



**Staff Report**

Subject: Rezoning  
 Author: Jennifer Rose, Planner I  
 Department: Development Services  
 Application: RZN-26-8  
 Meeting Date: May 5, 2026 (Postponed) to May 19, 2026

Existing Zoning: B-3 (Major Commercial)

Proposed Zoning: HI (Heavy Industrial)

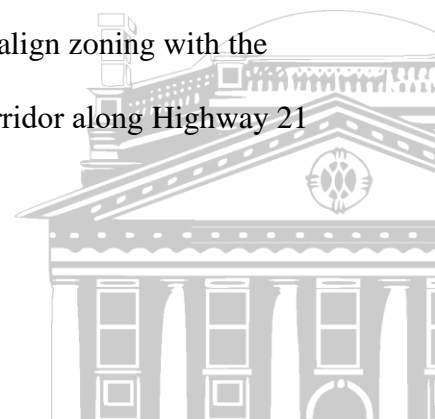
Map & Parcel: 466C-6  
 Parcel Size: ±4.84 Acres  
 Location: 323 Commerce Drive  
 Commissioner District: District 5 – Commissioner Kieffer

Proposed Use: Wrecked Vehicle Import/Export Activities

Applicant/Owner: Dietmar Lutte as agent for Rippolinger LLC  
 323 Commerce Drive  
 Rincon, GA 31326

**Rezoning Summary:**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Applicant Request</b>	Rezone ±4.84 acres from <b>B-3</b> to <b>HI</b>
<b>Proposed Use</b>	Vehicle export, storage, and logistics operations
<b>Existing Use</b>	Vehicle export yard, storage, and staging (operating since approximately 2018)
<b>FLUM Designation</b>	Commercial / Commercial Corridor Overlay
<b>Access</b>	Commerce Drive & Parkway Drive
<b>Key Considerations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Existing operation</b> includes wrecked vehicle import/export activities <b>not permitted</b> within the B-3 zoning district</li> <li>• Business has been <b>operating</b> since approximately 2018 <b>without</b> an Effingham County Business License</li> <li>• <b>Code Enforcement case (March 11, 2026)</b> related to obstruction of roads and right-of-way associated with business operations</li> <li>• Rezoning to HI with a Conditional Use Permit would align zoning with the existing use</li> <li>• Property is located within an established industrial corridor along Highway 21</li> </ul>
<b>Planning Board Recommendation</b>	<b>Denial</b> (Unanimous)



## Request Overview:

The applicant is requesting to rezone approximately **4.84 acres from B-3 (Major Commercial) to HI (Heavy Industrial)** to align the zoning classification with an existing vehicle storage and export operation.

The property is currently developed with a warehouse building and outdoor storage areas and has been operating as a vehicle staging, storage, and export facility since approximately 2018.

Staff notes that the business has been operating since approximately 2018 and has not held an Effingham County Business License during that time.

On **March 11, 2026**, Code Enforcement conducted a site visit and spoke with the property owner regarding a complaint indicating that business operations have at times obstructed roadways and public right-of-way areas, including reports of vehicles being unloaded within the street and on adjacent properties. The owner indicated that such activities were not occurring; however, Code Enforcement advised that all operational activities, including forklift use, should remain on-site. The owner acknowledged this and indicated that corrective measures would be implemented.

Based on staff review, the operational characteristics of the site, including the storage and handling of wrecked vehicles, meet the criteria of a heavy industrial use under the Effingham County Zoning Ordinance. This type of use is not permitted within the B-3 zoning district and requires rezoning and approval of a Conditional Use Permit.

## Existing Land Use and Zoning:

The subject property is located at **323 Commerce Drive within the Highway 21 industrial corridor** and consists of approximately **4.84 acres**.

The parcel is currently zoned **B-3 (Major Commercial)**.

