



Staff Report

Subject: 2nd Reading- Zoning Map Amendment
Author: Kimberly Barlett, Senior Planner
Department: Development Services
Application: RZN-26-31
Meeting Date: August 4, 2026

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

Proposed Zoning: R-5 (Single- family traditional neighborhood)

Map & Parcel: 413-8
Parcel Size: +/- 136 acres
Location: McCall Road
Commissioner District: Fourth District

Proposed Use: Residential Development

Applicant/Owner: Gary Wiggin/ GW Investments
600 E. 39th St.
Savannah, GA 31401

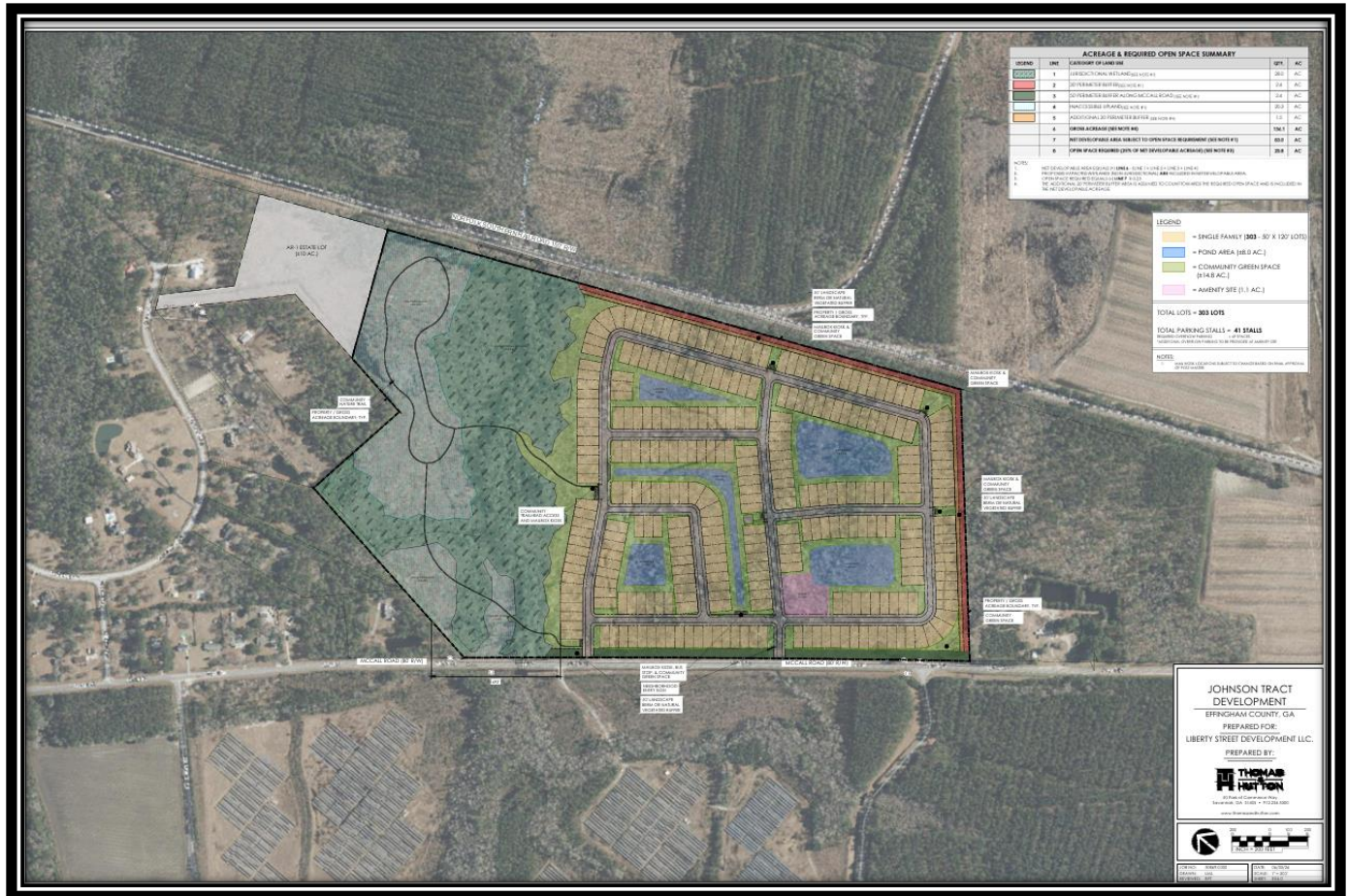
Rezoning Summary:

