



Staff Report

Subject: 2nd Reading - Zoning Map Amendment
Author: Jennifer Rose, Planner I
Department: Development Services
Application: RZN-26-1
Meeting Date: April 7, 2026

Proposed Zoning: R-5 (Single-Family Residential)

Existing Zoning: AR-1 (Agricultural Residential; 5 acres)

Map & Parcel: 374-18, 374-42, 374-42A
Parcel Size: Approximately 457 Acres
Location: Blue Jay Road / Zittrouer Road Area
Commissioner Floyd: First District

Proposed Use: Master Planned Residential Development

Applicant: Stanley Martin Homes – Anthony Rocco
774 S Shelmore Blvd, Suite 111
Mt. Pleasant, SC. 29464

Owner(s): Brett Hughes
5132 Jefferies Hwy
Walterboro, SC. 29488

Rezoning Summary:

Item	Description
Project	Hughes Tract
Applicant Request	Rezone 457 acres from AR-1 to R-5
Location	Blue Jay Road/Zittrouer Road Area
Proposed Use	Master Planned Residential Development
Proposed Units	1,300 Units
Water & Sewer	Effingham County Public Utilities
Future Land Use Map	Residential / Suburban Development Area
Staff Recommendation	Approval with conditions
Planning Board Recommendation:	Denial (March 10, 2026)



Proposed Development Request

The applicant, Stanley Martin Homes, is requesting to **rezone approximately 457 acres from AR-1 (Agricultural Residential) to R-5 (Residential)** in order to develop a **master-planned residential community**.

According to the concept plan submitted with the application, the development will include approximately:

- **975 single-family homes (75%)**
- **325 cottage-style homes on narrower lots (25%)**

The development will include internal streets, community amenities, open space areas, stormwater management infrastructure, and a walking trail network.

The applicant has indicated that a **park area will be donated to Effingham County** as part of the project.

The development will be served by **public water and sewer provided by Effingham County**, which supports the proposed residential density.

Property Information

The rezoning request applies to three parcels:

- Parcel **374-18**
- Parcel **374-42**
- Parcel **374-42A**

These parcels total approximately **457 acres** and are located along the **Zittrouer Road / Blue Jay Road corridor in Effingham County**.

According to the tax assessor records, the parcels consist primarily of large undeveloped wooded tracts.

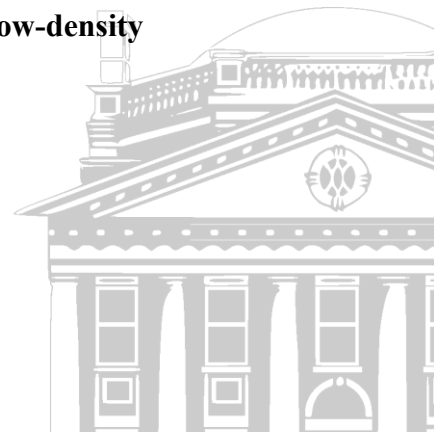
Existing Land Use and Zoning

The subject property currently consists of **large undeveloped tracts of timberland and natural drainage areas**.

The property is currently zoned **AR-1 (Agricultural Residential)**, which supports **low-density residential development and agricultural uses on large rural parcels**.

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Historically, land in this area has been used for **timber and agricultural purposes**, with residential development occurring on scattered rural parcels.

Surrounding Development Pattern

The surrounding area is characterized primarily by **agricultural land uses, rural residential properties, and scattered residential subdivisions**.

A review of the zoning map indicates that surrounding properties are predominantly zoned AR-1 (Agricultural Residential).

The surrounding zoning pattern is generally as follows:

- **North** – AR-1 (Agricultural Residential) and residential subdivisions
- **South** – AR-1 (Agricultural Residential) and rural residential properties
- **East** – AR-1 (Agricultural Residential) and scattered residential development
- **West** – AR-1 (Agricultural Residential)

The area surrounding the site reflects a **transitional growth pattern**, with increasing residential development occurring in this portion of Effingham County.

Facts and Findings:

Site Characteristics

The subject property contains approximately **457 acres** and consists primarily of **wooded land with natural drainage corridors**.

The site includes multiple **wetland systems and floodplain areas associated with natural drainage features**. These environmental features will influence the final development layout.

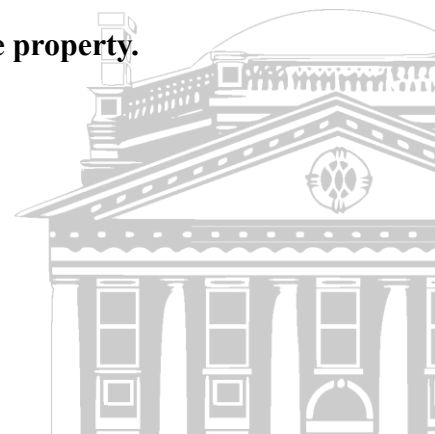
Environmental Considerations

Wetland mapping and floodplain mapping indicate the presence of **freshwater wetlands and FEMA flood hazard areas** across portions of the site.