The site is developed with:

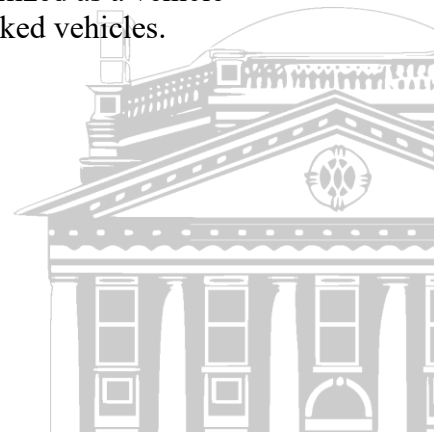
- A ±12,000 square foot warehouse building
- Outdoor storage and staging areas
- Internal circulation for truck access
- Secured perimeter fencing

The property is served by public water and sewer infrastructure and is currently utilized as a vehicle storage, staging, and export facility, including the handling of new, used, and wrecked vehicles.

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## Surrounding Development Pattern:

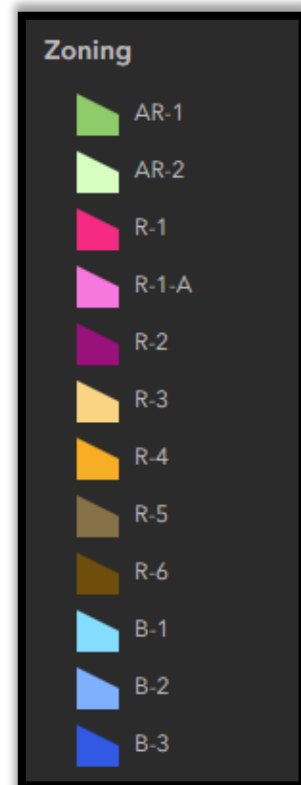
The subject property is located within an area characterized by **industrial and commercial development**.

A review of the Effingham County zoning map indicates the following surrounding zoning pattern:

- **North:** I-1 (Light Industrial)
- **South:** PD (Planned Development) and commercial uses across Highway 21
- **East:** I-1 (Light Industrial)
- **West:** B-3 (Major Commercial) and industrial uses



(Zoning Map)



(Zoning Legend)

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Development within the surrounding area consists primarily of:

- Warehousing and distribution facilities
- Outdoor storage yards
- Industrial and logistics operations

The overall pattern reflects an **established industrial corridor**.

### **Site Description:**

The subject property consists of approximately **4.84 acres** and includes:

- Existing warehouse structure
- Outdoor storage areas
- Internal circulation designed for truck movement
- 6- foot privacy fence surrounding the property

The property is served by public utilities and is located within a developed industrial area.

### **Proposed Use and Operations:**

The applicant proposes to continue operation of a **vehicle storage, staging, and export facility**.

The use includes:

- Storage of new, used, and wrecked vehicles
- Loading and export operations
- Warehouse-supported logistics

### **Operational Characteristics:**

- 3 employees and approximately 10 subcontractors
- Hours: Monday–Friday, 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM
- Vehicle turnaround: approximately 4–5 days
- Three loading docks
- Two access points

Truck access is primarily provided from **Parkway Drive**.

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## Access and Transportation:

The subject property is accessed from **Commerce Drive and Parkway Drive**, with proximity to **Highway 21**, a major transportation corridor.

Traffic associated with the use is generally consistent with industrial and logistics operations within the corridor. However, truck activity may represent a potential consideration, particularly with respect to site access, circulation, and impacts to adjacent roadways.

## Environmental Considerations:

A review of the Effingham County GIS Interactive Map indicates:

- **No FEMA floodplain located on the property**
- **Presence of wetlands near the southern portion of the site**, generally outside of primary operational areas



*(Wetlands Map)*

Any disturbance of wetlands may require:

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- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) review
- State and federal permitting

Wetland mapping is for planning purposes only and requires field verification.