Item	Description
Project Name	Johnson Tract Development
Applicant Request	Rezone approximately 136 acres from AR-1 to R-5
Current Use	Undeveloped Woodland
Proposed Development	Single-Family detached lots
Proposed Density	Approximately 303 Residential Units
Housing Types	Single-Family Homes
Utilities	Effingham County Public Water & Sewer
Future Land Use Map	Agricultural-Residential
Access	McCall Road
Planning Board Recommendation	Denied 2 to 1



Project Summary:

The applicant is requesting to rezone approximately +/-136 of the +/-146-acre parent tract from **AR-1 (Agricultural Residential; 5 acres or more)** to **R-5 (Single-family traditional neighborhood)** to develop a single-family detached-lot subdivision. Approximately 10 acres will remain AR-1.



According to the concept plan, the development includes:

- 303 single-family lots measuring approximately 50 feet by 120 feet, with a minimum lot area of 6,000 square feet
- Pond area (+/- 8.00 acres)
- Community green space (+/- 14.8 acres)
- Amenity site (1.1 acres)

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- Walking trails (0.47 acres)
- Covered mailbox kiosks
- Covered bus stops
- 50-foot perimeter vegetated buffer around the development, including a 50-foot buffer with a 6-foot berm along McCall Road where rear-facing lots are proposed.

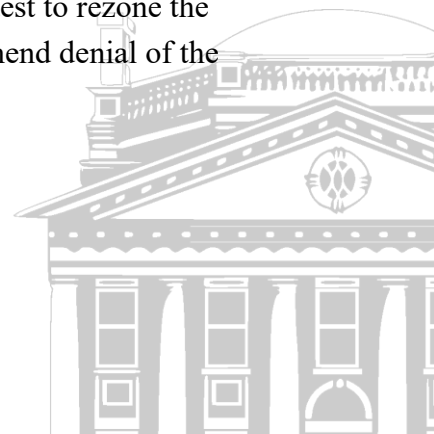


Zoning History

The subject property is currently zoned **AR-1 (Agricultural Residential)**. There is one prior zoning case on record for this parcel. On January 13, 2026, the applicant submitted a request to rezone the property to R-5 (Single-Family Residential). The Planning Board voted to recommend denial of the

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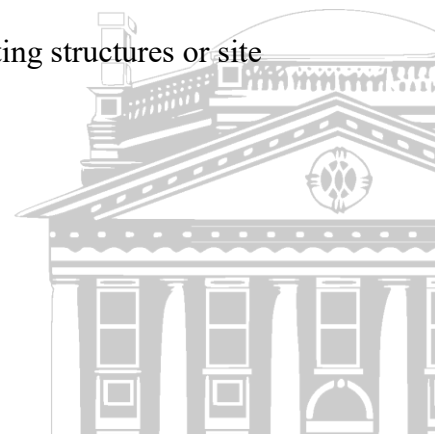
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The previous proposal consisted of a higher-density residential development, including approximately 342 dwelling units, comprising both townhomes and single-family detached homes. The current request reflects a revised development proposal with a reduced overall density.

