



Staff Report

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

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

Proposed Zoning: R-5 (Residential)

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

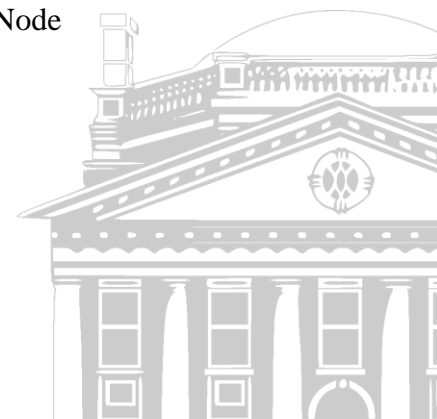
Proposed Use: Master Planned Residential Development

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:

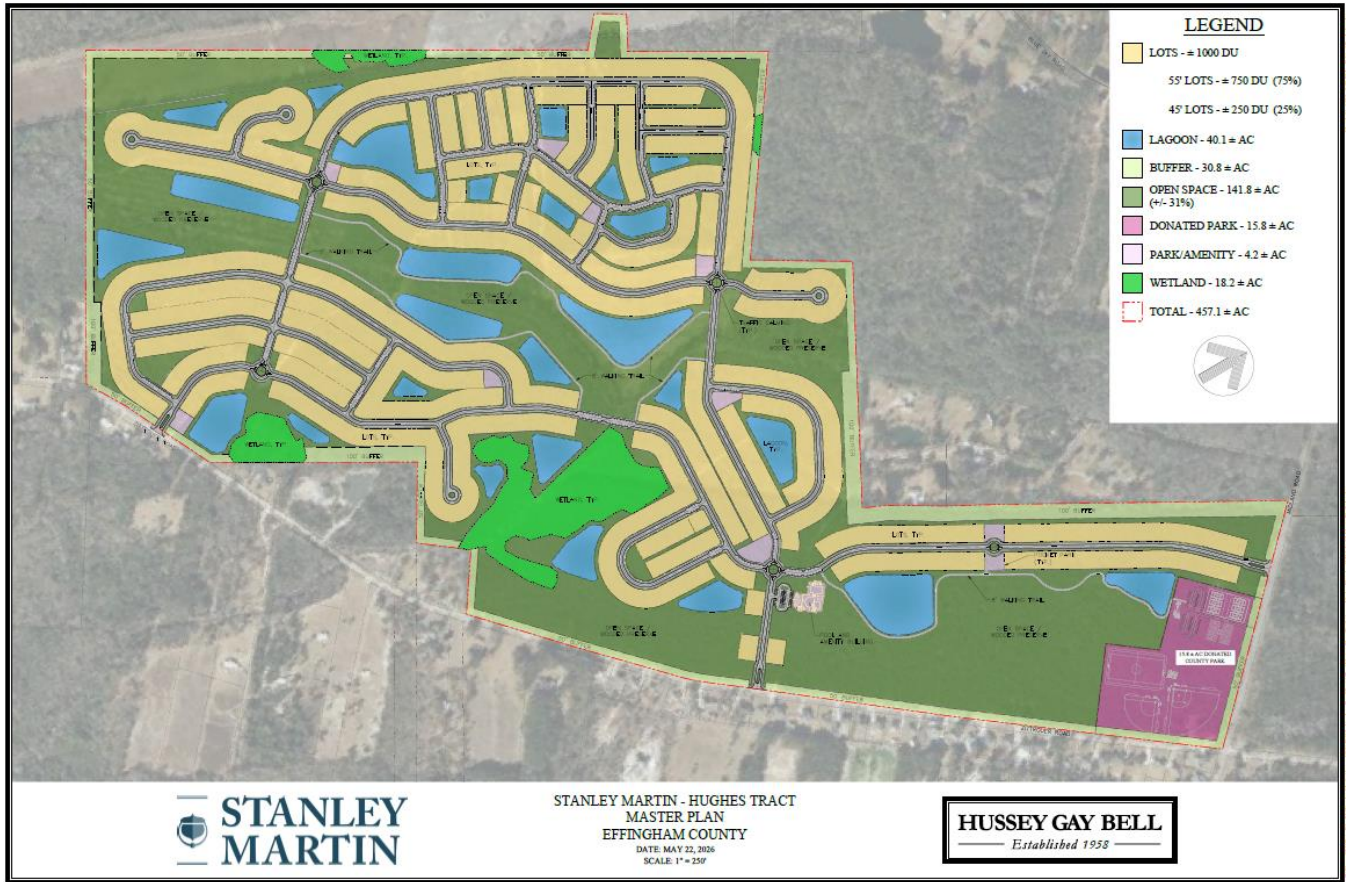
Item	Description
Project Name	Hughes Tract
Applicant Request	Rezone approximately 457 acres from AR-1 to R-5
Current Use	Undeveloped timberland and natural drainage areas
Proposed Development	Master-Planned Residential Community
Updated Proposed Density	Approximately 1,000 Residential Units
Housing Types	Single-Family Homes and Cottage-Style Homes
Utilities	Effingham County Public Water & Sewer
Future Land Use Map	Agricultural-Residential / Development–Suburban Node
Character Overlay	Development–Suburban Node Area
County Park Dedication	Approximately 15.8 Acres
Planning Board Recommendation	Denial (3–2 Vote)



PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT REQUEST

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

The applicant submitted an updated master plan dated May 22, 2026, which revised the overall development layout and reduced the total number of proposed residential units from approximately 1,300 units to approximately 1,000 units.



According to the revised concept plan, the development generally includes:

- Approximately 750 traditional single-family lots (55-foot lots)
- Approximately 250 cottage-style lots (45-foot lots)
- Internal road network
- Community amenities and recreation areas
- Walking trail system

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- Stormwater lagoons and drainage infrastructure
- Preserved open space and wooded buffer areas
- Dedicated county park area

The revised master plan also increases perimeter buffers from 50 feet to 100 feet in areas directly adjacent to existing residential properties.

The updated concept plan identifies:

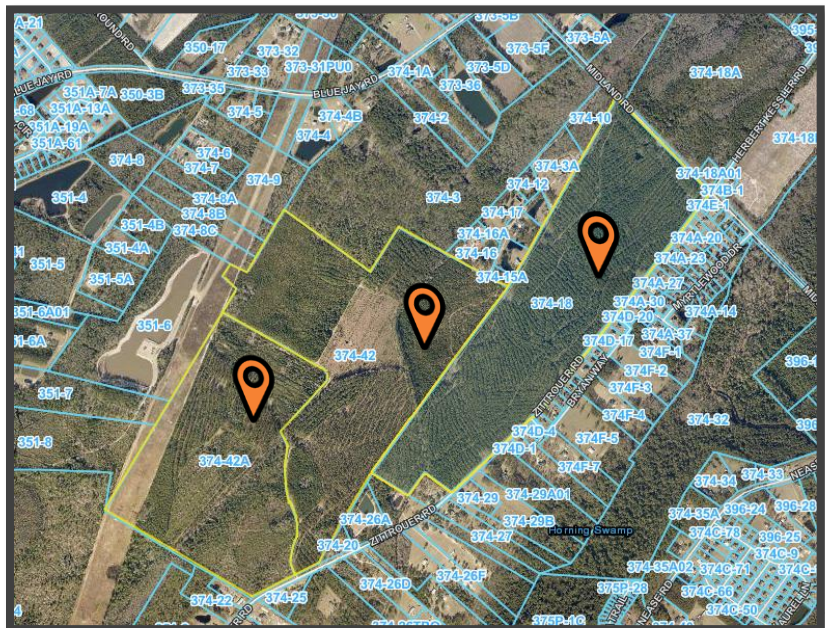
- Approximately 141.8 acres of open space and wooded preserve areas
- Approximately 18.2 acres of wetlands
- Approximately 40.1 acres of lagoon and stormwater infrastructure
- Approximately 15.8 acres dedicated as a county park area

