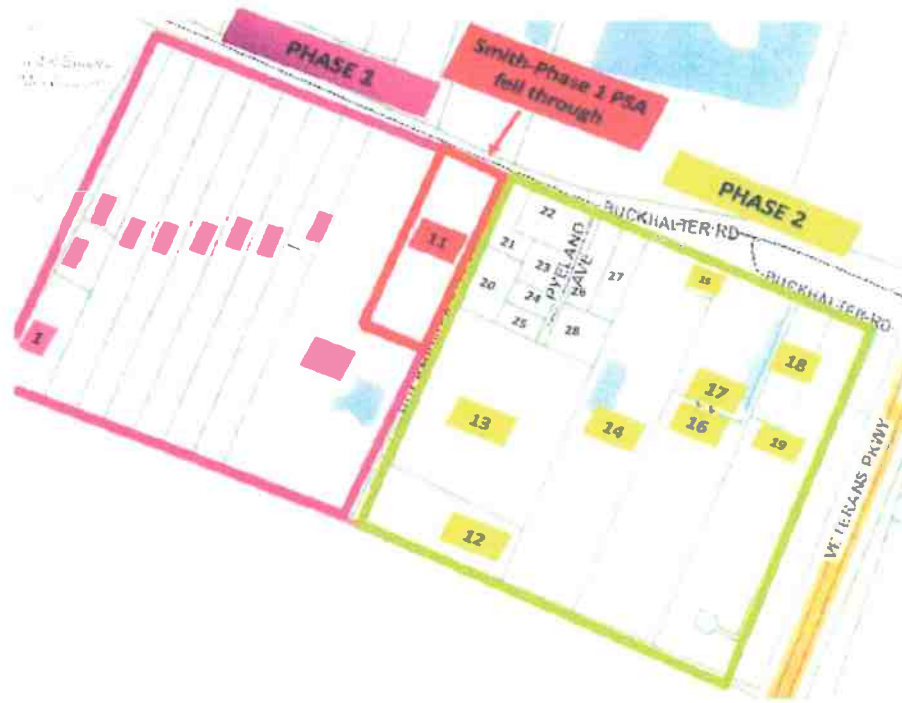
- iii. Whether the zoning proposal will adversely affect the existing use or usability of adjacent or nearby property.

MPC Comment: Based on the location and rural nature of the Residential Agricultural neighborhood that would be affected by the Industrial uses, the rezoning of these parcels would adversely affect the existing surrounding single-family neighborhood. A significant buffer would be required from the residential properties that the subject parcels are adjacent to and are located across the street from. There would be an increase in noise, and the intensity of uses themselves even if the applicant is proposing to construct a sound wall. Staff have not received any visual or dimensions toward the design of the sound wall.

The petitioner states the following, "They have a verbal agreement /understanding that the developer has with the city is that the sound wall must be built if the developer does not purchase both phase 1 and phase 2 within 24 months of completion of the proposed building (on the parcel to the south of phase 1 and phase 2). Once the building is complete, the developer must provide a completion bond within 30 days, if both phase 1 and phase 2 have not been acquired by then. The bond must be \$500,000 if only phase 2 has not been acquired by then, and \$1 million if neither phase 2 nor phase 1 has been acquired by then. A written agreement containing those terms has been drafted and forwarded to the Assistant City Manager, Heath Lloyd. To the petitioners' understanding, they have passed on that agreement to the City's legal counsel for further review and comment. Since the warehouse building should be completed within a year, the clock on the sound wall should start ticking relatively soon".

The purchasing of the ten (10) parcels is contingent on the re-zoning being approved. The applicant may purchase those parcels at any time but chooses to wait for the rezoning approval.

SITE PLAN OF
PHASE 1 BUCKHALTER PROPERTIES AND
PHASE 2 BUCKHALTER PROPERTIES



Parcel 11 is unwilling to be annexed until more negotiations are in place for the sale of the property as well as the other phase two parcels. Leaving a jog into what may be the sound wall.

- a. Whether the zoning proposal is compatible with the present zoning pattern and conforming uses of nearby property and the character of the surrounding area.