These areas occur primarily within **low-lying drainage corridors throughout the property**.

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Development will be required to comply with all applicable **federal, state, and local environmental regulations**, including:

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers wetland permitting
- Georgia Environmental Protection Division regulations
- Effingham County stormwater management standards

These environmental features will likely be incorporated into **preserved open space, buffers, and stormwater management areas**.

Infrastructure and Utilities

The proposed development will be served by **public water and sewer provided by Effingham County**.

Public utilities will support the residential density proposed for the development.

Infrastructure improvements associated with the project will include:

- internal road network
- stormwater management systems
- water and sewer infrastructure
- community recreation amenities

Emergency services will continue to be provided by Effingham County Fire, EMS, and Sheriff's Office.

Traffic and Transportation Considerations

A Traffic Impact Study has been conducted for the proposed development.

The study estimates that the project could generate approximately 1,267 peak-hour vehicle trips once the development is complete.

Traffic improvements identified as part of the study include:

- **A single-lane roundabout at Midland Road and Zittrouer Road**
- **A westbound right-turn lane at SR-30 and Zittrouer Road**
- **A westbound right-turn lane at SR-17 and SR-30**
- **A right-turn bypass lane at SR-30 and Blue Jay Road**

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- **Left-turn lanes at Midland Road and the project access point**

These improvements are intended to maintain safe and efficient traffic operations as the surrounding area continues to grow.

Public Facilities Impact

Development of approximately **1,300 residential units** will increase demand for public services including fire protection, law enforcement, emergency services, and schools.

School System Impact

The proposed residential development may contribute to increased enrollment within the **Effingham County School System**. Student generation will depend on housing types and household demographics.

The Effingham County School District evaluates enrollment trends and facility needs through long-term planning and capital improvement programs.

The subject property is located in unincorporated Effingham County and public water and sewer service for the proposed development will be provided by Effingham County Utilities.

With regard to schools, the property is currently located within the Marlow Elementary School attendance zone. The Effingham County School District has also constructed Creekside Elementary School, which is scheduled to open in Fall 2026 and is located approximately 5 to 10 miles from the proposed development area. The opening of this school is intended to help accommodate continued residential growth within this portion of the county.

School attendance zones and enrollment capacity are managed by the Effingham County Board of Education. As residential development occurs throughout the county, the School District periodically evaluates enrollment trends and may adjust school attendance zones as needed to balance student populations among available schools.

This development will be served by county utilities and county school facilities, and any future school assignments will be determined by the Effingham County School District based on their established policies and planning processed.

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Parks and Recreation

The proposed development will include **community open space areas and recreational amenities**.

Additionally, the applicant has indicated that a **park area will be dedicated to Effingham County**, providing additional recreational opportunities for county residents.

Stormwater Management

Stormwater will be managed through a system of **detention ponds and drainage infrastructure throughout the development**.

The applicant has indicated that approximately **20% of the site will consist of impervious surface area** once development is complete.

A **flood study and hydrologic modeling have been completed**, and the applicant has indicated that the project will be designed to maintain a **“no-rise” condition for flood elevations** upon completion.

Comprehensive Plan Consistency

The Future Land Use Map identifies this area as appropriate for **future residential growth**.

These areas are intended to support **planned residential communities with a mix of housing types supported by public infrastructure such as water and sewer service**.

The proposed development is generally consistent with the Comprehensive Plan’s goal of **directing residential growth toward areas where infrastructure can support development**.

Rezoning Considerations

Staff evaluated the rezoning request based on commonly applied planning criteria.

Existing Use

The property currently consists primarily of **undeveloped timberland and natural drainage areas**.

Suitability for Current Zoning

The property could remain under AR-1 zoning; however, the availability of public utilities supports increased residential density.

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Compatibility with Surrounding Uses

The surrounding area includes a mixture of **rural residential properties and emerging residential subdivisions.**

Infrastructure Availability

Public water and sewer infrastructure supports residential development in this area.

Environmental Constraints

Wetlands and floodplain areas will require careful incorporation into the development design.

Potential Considerations

Staff has identified several considerations associated with the development:

- Wetlands and floodplain areas may influence the final development layout.
- Traffic volumes in the area will increase as development occurs.
- Infrastructure improvements may be necessary to support projected growth.

These considerations will be addressed during **development plan and subdivision review.**

Planning Board Recommendation

At the **March 10, 2026 Planning Board meeting**, the Planning Board conducted a public hearing on the requested rezoning.