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

PROPERTY INFORMATION

The rezoning request applies to the following parcels:

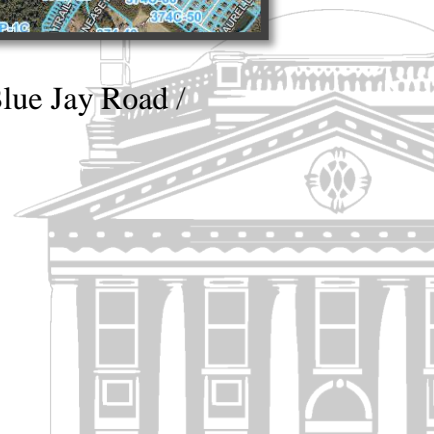
- Parcel **374-18**
- Parcel **374-42**
- Parcel **374-42A**



The subject property contains approximately **457 acres** and is located within the Blue Jay Road / Zittrouer Road corridor of Effingham County.

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According to tax assessor records and aerial mapping, the property primarily consists of wooded timberland, natural drainage corridors, wetlands, and undeveloped open space areas

EXISTING LAND USE AND ZONING

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

Existing land uses on the property primarily consist of:

- Timberland
- Natural drainage corridors
- Wetland areas
- Undeveloped wooded tracts

Historically, land within this portion of Effingham County has been utilized for agricultural and timber-related purposes, with scattered rural residential development occurring throughout the area.

SURROUNDING DEVELOPMENT PATTERN

The surrounding area is characterized by a combination of agricultural land, rural residential properties, and emerging residential subdivisions.

A review of the zoning map indicates surrounding properties are predominantly zoned AR-1 (Agricultural Residential), with residential growth occurring throughout the corridor.

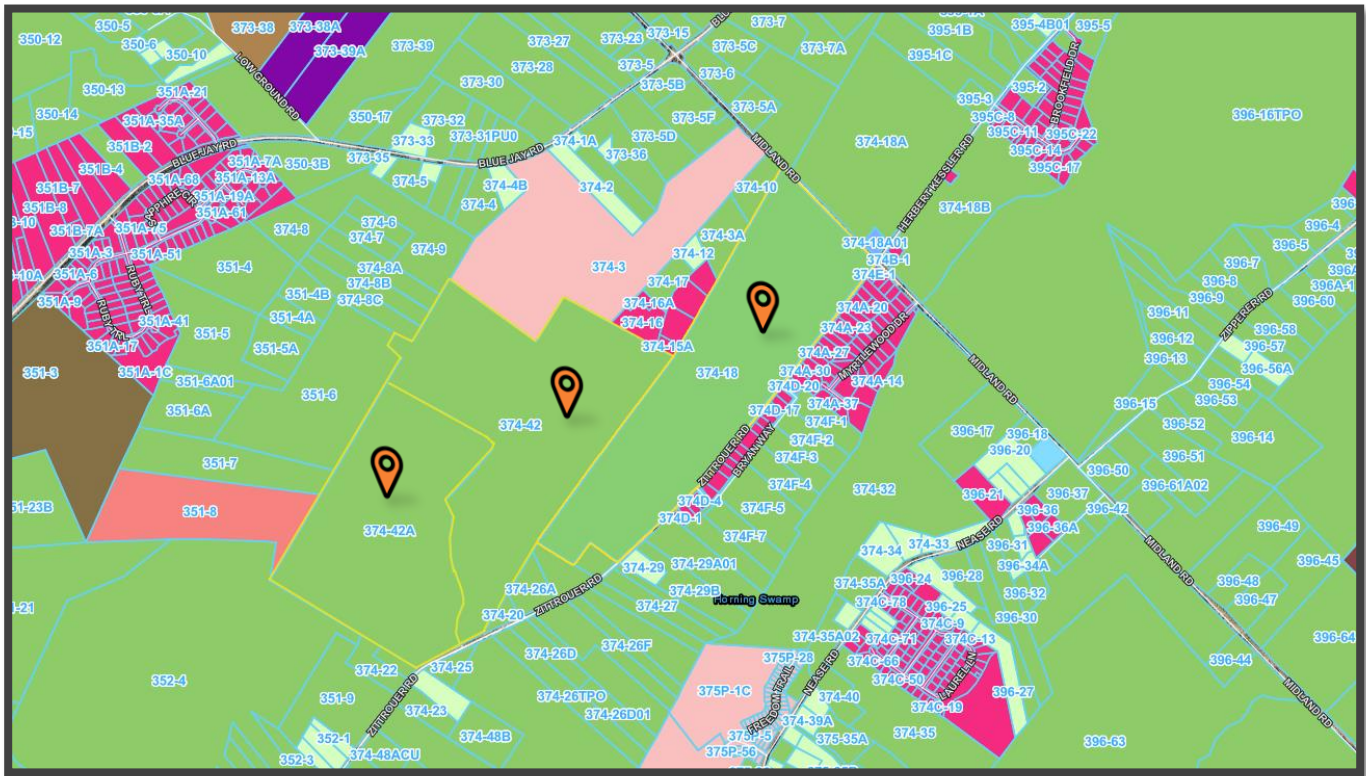
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Surrounding Zoning Pattern