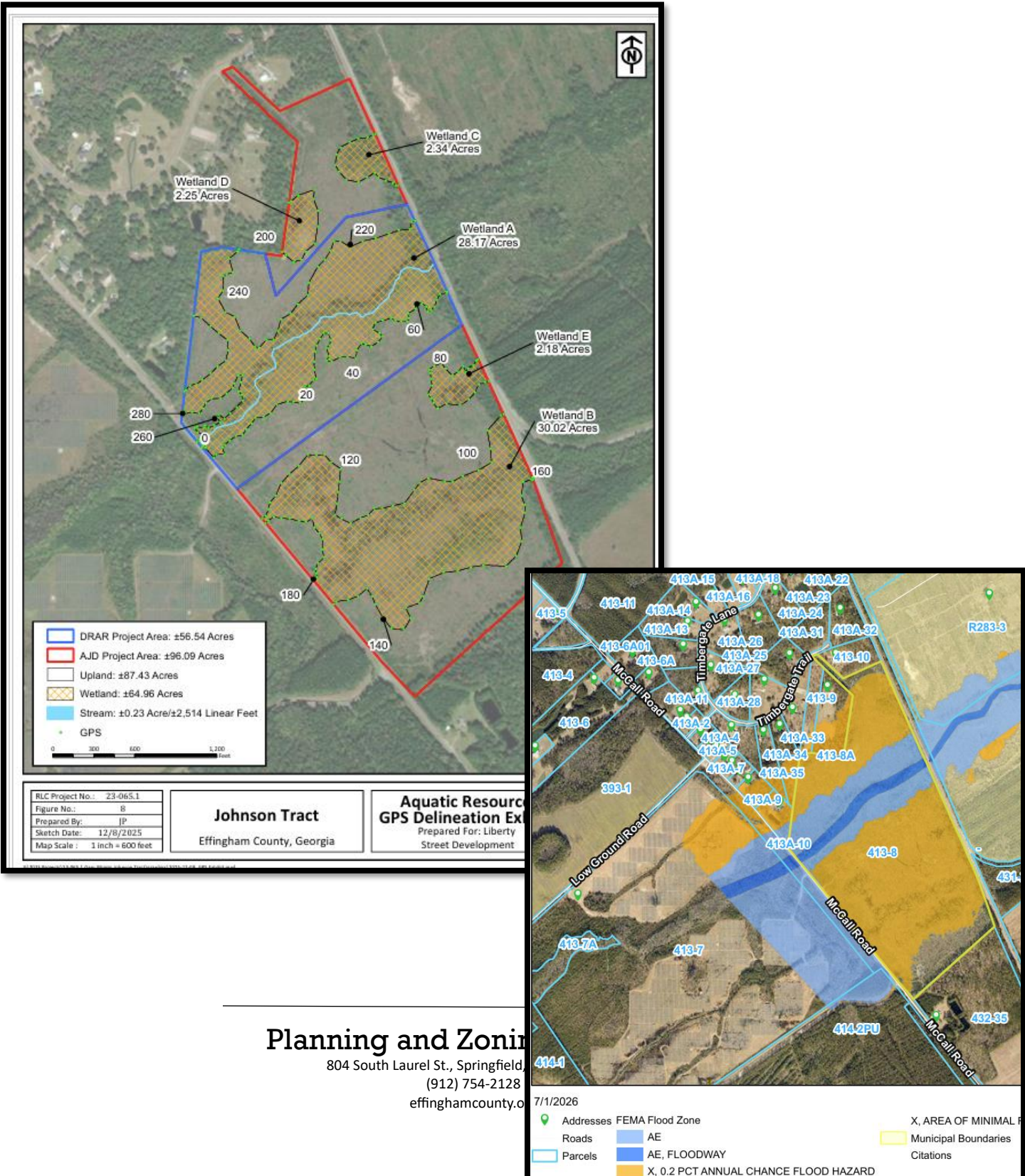


The remainder of the property is currently undeveloped and wooded, with no existing structures or site improvements.



McCall Road serves as a designated truck route within Effingham County; there are currently no sidewalks along the roadway frontage.

Wetland and floodplain mapping indicate the presence of freshwater wetlands and FEMA flood hazard areas throughout portions of the property. A wetlands delineation has been provided to the county.

