



Staff Report

Author: Kimberly Barlett, Senior Planner
 Department: Development Services
 Subject: Variance
 Meeting Date: June 2, 2026
 Application: VAR-26-21

Existing Zoning: AR-1 (Agricultural–Residential, 5 acres or more)

Map & Parcel: 417B-16

Parcel Size: 1.49 acres

Applicant & Owner: Michael Blemlak
 259 Zettler Loop
 Guyton, GA 31312

Commissioner District: Second District

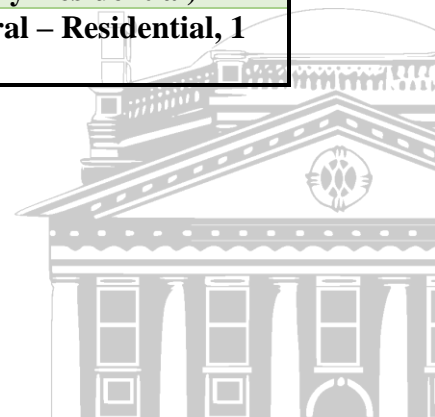
Location: 259 Zettler Loop
 Guyton, GA 31312

Existing Land Use and Zoning:

The subject parcel at **259 Zettler Loop**, located within the Monteith Farms Subdivision, is currently vacant. The parcel has remained vacant since the previous residential structure was demolished in May 2026. Access to the property is provided via Zettler Loop.

The subject parcel is a legal nonconforming lot of record. The parcel was created prior to the adoption of the current AR-1 zoning district standards, which require a minimum lot size of five (5) acres. The existing parcel contains approximately 1.49 acres. Surrounding properties are characterized by low-density residential and agricultural uses:

Surrounding Neighborhood
North: AR-1 (Agricultural–Residential, 5 acres or more)
South: AR-1 (Agricultural–Residential, 5 acres or more)
East: AR-2 (Agricultural – Residential, 1 acre or more) & R-1 (Single-Family Residential)
West: AR-1 (Agricultural–Residential, 5 acres or more) & AR-2 (Agricultural – Residential, 1 acre or more)





The Proposed Request:

This **variance** request seeks to allow temporary residential occupancy of a camper during the construction of the new primary dwelling. The applicant has initiated the building permit process for the proposed home and intends to reside in the camper during construction. The request is intended to provide temporary housing during the construction of the permanent residence.