Direction	Existing Zoning	Existing Development Pattern
North	AR-1	Rural residential and undeveloped land
South	AR-1	Agricultural land and scattered residences
East	AR-1 & R-1	Residential subdivisions and rural residential
West	AR-1	Undeveloped timberland and agricultural uses



(Zoning Map)

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

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FACTS AND FINDINGS:

SITE CHARACTERISTICS

The property contains approximately 457 acres consisting primarily of wooded land, natural drainage corridors, wetlands, and undeveloped open space.

The site includes multiple wetland systems and floodplain areas associated with existing drainage features. These environmental characteristics will influence the final development layout and infrastructure design.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

Wetland mapping and floodplain mapping indicate the presence of freshwater wetlands and FEMA flood hazard areas throughout portions of the property.

The applicant's revised master plan identifies approximately **18.2 acres of wetlands** and **proposes preservation of significant open space** and **wooded buffer areas** throughout the development.

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

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers permitting requirements
- Georgia Environmental Protection Division regulations
- Effingham County stormwater management standards
- FEMA floodplain regulations where applicable

Environmental features are proposed to be incorporated into preserved open space, stormwater management areas, buffers, and walking trail systems.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND UTILITIES

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

Infrastructure improvements associated with the development are anticipated to include:

- Internal roadway network
- Water and sewer infrastructure

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- Stormwater management systems
- Recreational amenities
- Sidewalks and pedestrian connectivity
- Open space preservation areas

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

TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION CONSIDERATIONS

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

Based on the submitted study, the development is anticipated to generate significant additional traffic volumes within the surrounding roadway network as development occurs. 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**
- **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.

The Planning Board discussion included concerns regarding roadway infrastructure capacity and long-term traffic impacts associated with the scale of the proposed development.

Future roadway improvements **may require coordination** with Effingham County Engineering, Effingham County Public Works, and the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT).

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PUBLIC FACILITIES IMPACT

Development of **approximately 1,000 residential units** may increase demand for public services including:

- Fire protection
- Emergency medical services
- Law enforcement
- Schools
- Transportation infrastructure
- Utilities and stormwater systems

As growth continues throughout this area of the county, coordination between county departments, utilities, and school system planning will remain important to ensure adequate infrastructure capacity.

SCHOOL SYSTEM IMPACT

The proposed residential development may contribute additional enrollment demand within the Effingham County School System.