### **Infrastructure and Services:**

The property is adequately served by:

- Public water and sewer
- Established roadway access
- Proximity to Highway 21

Infrastructure appears adequate to support the existing and proposed use, subject to compliance with applicable regulations.

### **Comprehensive Plan Consistency:**

The subject property is designated **Commercial** on the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) and is located within the **Commercial Corridor Overlay** of the Effingham County 2020–2040 Joint Comprehensive Plan.

The Commercial designation is intended to support:

- Retail, service, and office uses
- Employment-generating development
- Corridor-oriented development along major transportation routes
- Uses that benefit from visibility and access to arterial roadways

The requested rezoning from **B-3 (Major Commercial)** to **HI (Heavy Industrial)** represents a **higher intensity use than typically envisioned under the Commercial designation**, particularly due to the scale of outdoor storage and operational characteristics associated with heavy industrial uses.

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*(FLUM Node Legend)*

*Future Land Use Map (FLUM)*

*(FLUM Legend)*

However, staff notes that the subject property is located within an **established industrial and logistics corridor along Highway 21**, where surrounding land uses are predominantly industrial in nature, including warehousing, outdoor storage, and distribution facilities.

Additionally:

- The site is already developed with a warehouse and outdoor storage areas
- The existing use is operational and consistent with surrounding properties
- The property is served by public water, sewer, and roadway infrastructure
- The use is oriented toward logistics and employment rather than retail activity

While the request is not fully consistent with the Commercial FLUM designation in terms of intensity, the **existing development pattern and corridor context** support consideration of the request.