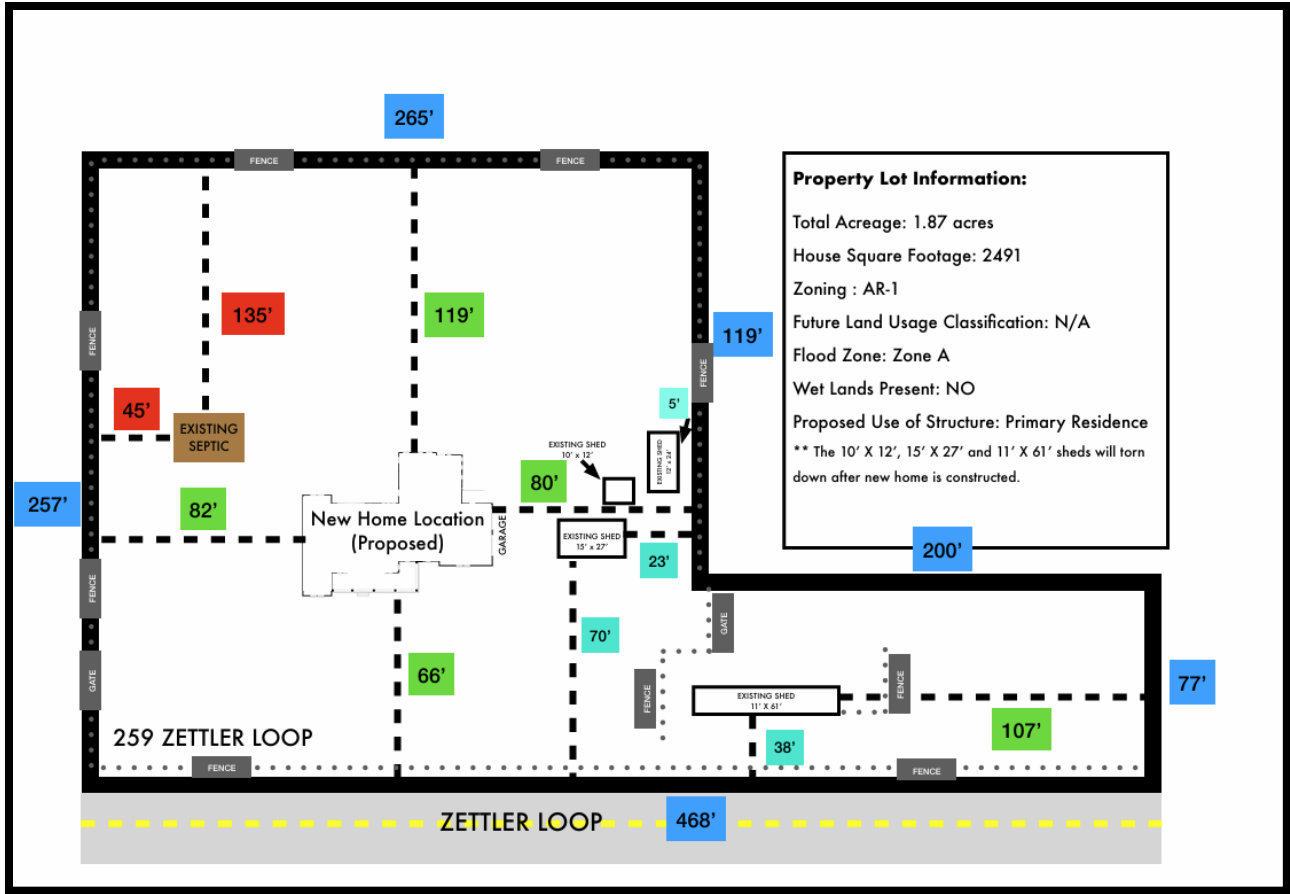
****Code Enforcement****

- There was a code enforcement complaint regarding the camper on the property. Based on progress made toward compliance, the case has been closed at this time.

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Facts and Findings:

Site Characteristics

The subject parcel consists of approximately **1.49 acres** and is currently vacant. Access to the property is provided directly from Zettler Loop.

According to County GIS mapping, a portion of the parcel lies within **FEMA Flood Zone A**; however, no identified **wetlands or other environmental constraints** have been noted.

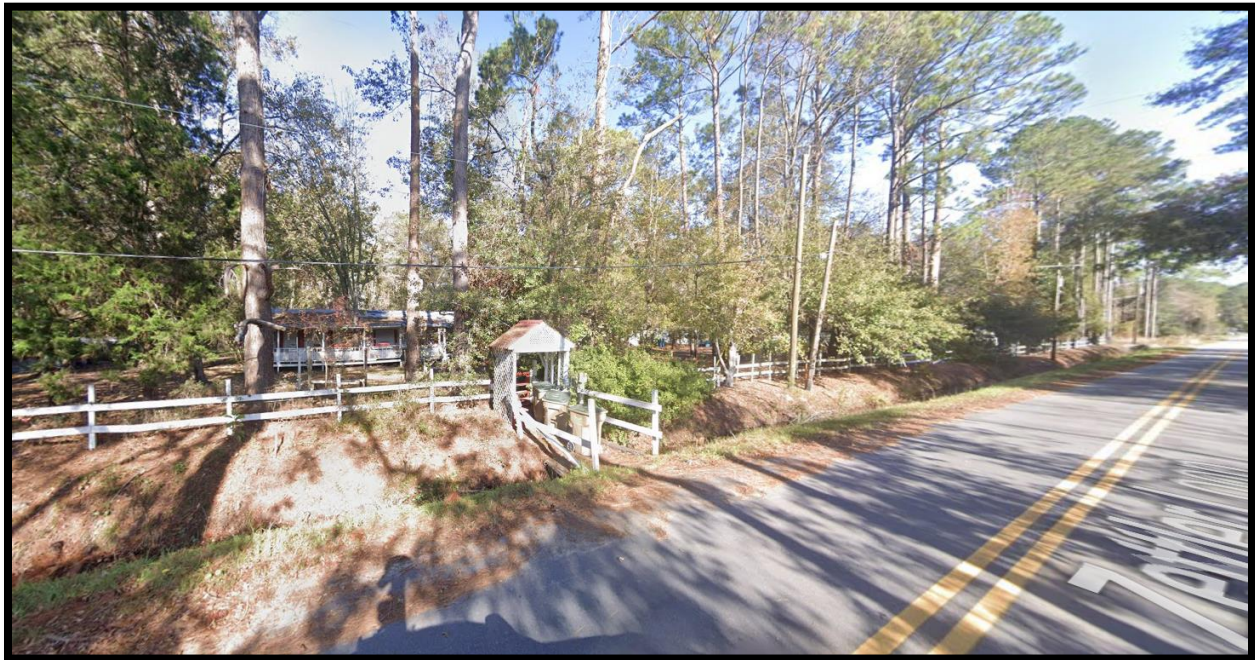
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GIS- imagery 2024



Google Maps- December 2024

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Surrounding Development Pattern

The area surrounding the parcel consists primarily of residential homesteads and agricultural tracts. Development intensity varies between low-density and higher-density residential lots, with lot sizes generally 0.5 acre or greater.

Surrounding development includes:

- To the North of the property are a church and agricultural land tracts (AR-1).
- To the East of the property is Kensington Forest Subdivision (R-1).
- To the South of the property is S Effingham Woods Subdivision (R-1).
- To the Northwest is the proposed Midland Sands Subdivision (PD-R)
- To the West is Randall Estate Subdivision (AR-2).