Staff presented the request to rezone approximately **457 acres from AR-1 to R-5** for a **master-planned residential development consisting of approximately 1,300 units**, and recommended **approval with conditions.**

Public Hearing Summary

In Support:

Representatives of the applicant and property owner stated that the development:

- Complies with **R-5 zoning standards**
- Includes approximately **33% open space**, including land to be dedicated to the County
- Provides **amenities and planned infrastructure**
- Is **consistent with the Comprehensive Plan**
- Has supporting **traffic and environmental studies**

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In Opposition:

Residents expressed concerns related to:

- **Traffic and roadway safety**
- **Flooding and drainage conditions**
- **School capacity**
- **Infrastructure limitations**
- **Community character and property values**
- **Public safety and growth impacts**

Planning Board Action

Following discussion, the Planning Board voted to **recommend denial** of the rezoning request based on concerns that **existing infrastructure may not adequately support a development of this scale.**

- **Motion by:** Mr. Walter Boykin
- **Seconded by:** Ms. Lyndsay Smith
- **Vote:** 3–2 (Denial)

Staff Analysis and Recommendation

Staff reviewed the rezoning request based on the Effingham County Zoning Ordinance, surrounding land use patterns, infrastructure availability, environmental constraints, and the policies outlined in the Effingham County 2020–2040 Joint Comprehensive Plan.

The applicant proposes a **master-planned residential community consisting of approximately 1,300 residential units.**

The development includes a mix of **traditional single-family homes and cottage-style homes**, along with open space areas, stormwater management infrastructure, and recreational amenities.

Public **water and sewer service provided by Effingham County** supports the proposed residential density.

The development also includes the **donation of parkland to the County**, which will provide recreational opportunities for residents.

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While the site contains wetlands and floodplain areas, these features appear to be incorporated into the development layout through preserved open space and drainage corridors.

Effingham County has experienced continued residential growth in recent years, particularly in areas where **public infrastructure such as water and sewer service is available or planned**. The County's Comprehensive Plan identifies locations appropriate for residential expansion and encourages development patterns that are supported by available infrastructure and public services.

The proposed development is located within an area where **county utilities can provide water and sewer service**, which allows residential growth to occur in a manner that can be more efficiently served by public infrastructure. Directing higher-density residential development toward areas served by utilities helps reduce the reliance on individual well and septic systems and supports more coordinated long-term infrastructure planning.

As residential growth continues within Effingham County, coordination between **county utilities, transportation planning, and the school system** will remain important to ensure that infrastructure and public services are able to support future development.

Comprehensive Plan Consistency

The Effingham County Future Land Use Map identifies the subject property within the **Agricultural–Residential character area**, which is intended to accommodate rural residential development and transitional growth patterns as infrastructure becomes available. These areas are generally characterized by larger tracts of land, low-density residential uses, and agricultural activities, but may also transition to more developed residential patterns over time as the county continues to grow.

The Future Land Use Map also identifies a **Development–Suburban Node located adjacent to the subject parcels near the intersection of Blue Jay Road and Midland Road**. Development–Suburban Nodes are intended to serve as locations where **more concentrated residential development and supporting uses may occur**, particularly in areas where transportation access and public infrastructure can support additional growth.

The proximity of the subject property to this designated **Development–Suburban Node indicates that the Comprehensive Plan anticipates increased residential development activity within this general area over time**. The proposed master-planned residential community reflects a development pattern

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commonly associated with suburban growth nodes, including a mix of housing types, internal road networks, open space areas, and recreational amenities.

Additionally, the project proposes to utilize **public water and sewer service provided by Effingham County Utilities**, which supports the residential density proposed and aligns with the Comprehensive Plan’s goal of directing higher-density residential development toward areas where public infrastructure is available.

Based on the property’s location adjacent to a **Development–Suburban Node**, the availability of **public utilities**, and the overall residential development pattern proposed, staff finds that the request demonstrates **general consistency with the growth framework outlined in the Effingham County Comprehensive Plan**.

Staff recommends approval of the rezoning request from AR-1 to R-5 subject to the conditions listed below.

The Board of Commissioners 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 condition:

1. Development of the property shall be generally consistent with the concept plan submitted with the rezoning application.
2. All wetlands and floodplain areas shall comply with applicable federal, state, and local environmental regulations, including permitting where required.
3. Roadway improvements identified in the Traffic Impact Study shall be coordinated with Effingham County and the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), where applicable.
4. A Land Disturbance Activity (LDA) permit and Tree Removal Permit shall be required prior to any land clearing activities.
5. A park area shall be dedicated to Effingham County as indicated on the concept plan, with the final location and design subject to County approval.
6. All subdivision plats and development plans shall comply with Effingham County subdivision and development regulations.

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