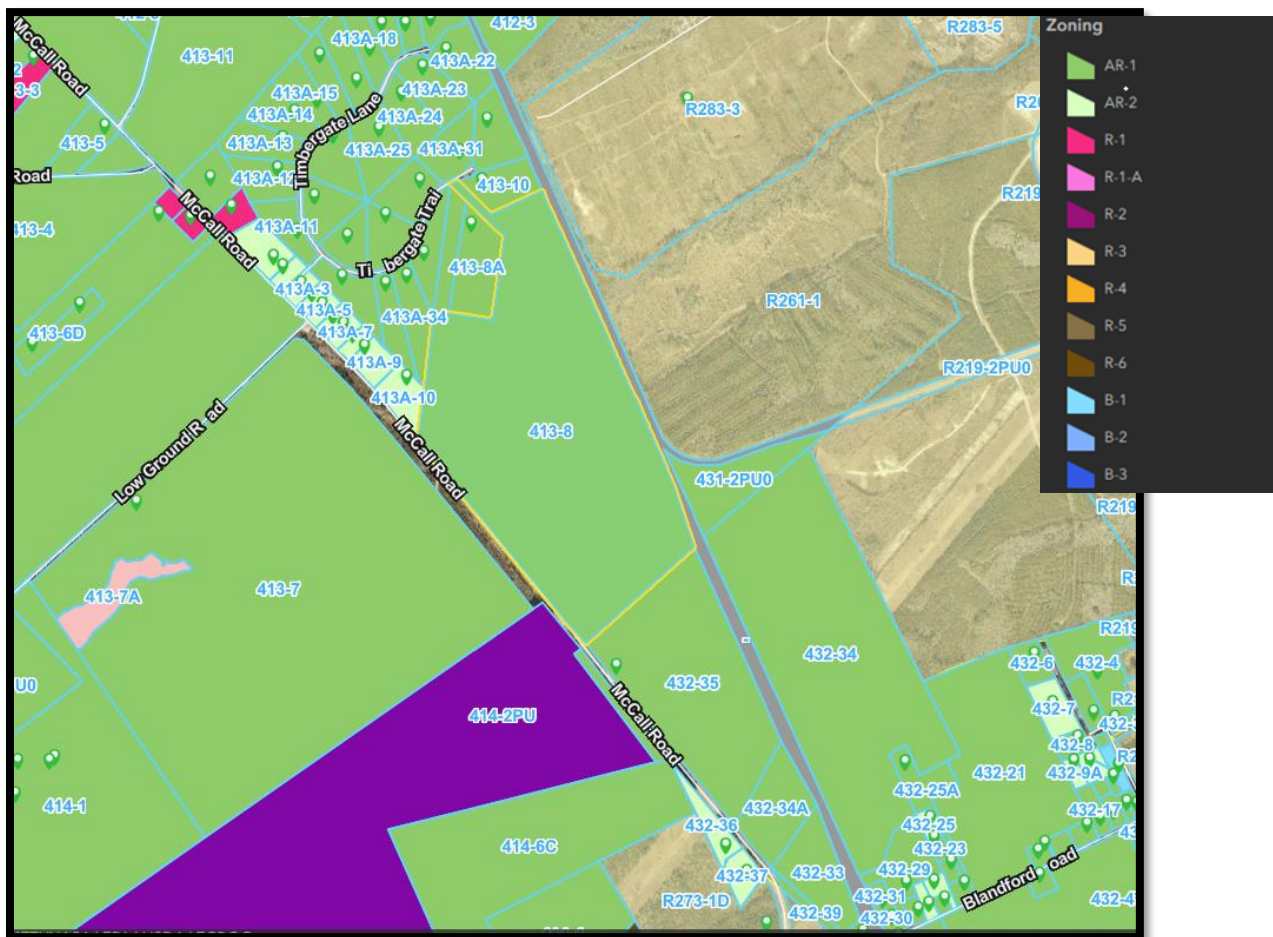


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Surrounding Use and Zoning Pattern

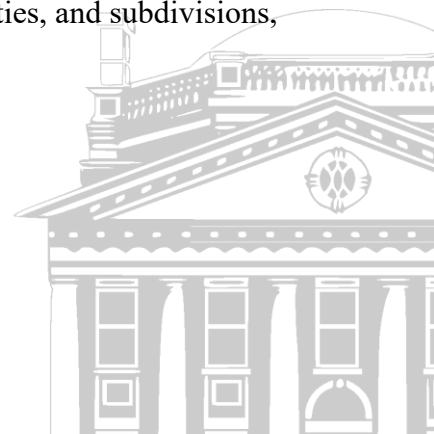
Surrounding Neighborhood	
North:	Light Industrial (City of Rincon jurisdiction)
South:	AR-1 (Agricultural–Residential, 5 acres or more)
East:	AR-1 (Agricultural–Residential, 5 acres or more)
West:	AR-1 (Agricultural–Residential, 5 acres or more) & AR-2 (Agricultural-Residential, 1 acre or more)



The surrounding area is characterized by agricultural land, rural residential properties, and subdivisions, as well as public utility facilities.

