



Staff Report

Author: Kimberly Barlett, Senior Planner
Department: Development Services
Subject: Conditional Use
Meeting Date: May 19, 2026
Application: CU-26-19

Existing Zoning: B-3 (Major Commercial)

Map & Parcel: 466C-6

Parcel Size: 4.84 acres

Applicant: Dietmar Lutte
323 Commerce Drive
Rincon, GA 31326

Owner(s): Dietmar Lutte as agent for Rippolinger LLC
323 Commerce Drive
Rincon, GA 31326

Commissioner District: Fifth District

Location: 323 Commerce Drive
Rincon, GA 31326

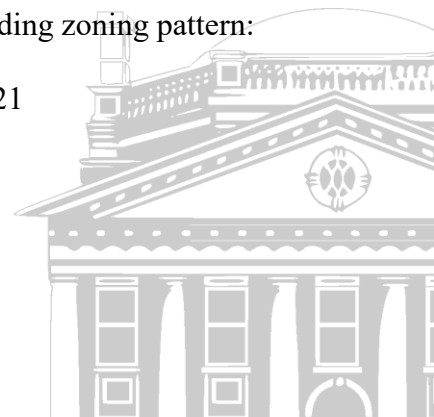
Existing Land Use and Zoning:

The applicant is requesting a Conditional Use approval associated with the proposed rezoning of approximately 4.84 acres from **B-3 (Major Commercial)** to **HI (Heavy Industrial)** to allow the import and export of wrecked vehicles.

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

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





Project Summary/Proposed Request:

The applicant is requesting a **Conditional Use** to allow for the import and export of wrecked vehicles. The subject property currently operates as a preexisting vehicle storage and export facility. In conjunction with this request, the applicant is seeking to rezone the property to Heavy Industrial (HI). While the HI zoning district is intended to accommodate more intensive industrial uses, the import/export and storage of wrecked or inoperable vehicles is not permitted by right within this district and is instead classified as a conditional use.

Wrecked vehicle import/export. This generally refers to the process of moving damaged or "totaled" vehicles across borders for various purposes. These vehicles may have been in accidents or have substantial damage, but they might still have value in specific markets for parts, repairs, or salvage.

Proposed Use and Operations:

The applicant proposes to continue operating a vehicle storage, staging, and export facility.

The use includes:

- Storage of new, used, and wrecked vehicles
- Loading and unloading operations by truck and container.
- Warehouse-supported logistics operations

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According to section 3.16.4, of Junk yards. Wrecked automobiles shall be stored in an orderly manner with an adequate area for maneuvering provided within the property boundaries. All loading and unloading shall occur within the property boundaries and no trucks delivering or picking up the wrecked automobiles shall park in the public road or public road rights-of-way. Under no circumstances may wrecked automobiles be stacked and at no time may any storage yard contain more than 50 wrecked automobiles. Further, all wrecked automobiles shall be free of all motor fuels and fluids including, but not limited to, gasoline, diesel fuel, oil, brake fluid, engine coolant and transmission fluids.

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

Facts and Findings:

Site Characteristics

The subject parcel contains **4.84** acres and includes an existing warehouse structure, outdoor storage areas, and a vehicle storage yard. Access is provided directly from Commerce Drive and Parkway Drive. The parcel does contain **wetlands**, with no identified **floodplain or environmental constraints** based on County GIS mapping.

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Surrounding Development Pattern

The surrounding area is predominantly industrial, consisting of warehouses, distribution, and logistics-related uses, with a mix of commercial operations. The proposed zoning classification is consistent with this established development pattern.

Zoning Context

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

Pursuant to Effingham County Code of Ordinances **Section 4.1A – Permitted Use Table**, a wrecked vehicle import/export requires a Conditional Use approval within the HI district. Therefore, Conditional Use approval is required for the proposed activity.

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	AR-1	AR-3	AR-2	R-1	R-1-A	R-2	R-3	R-4	R-5	R-6	B-1	B-2	B-3	PD	I-1	LI	HI	FH	CP	C - Article II - Definitions
General Sales or Services																				
Retail Sales or Service																				
Automobile Sales and Services																				
Car Dealer																				
Car Brokerage												P	P	P	C	P	P	P		2.78
Bus, Truck, RV/Camper, or Large Vehicles													C	P	C	P	P	P		2.67
Motorcycle, ATV, etc.													P	P	C	P	P	P		2.312
Boat or Marine Craft Dealer													P	P	C	P	P	P		2.316
Automobile Paint & Body	C	C											P	P	C	P	P	P		2.37
Parts, Accessories, or Tires														P	P	C				2.374
Fuel Service Station (less than 6 pumps)												P	P	P	C					2.215(a)
Fuel Service Station (Less than 10 Pumps)														P	P	C				2.215(b)
Fuel Service Station (10 or More Pumps)														C	P	C				2.215(c)
Truck Stop														C	P	C				2.516
Overnight Truck Stop															P	C				2.368
Diesel Truck Service Station (Repair Shop, etc.)														P	P	C	P	P	P	2.145
Car Wash														P	P	C	P	P	P	2.8
Wrecked Vehicle Import/Export															C	C		C		2.519
Junkyard															C	C		C		2.273

Infrastructure and Services

The property is served by **public water and sewer**, consistent with surrounding development. Emergency access is adequate via Commerce Drive and Parkway Drive.

Compatibility with Surrounding Area

The proposed business is consistent with the character of the surrounding area and neighboring properties. There are several properties in the vicinity with similar types of operations, including outdoor storage and industrial uses.

The surrounding zoning classifications include a mix of commercial and industrial districts, which support a range of higher-intensity uses.

Development within the area primarily consists of:

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

This pattern of development reflects an established industrial corridor that is well-suited to accommodate uses of a similar nature.

Intensity of Use

The scale and operational characteristics of the proposed business represent 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.

Comprehensive Plan:

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The parcel is designated **Commercial Area** on the **Future Land Use Map (FLUM)**. This category supports land dedicated to non-industrial business uses. The intent is to ensure a harmonious relationship between commercial and non-commercial land uses. Uses are categorized into Neighborhood Commercial, General Commercial, and Highway Commercial. Neighborhood Commercial provides locations for small-scale stores and serving residential areas. General Commercial provides locations for large, county-wide and regional businesses that tend to generate higher traffic volumes. Highway Commercial are more intensive uses such as wholesale operations and automotive sales and service. Commercial uses may be located as a single use in one building or grouped together in a shopping center or office building. (Effingham County 2020-2040 Joint Comprehensive Plan, pg. 36).



Recommendation

Based on the findings above, staff finds that the proposed Conditional Use is compatible with surrounding land uses, and consistent with the intent of the HI zoning district. 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 is typically envisioned under this designation, the existing development pattern, and infrastructure availability are relevant considerations if approved, it would be subject to the following stipulations:

1. **An Effingham County Occupational Tax Certificate (business license) shall be obtained and kept in good standing.**

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