Zoning Context

The parcel is currently zoned **AR-1**, which requires a minimum lot size of five (5) acres. The parcel is bordered by existing legal nonconforming residential lots of similar acreage. Most surrounding properties are also zoned AR-1. Surrounding properties are also zoned R-1, reflecting a transition from agricultural homesteads to lower-density residential development. The applicant intends to construct a residence on this nonconforming lot, which is less than five acres in size. The district supports low-density residential development that blends with the rural landscape and serves as a transition between more intensive development and larger-lot agricultural areas.

Infrastructure and Services

The property is served by a **private well and septic**, consistent with surrounding development.

Road Routes: Zettler Loop is classified as a local road located north of Noel C. Conaway Road, which is designated as a major collector roadway within Effingham County.

Variance Criteria- Article IX- 9.1: The board of commissioners shall not grant such variances unless it finds based on the evidence presented to it in each specific case that:

a. The granting of the variance will not be detrimental to the public safety, health, or welfare or injurious to other property, and;

b. The conditions upon which the request is based are unique to the property for which the relief is sought and are not applicable generally to other property, and;

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c. Because of the particular physical surroundings, shape, or topographical conditions of the specific property involved, a particular hardship to the owner would result, as distinguished from a mere inconvenience, if the strict letter of these regulations is carried out, and;

d. The relief sought will not in any manner vary the provisions of the zoning ordinance or comprehensive plan, except that those documents may be amended in the manner prescribed by law.

Staff Analysis of Variance Criteria

(a) Public Safety and Welfare

The proposed temporary use of a camper on the property during the active construction of the primary residence is not anticipated to adversely affect public health, safety, or welfare. The request is limited in duration and scope and is intended to provide safe, temporary housing while the new primary residence is under construction.

Provided that appropriate conditions are established—such as compliance with health department regulations, proper utility connections, and a defined timeframe for removal—the request is consistent with the maintenance of the public health, safety, and welfare of the community.

(b) Unique Conditions

The subject property is affected by specific circumstances that are not commonly shared by other properties in the area. The primary residence is currently undergoing construction. This condition creates a unique situation in which the property cannot reasonably function as a permanent residence during the construction period.

(c) Hardship

The requested variance is based on a claimed hardship associated with the temporary occupancy of a camper during the construction of a new primary dwelling. Allowing temporary on-site use of a camper would provide the applicant with reasonable accommodation during the development process.

Staff finds that the request is limited in scope and duration, as it is intended solely to accommodate temporary living arrangements during the construction period. With appropriate conditions, such as establishing a defined timeframe for occupancy and ensuring compliance with applicable health and safety standards, the request would not adversely impact the surrounding area or be contrary to the intent of the ordinance.

(d) Consistency with the Ordinance and Comprehensive Plan

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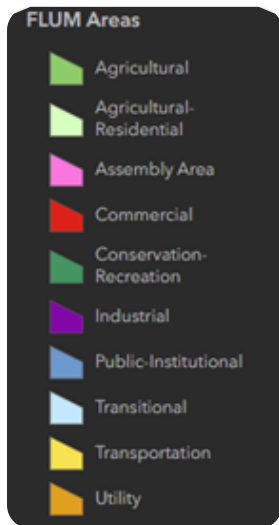
According to County ordinance *Section 3.21.1-Mobile homes, trailers, mobile home parks, and trailer parks states that parked or stored camping and recreational equipment shall never be occupied or used for living, sleeping, or housekeeping purposes.*

Although the ordinance does not typically permit occupancy of a camper as a dwelling unit, the request is temporary in nature and associated with the active construction of a new primary residence.

The requested variance does not alter the permitted use of the property or conflict with the intent of the zoning ordinance. The request seeks limited relief from the ordinance restrictions to allow temporary residential occupancy of a camper during the renovation of the primary dwelling. The proposed use remains incidental and subordinate to the principal residential use of the property and does not represent a permanent change in land use. With appropriate conditions and time limitations, the request maintains the overall intent and integrity of the zoning regulations.

Comprehensive Plan:

The parcel is designated **Agricultural** area on the **Future Land Use Map (FLUM)**. This category supports low-density residential development that is compatible with nearby agricultural uses. The intent is to ensure residential development patterns that are compatible with surrounding densities, building types, and established neighborhoods characterized by low intensity development, larger lots, low pedestrian orientation and access, with a sizable amount of open space, and with a high degree of separation and deep setbacks. (Effingham County 2020-2040 Joint Comprehensive Plan, pg. 36).



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Recommendation:

Based on the findings presented in this report, staff finds that the request satisfies the variance criteria contained in Article IX, Section 9.1 of the Effingham County Zoning Ordinance. Allowing limited, temporary use of a camper provides a reasonable solution that enables the applicant to remain on-site during home construction. Staff finds that the request represents the minimum necessary relief and, if approved, should be subject to the following stipulations:

1. **The RV/camper may be occupied for up to ten (10) months during the home construction.** Should an extension be needed, the applicant shall come before the Board of Commissioners for approval.
2. **Upon completion of the construction,** the camper shall be vacated and disconnected from the well and septic.

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