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

North

- ✚ Light Industrial Park (City of Rincon)

East / Southwest

- ✚ Agricultural Residential homesteads (AR-1 & R-1 & AR-2)
- ✚ Timbergate Subdivision (AR-1 & AR-2)

South

- ✚ Agricultural Residential homesteads and large agricultural lots (AR-1)
- ✚ Solar Farm (AR-1)
- ✚ Energy plant (I-1)

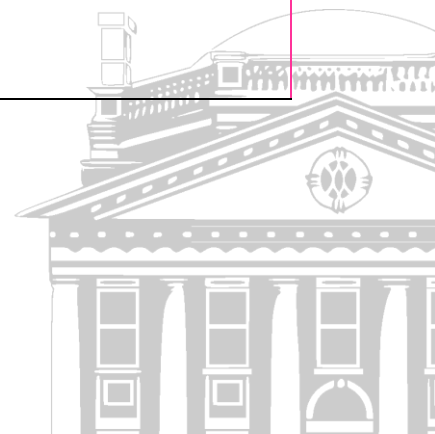
West/ Southwest

- ✚ Agricultural-Residential homesteads (AR-1)
- ✚ Gas Station & Convenience store (B-2) (City of Rincon)

R-5 Development Standards		
Development Standard	Ordinance Requirement	Proposed Development
Perimeter Buffers	30-foot vegetated buffer	50-foot vegetated buffer (an additional 20 feet beyond the minimum requirement)
McCall Road Buffer (Rear-Facing Lots)	50-foot buffer with a 6-foot berm	50-foot buffer with a 6-foot berm (meets requirement)
Open Space	Minimum 25% of gross site area	57% open space provided
Minimum Lot Area	6,000 square feet	6,000 square feet
On-Street Parking (1 space per every five units) w/ street trees	61 spaces required	41 spaces proposed (61 required; additional overflow parking to be provided at the amenity area in accordance with the ordinance).

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Sidewalks	Shall be ADA compliant	
Utilities	Public water & sewer	Effingham County Water and Sewer

Minimum lot area	6,000 sq. feet (0.14 acres)
Maximum number of principal residences	1
Maximum number of accessory dwelling units	1
Minimum Road Frontage	N/A
Minimum lot width at building line	50 feet
Minimum front yard setback	10 feet (building) 25 feet (attached garage)
Minimum rear yard setback	25 feet
Minimum side yard (interior) setback	6 feet (or 3 feet, provided minimum building separation of 12 feet is maintained)
Minimum side yard (street/road easement) setback	15 feet
Minimum side yard (secondary street) setback	15 feet
Maximum building height	35 feet

Zoning Classification

*The **R-5 District** represents a balanced trade-off—allowing for increased residential density in exchange for thoughtfully designed and accessible open space, ensuring that growth is compact yet livable, and community-oriented.*

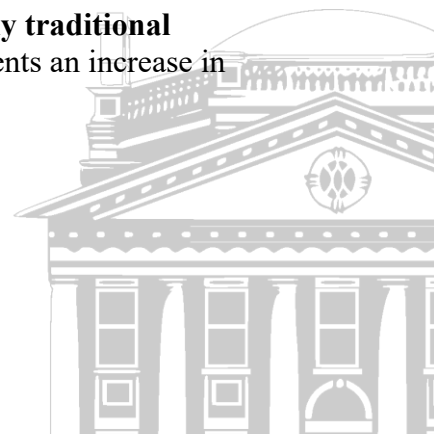
The intent of the R-5 Single-Family Traditional Neighborhood Design Residential District is to promote compact, higher-density residential development that reflects the principles of traditional neighborhood design. This district encourages walkable, interconnected communities, smaller lot sizes, and pedestrian-oriented streetscapes. The R-5 District is designed to accommodate single-family detached dwellings in a pattern that fosters a strong sense of community and efficient land use. Key features may include reduced setbacks, alley access, front porches, and integrated open spaces contributing to neighborhood character and livability. This district supports long-term planning goals related to housing diversity, affordability, and sustainable growth by offering an alternative to conventional suburban development patterns, while still preserving the identity of single-family neighborhoods in a higher-density format.

Intensity of Use

The proposed rezoning from AR-1 (Agricultural Residential) to **R-5 (Single-family traditional neighborhood)** for the development of a 303-lot single-family subdivision represents an increase in density relative to surrounding homesteads.

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The current Agricultural Residential zoning designation is intended for low-density residential and agricultural activities, which typically generate minimal traffic and require limited site improvements, limited public infrastructure, and relatively modest demands on public services and utilities.

In contrast, the proposed R-5 development would introduce a residential neighborhood with an interconnected street network, sidewalks, public utilities, stormwater management areas, and neighborhood amenities. The increase in the number of dwelling units will result in higher daily traffic volumes, increased demand on public infrastructure, utilities, schools, emergency services, and other public facilities.