The property is currently located within the Marlow Elementary School attendance area. Creekside Elementary School is anticipated to open in Fall 2026 and may assist in accommodating projected residential growth within this portion of the county.

School attendance zones and enrollment capacity are managed by the Effingham County Board of Education and may be adjusted periodically as growth occurs throughout the county.

PARKS, OPEN SPACE, AND RECREATION

The proposed development includes community open space areas, walking trails, preserved wooded areas, and recreational amenities.

The applicant has also indicated approximately 15.8 acres will be dedicated to Effingham County for future park purposes.

The revised master plan identifies approximately 141.8 acres of open space and wooded preserve areas, representing approximately 31% of the overall site.

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STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

Stormwater management is proposed through a system of detention lagoons, drainage corridors, and stormwater infrastructure located throughout the development.

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.

Stormwater facilities and drainage infrastructure will require review and approval during subsequent development plan review and permitting processes.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN CONSISTENCY

The Effingham County Future Land Use Map identifies the subject property within the Agricultural–Residential character area and adjacent to a designated Development–Suburban Node.

The Agricultural–Residential category is intended to support rural residential development patterns, agricultural uses, and transitional growth areas as infrastructure becomes available.

Development–Suburban Nodes are intended to accommodate more concentrated residential development patterns in locations where transportation access and public infrastructure can support increased growth and development intensity.

The subject property’s proximity to the Development–Suburban Node indicates that the Comprehensive Plan anticipates continued residential growth within this portion of the county over time.

The proposed master-planned development reflects characteristics commonly associated with suburban residential growth areas, including:

- Mix of housing types
- Internal roadway network
- Open space preservation
- Public utilities
- Recreation amenities
- Stormwater infrastructure
- Coordinated development planning

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Additionally, the availability of public water and sewer service supports the proposed residential density and aligns with Comprehensive Plan policies encouraging growth in areas where infrastructure is available or planned.

REZONING CONSIDERATIONS:

Existing Use

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

Suitability for Current Zoning

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

Compatibility with Surrounding Uses

The surrounding area includes a mixture of rural residential properties, undeveloped land, agricultural uses, and emerging residential subdivisions.

Infrastructure Availability

Public water and sewer infrastructure is available to support residential development within this corridor.

Environmental Constraints

Wetlands, drainage corridors, and floodplain areas will require careful integration into future development design and infrastructure planning.

Potential Considerations

Several considerations associated with the development include:

- Increased traffic volumes within the surrounding roadway network
- Infrastructure capacity and service demands
- Wetland and floodplain impacts
- Stormwater management requirements
- School system impacts
- Long-term growth management within the corridor

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These considerations will continue to be evaluated during future development review and permitting processes.

PLANNING BOARD RECOMMENDATION

Planning Board Public Hearing – March 10, 2026

The Effingham County Planning Board conducted a public hearing regarding the proposed rezoning request on March 10, 2026.

During the public hearing, the Board discussed several aspects of the proposed development, including:

- Zoning classification and density
- Floodplain and wetlands
- Stormwater management
- Affordable housing
- Existing infrastructure capacity
- Traffic impacts
- Lot sizes and housing mix
- Parking and roadway circulation
- Development timelines and phasing
- Parkland dedication and open space preservation

The applicant also presented an **updated master plan** reflecting revisions to the development layout, including:

- Reduction in proposed residential units from approximately 1,300 units to approximately 1,000 units
- Increase in perimeter buffers from 50 feet to 100 feet adjacent to residential properties
- Continued preservation of open space, wetlands, and wooded buffers

Planning Board Action

Motion **Denial based on concerns that infrastructure cannot support a development of this size**

Made By Mr. Walter Boykin

Seconded By Ms. Lyndsay Smith

Vote 3–2

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STAFF ANALYSIS/ KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

Staff reviewed the request in relation to the Effingham County Zoning Ordinance, surrounding land use patterns, infrastructure availability, environmental constraints, and the policies outlined within the Effingham County Comprehensive Plan.