### **Buffer Requirements:**

**Per Effingham County Code of Ordinances - Article III, Section 3.4 Buffers**

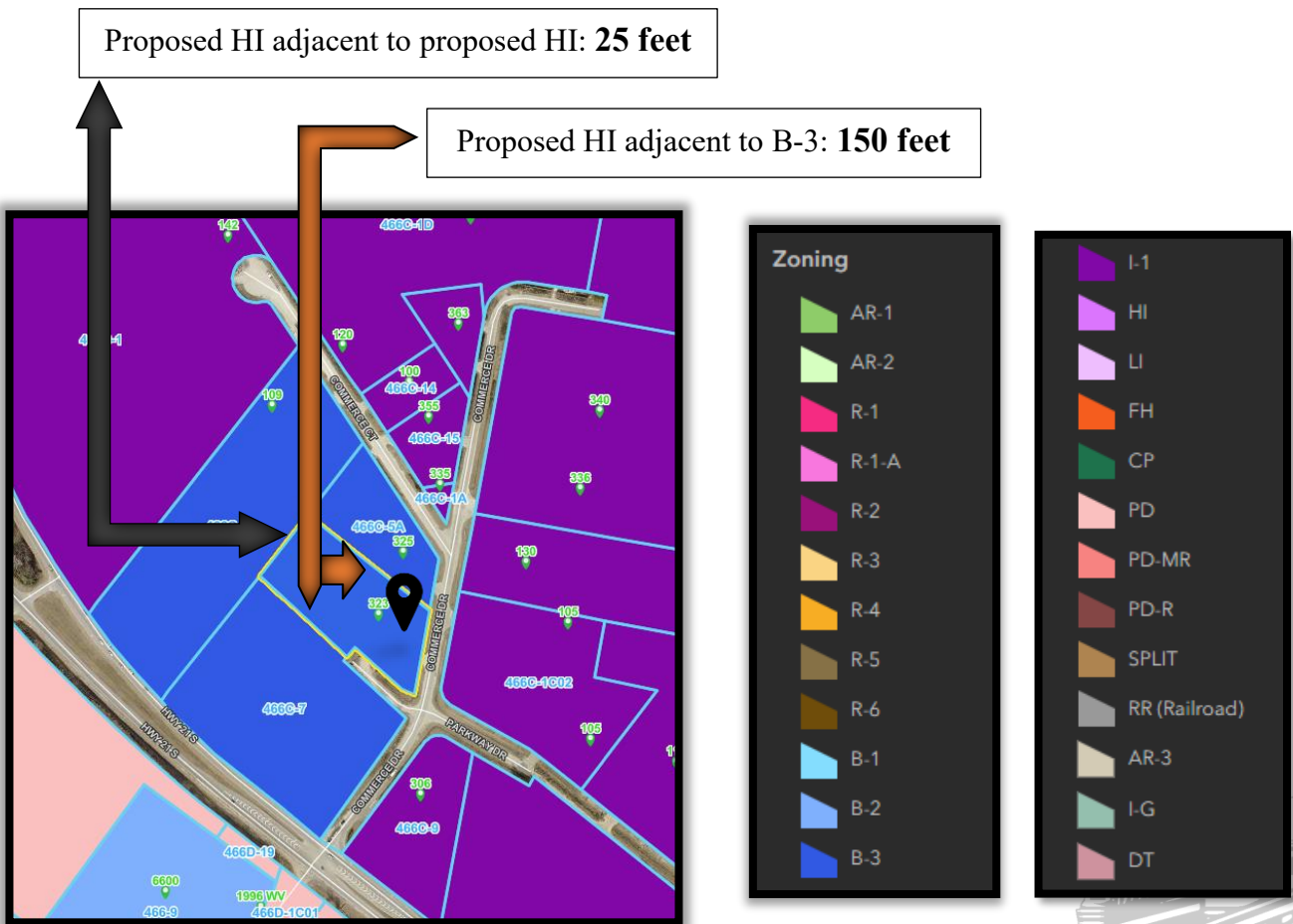
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Proposed Zoning													
	AR-1	AR-2	R-1	R-3	R-4	R-5	R-6	B-1	B-2	B-3	MXD	LI	HI
AR-1	15 ft	15 ft	15 ft	30 ft	15 ft	15 ft	15 ft	30 ft	30 ft	30 ft	20 ft	150 ft	300 ft
AR-2	15 ft	15 ft	15 ft	30 ft	15 ft	15 ft	15 ft	30 ft	30 ft	30 ft	20 ft	150 ft	300 ft
R-1	30 ft	30 ft	15 ft	30 ft	15 ft	15 ft	15 ft	30 ft	30 ft	30 ft	20 ft	300 ft	300 ft
R-3	30 ft	30 ft	30 ft	15 ft	30 ft	30 ft	30 ft	20 ft	20 ft	20 ft	15 ft	150 ft	300 ft
R-4	30 ft	30 ft	30 ft	30 ft	15 ft	15 ft	15 ft	30 ft	30 ft	30 ft	20 ft	300 ft	300 ft
R-5	30 ft	30 ft	30 ft	30 ft	15 ft	15 ft	15 ft	30 ft	30 ft	30 ft	20 ft	300 ft	300 ft
R-6	30 ft	30 ft	30 ft	30 ft	15 ft	15 ft	15 ft	30 ft	30 ft	30 ft	20 ft	300 ft	300 ft
B-1	30 ft	30 ft	30 ft	20 ft	30 ft	30 ft	30 ft	15 ft	15 ft	15 ft	15 ft	50 ft	150 ft
B-2	30 ft	30 ft	30 ft	20 ft	30 ft	30 ft	30 ft	15 ft	15 ft	15 ft	15 ft	50 ft	150 ft
B-3	30 ft	30 ft	30 ft	20 ft	30 ft	30 ft	30 ft	15 ft	15 ft	15 ft	15 ft	50 ft	150 ft
MXD	30 ft	30 ft	30 ft	15 ft	20 ft	20 ft	20 ft	15 ft	15 ft	15 ft	10 ft	150 ft	300 ft
LI	150 ft	150 ft	300 ft	150 ft	300 ft	300 ft	300 ft	50 ft	50 ft	50 ft	50 ft	50 ft	50 ft
HI	300 ft	300 ft	300 ft	300 ft	300 ft	300 ft	300 ft	150 ft	150 ft	150 ft	150 ft	25 ft	25 ft



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- A minimum 150-foot buffer is required where the property abuts commercial zoning districts.
- A 25-foot buffer is required where the property abuts proposed industrial zoning districts.