The proposal represents a substantial increase in development intensity; the applicant has incorporated design elements intended to mitigate potential impacts, including the preservation of approximately 57% open space, perimeter buffering exceeding ordinance requirements in several locations, internal sidewalks, and compliance with subdivision design standards. These features help reduce visual impacts, provide recreational opportunities, and improve connectivity within the development.

The proposed rezoning represents a transition from a rural, low-density land-use pattern to a traditional neighborhood development that is significantly more intensive in residential density, infrastructure requirements, and service demands. The availability of County water and sewer infrastructure supports the proposed residential density and is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan's policy of directing higher-density development to areas served by public utilities.

Infrastructure

The property will be served by **County water and sewer**, consistent with the surrounding development.

Road Routes: McCall Road is classified as a Minor Collector Road and a designated truck route within Effingham County.

Public Health, Safety, and Welfare

The proposed rezoning to **R-5 (Single-Family Traditional Neighborhood)** can promote the public health, safety, and welfare by providing additional housing opportunities within the county while requiring development that meets current subdivision and engineering standards. The proposed subdivision will include public streets, sidewalks, stormwater management facilities, utility infrastructure, and other required improvements designed to protect public safety and accommodate future residents. The proposed development will also provide sidewalks, buffering, stormwater management, and public infrastructure improvements that are intended to enhance pedestrian safety and neighborhood compatibility.

Consistency with Comprehensive Plan

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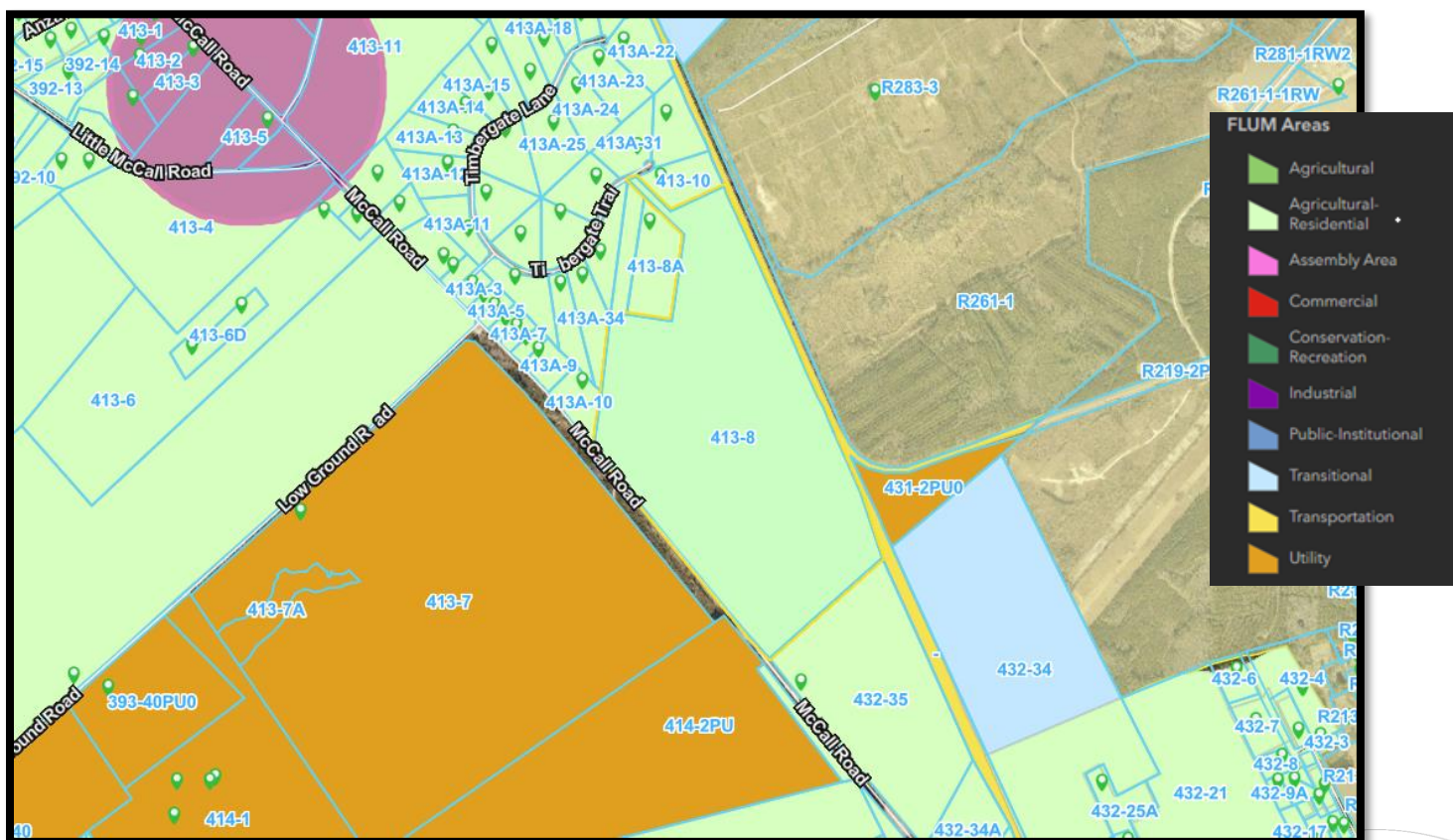
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The subject property is designated **Agricultural/Residential** on the Effingham County Future Land Use Map (FLUM). The Comprehensive Plan identifies this category as supporting agricultural, residential, and mixed-use zoning districts. Residential areas are intended to accommodate a variety of housing types, including single-family homes, townhouses, multifamily dwellings, and mixed-use developments. The Plan further states that higher residential densities may be appropriate where adequate infrastructure is available to support the development.