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.

The applicant has revised the proposed master plan to reduce the overall development intensity from approximately 1,300 residential units to approximately 1,000 residential units. The revised plan also increases perimeter buffering adjacent to existing residential properties from 50 feet to 100 feet in certain areas.

The subject property is located within an area experiencing continued residential growth and is situated near a designated Development–Suburban Node identified within the Comprehensive Plan. The availability of public water and sewer infrastructure supports consideration of increased residential density within the corridor.

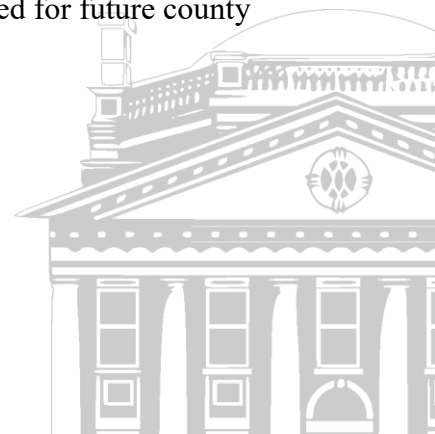
The proposed development includes several master-planned components intended to address long-term residential growth, including:

- Open space preservation areas
- Stormwater management infrastructure
- Internal roadway connectivity
- Recreation and trail amenities
- Parkland dedication
- Expanded residential buffering

The revised concept plan identifies approximately 141.8 acres of preserved open space and wooded areas, approximately 18.2 acres of wetlands, and approximately 15.8 acres proposed for future county park dedication.

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During the public hearing process, several considerations were raised by the Planning Board and surrounding property owners regarding:

- Existing roadway capacity and traffic impacts
- Infrastructure demands associated with future growth
- Stormwater management and drainage
- Floodplain and wetland impacts
- Residential density and compatibility with surrounding rural development patterns
- School system and public service impacts
- Development phasing and long-term buildout timelines

The Planning Board voted 3–2 to recommend denial of the request based on concerns regarding infrastructure capacity and the overall scale of the proposed development.

These considerations may continue to be evaluated during future engineering review, subdivision review, and development permitting processes should the rezoning request move forward.

The Board of Commissioners may approve the request, approve the request with conditions, or deny the request.

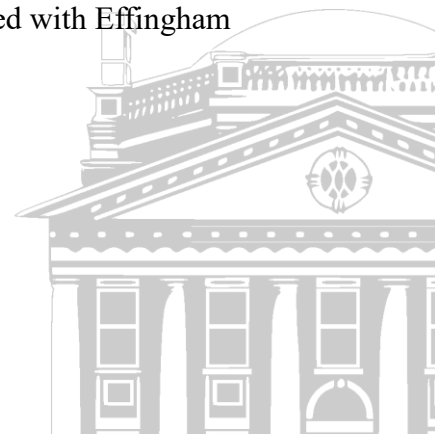
RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS (If Approved):

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 revised master plan submitted with the rezoning application dated May 22, 2026.
2. Residential units shall not exceed approximately 1,000 dwelling units unless otherwise approved by the Board of Commissioners.
3. A minimum 100-foot buffer shall be maintained adjacent to existing residential properties where indicated on the revised master plan.
4. Roadway improvements identified in the Traffic Impact Study shall be coordinated with Effingham County and the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), where applicable.
5. A Land Disturbance Activity (LDA) permit and Tree Removal Permit shall be required prior to land clearing activities.
6. Approximately 15.8 acres identified for park dedication shall be coordinated with Effingham County regarding final location and acceptance.

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7. All subdivision plats and development plans shall comply with Effingham County subdivision and development regulations.
8. Final engineering plans, infrastructure improvements, and utility extensions shall be subject to review and approval by Effingham County Engineering and Public Utilities.

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