Additional buffering, landscaping, and site development standards will be reviewed during the site plan review and permitting process, where applicable.

## **Rezoning Decision Criteria:**

Staff evaluated the request based on standard zoning considerations.

### **Existing Use of the Property**

The property is currently used for vehicle storage, staging, and export operations, including the handling of new, used, and wrecked vehicles.

### **Suitability for the Current Zoning**

The current operation appears to exceed the intensity permitted within the B-3 zoning district.

### **Suitability for the Proposed Zoning**

The requested HI (Heavy Industrial) zoning classification would allow the existing operation to function within a zoning district that is intended to accommodate higher intensity industrial uses, including outdoor storage and logistics-related activities, subject to approval of a Conditional Use Permit.

### **Compatibility with Surrounding Development**

The surrounding area is predominantly industrial in nature, consisting of warehouse, distribution, and logistics-related uses. The proposed zoning classification is consistent with this established development pattern.

### **Impact on Adjacent Properties**

Potential impacts include noise, truck traffic, and visual impacts associated with outdoor storage.

### **Traffic and Infrastructure**

The property is adequately served by existing infrastructure, including public water and sewer.

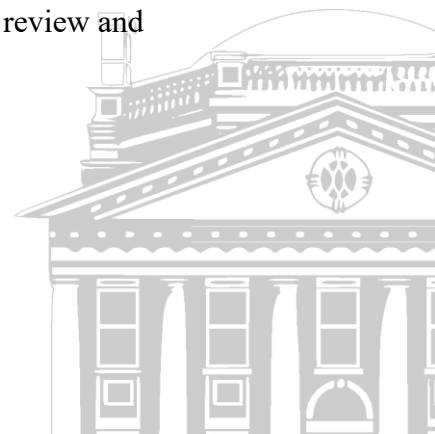
Traffic generated by the use is generally consistent with industrial and logistics-oriented operations within the surrounding corridor. However, truck traffic associated with the use may represent a potential consideration, particularly with respect to site access, circulation, and impacts to adjacent roadways.

Any future modifications to access or operational intensity may require additional review and coordination with applicable agencies.

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### **Environmental Considerations**

Wetlands are present and may require permitting if impacted.

### **Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan**

The Future Land Use Map designates the property as Commercial within the Commercial Corridor Overlay. While the requested HI zoning represents a higher intensity classification than typically envisioned under the Commercial designation, the surrounding area is characterized by industrial development, and the existing use is consistent with this development pattern.

### **Planning Board Recommendation;**

At the **April 14, 2026 Planning Board meeting**, the Planning Board conducted a public hearing on the requested rezoning application.

### **Public Hearing Summary:**

Staff presented the request to rezone approximately **4.84 acres from B-3 (Major Commercial) to HI (Heavy Industrial)** to align the zoning classification with an **existing vehicle storage, staging, and export operation**.

Staff also outlined recommended conditions addressing **on-site operations, outdoor storage, security fencing, and operational limitations**.

### **Public Comment:**

#### **In Support:**

Speakers in favor stated that the business operates similarly to surrounding industrial uses and has made efforts to maintain the site and comply with regulations.

#### **In Opposition:**

Multiple speakers expressed concerns related to:

- **Truck traffic and roadway congestion**
- Vehicles being **loaded/unloaded within public roadways**
- **Public safety concerns** associated with truck activity
- **Damage to roadways and surrounding infrastructure**
- **Unauthorized use of adjacent properties** for staging or unloading
- Potential **environmental impacts**, including fluid leakage and proximity to wetlands

### **Planning Board Discussion:**

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During deliberation, the Planning Board discussed **operational impacts, traffic concerns, and site constraints**, including the **required buffer standards between industrial and commercial zoning districts**.