The proposed **R-5 (Single-Family Traditional Neighborhood)** zoning is **consistent** with the residential component as it provides single-family residential development. The proposed subdivision incorporates public infrastructure, an interconnected street network, sidewalks, significant open space, and other neighborhood amenities that are consistent with traditional neighborhood design principles.

*The parcel is designated **Agricultural–Residential** on the **Future Land Use Map (FLUM)**. This category supports single-family and multifamily residential uses arranged within general net-density ranges. The intent is to ensure residential development patterns that are compatible with surrounding densities, building types, and established neighborhood character (Effingham County 2020–2040 Joint Comprehensive Plan, p. 37).*



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PLANNING BOARD RECOMMENDATION

At the **July 14, 2026**, Planning Board meeting, the Planning Board conducted a public hearing regarding the requested rezoning application to rezone approximately $\pm$ 136 acres from AR-1 to R-5 to allow for residential development in R-5.

Discussion of the Planning Board included the zoning classification, infrastructure needs based on potential development, walkable neighborhood, buffers, open space requirements, on-street parking requirements, and traffic and road improvements on McCall Road.

Concerns of citizens:

- Destruction of natural habitats/Wildlife
- Infrastructure demands
- Overload of municipal services
- Preservation of rural character
- Capacity of schools
- Proximity to railroad
- Large number of approved homes in the county
- Flooding concerns
- Potential increase in crime
- Increased noise
- Traffic/truck traffic
- Road Improvements

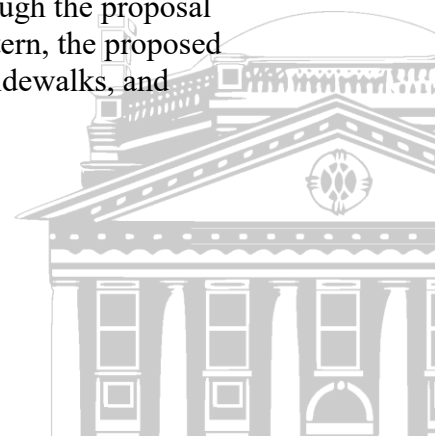
Following the discussion, **the Planning Board voted 2–1 to recommend denial of the request.** The recommendation was based on concerns regarding the number of homes currently for sale in the County, the approximately 5,000 residential units currently approved, and the timing of the proposed project.

STAFF ANALYSIS

Staff finds that the proposed rezoning is generally compatible with surrounding land uses and is consistent with the intent of the R-5 (Single-Family Traditional Neighborhood) zoning district. The request is generally consistent with the Agricultural–Residential Future Land Use designation, which supports residential development where adequate infrastructure is available. Although the proposal represents a higher residential density than the surrounding rural development pattern, the proposed subdivision incorporates substantial buffering, open space, public infrastructure, sidewalks, and

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amenities designed to minimize impacts on adjacent properties and protect the public health, safety, and welfare.

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