MPC Comment: The zoning proposal is not compatible with the present zoning pattern, being that the subject parcels are zoned Residential-Agriculture-Annexed does not mean it is suitable to be rezoned Light-Industrial with more intense uses that include noise, and smells from light-Industrial uses. Traditionally, the development pattern has been rural, and during the past years the outlying parcels have been annexed. The applicant within the sound wall agreement with the City of Savannah explains that their intention is to build a warehouse within the proposed 50 acres of R-A-CO area and possibly within phase 2 of the additional R-A zoned parcels.



This map indicates the subject parcels and surrounding proximity of parcels that have been annexed into the City of Savannah currently.

- b. Whether there are other existing or changing conditions affecting the use and development of the property which give supporting grounds for either approval or disapproval of the zoning proposal.

MPC Comment: There are existing conditions that would affect the use and development of the property which give supporting grounds for disapproval. Such as the rural character of the subject parcels themselves, the adjacent properties that may be included in phase 2, the residential agriculture properties across the street from the subject parcels on Buckhalter Road, and the Coastal Empire Montessori School located at 301 Buckhalter Road. These areas are in a historically rural neighborhood and will be greatly affected by warehouse use and an Industrial Park with such proximity. If the requested re-zoning is approved the industrial uses from the industrial park and warehouse would be even closer to the rural neighborhood and school properties.

iv. Consistency

Whether the zoning proposal is in conformity with the policy and intent of the Comprehensive Plan and other adopted plans, such as a redevelopment plan or small area plan.

MPC Comment: The proposed parcels being requested for rezoning to I-L are not in conformity with the policy and intent of the Comprehensive Plan's Residential-Suburban Single Family land use designation. The proposed use would be warehousing for Light-Industrial.

Staff recommends the applicant apply for a comp plan amendment for the subject parcels in Phase 1, and the subject parcels in Phase 2. The intent of amending the comprehensive plan would be to allow for the possibility of the future land use designation to be compatible for Light-Industrial.

v. Reasonable Use

Whether the property to be affected by the zoning proposal has a reasonable use as currently zoned.

MPC Comment: The subject properties are reasonable for uses that are under the current zoning. The proposed light industrial uses would require further mitigation.

vi. Adequate Public Services

Whether adequate school, public safety and emergency facilities, road, ingress and egress, parks, wastewater treatment, water supply and stormwater drainage facilities are available for the uses and densities that are permitted in the proposed zoning district.

MPC Comment: Adequate services are available.

vii. Proximity to a Military Base, Installation or Airport

MPC Comment: Hunter Army Airfield (HAAF) is located across Veterans Parkway.

Policy Analysis

The applicant's proposal to re-zone ten (10) parcels from R-A-CO to I-L would result in a significant change to the rural development pattern in the subject parcels and the surrounding area. There are existing conditions that would affect the use and development of the property which give supporting grounds for disapproval, such as the rural character of the subject parcels themselves, the adjacent properties that may be included in phase 2, the residential agriculture properties across the street from the subject parcels on Buckhalter Road, and the Coastal Empire Montessori school located at 301 Buckhalter Road. These areas are in a historically rural neighborhood and would be greatly affected by a warehouse use and Industrial Park with such proximity, as the petitioner is already developing warehousing within the Industrial Park area. If the requested re-zoning is approved, the proximity to the industrial and warehouse uses would be even closer to the rural neighborhood and school properties.

The proposed parcels being requested for rezoning to I-L are not in conformity with the policy and intent of the Comprehensive Plan's Residential-Suburban Single Family land use designation. The proposed use would be warehousing for Light-Industrial.

If MPC recommends approval, staff recommends the applicant apply for a comprehensive plan amendment for the subject parcels in Phase 1, and the subject parcels in Phase 2. The intent of amending the comprehensive plan would be to reach out to allow for the possibility of the future land use designation to be compatible for Light-Industrial.

Recommendation

Based upon the Future Land Use as well as the review criteria. Staff recommends the denial of the request to rezone from R-A-CO to I-L.

If the MPC Board decides to approve the requested map amendment than staff requests the following conditions:

1. The applicant applies for an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan prior to moving this agenda item to the City Council for final approval.
2. A 200-foot densely landscaped buffer around the residentially zoned properties.
3. A recombination plat would be required.

Note: Staff's recommendation is based upon information contained in the application and discussions with the Applicant. This recommendation could change based on information gathered during the public hearing.