The Board noted that the site may **not be able to meet required buffer widths**, and that approval of the request could necessitate a **variance from the buffer requirements**. Concerns were expressed that even if a variance were pursued, granting such relief **could establish an undesirable precedent for similar properties**.

### **Planning Board Action:**

Following discussion, the Planning Board voted to **recommend denial** of the rezoning request based on concerns related to **traffic, infrastructure impacts, operational intensity, and buffer compliance**.

- **Motion by:** Ms. Lyndsay Smith
- **Seconded by:** Mr. Neal Kessler
- **Vote:** Unanimous (Denial)

### **Staff Analysis and Recommendation:**

Staff has reviewed the request in relation to the Effingham County Zoning Ordinance, the existing use of the property, surrounding development patterns, infrastructure availability, and the policies of the Effingham County Comprehensive Plan.

The subject property is currently developed and operating as a vehicle storage and export facility. Based on staff review, the operational characteristics of the site, including the storage and handling of wrecked vehicles, exceed the uses permitted within the B-3 zoning district and are consistent with uses classified as heavy industrial under the zoning ordinance.

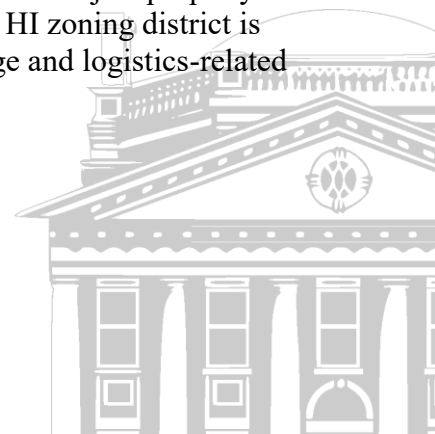
Staff also notes that the business has been operating since approximately 2018 without an Effingham County Business License. Additionally, a Code Enforcement complaint received regarding obstruction of roadways and right-of-way areas associated with business operations, including reports of unloading activity occurring off-site. A site visit conducted on March 11, 2026 addressed these concerns with the property owner, including the requirement that all operational activities and equipment remain on-site.

The surrounding area is developed with industrial and logistics-oriented uses, and the subject property is located within an established industrial corridor along Highway 21. The requested HI zoning district is intended to accommodate higher intensity industrial uses, including outdoor storage and logistics-related activities, subject to approval of a Conditional Use Permit.

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The Future Land Use Map designates the property as Commercial within the Commercial Corridor Overlay. While the requested zoning represents a higher intensity classification than typically envisioned under this designation, the existing development pattern, corridor function, and infrastructure availability are relevant considerations.

Based on these factors, the request may be considered as a zoning alignment to bring the property into conformance with the existing use rather than the introduction of a new or more intensive land use and does not **appear** to create a substantial change in the character of the area, as the site is already developed and operating in a manner consistent with surrounding properties. With appropriate conditions related to site operations, access, buffering, lighting, and environmental compliance, staff finds that potential operational impacts can be reasonably addressed when subject to conditions.

The Board may approve the request, approve the request with conditions, or deny the request

### **Recommended Conditions (If Approved):**

If the Board elects to approve the rezoning request, staff recommends the following conditions:

1. All loading, unloading, and operational activities shall occur on-site. No vehicles, equipment, or materials shall be staged, loaded, or unloaded within public roadways, rights-of-way, or on adjacent properties.
2. A **Conditional Use Permit (CUP)** shall be required.
3. All outdoor storage areas shall be **fully enclosed with security fencing**.
4. No vehicle dismantling, salvage processing, or hazardous material handling shall occur unless separately approved.
5. Hours of operation shall be limited to **Monday–Friday, 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM**.

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