



Staff Report

Subject: Rezoning
Author: Kimberly Barlett, Senior Planner
Department: Development Services
Application: RZN-26-41
Meeting Date: September 8, 2026

Existing Zoning: **R-1 (Single Family Residential)**
Proposed Zoning: **B-1 (Neighborhood Commercial)**

Map & Parcel(s): 451D-1
Total Acreage Affected: ± 2.14 acres
Location: 604 Goshen Road
Commissioner District: Second District

Proposed Use: Funeral Home

Applicant/Owner: Joshua Gibbons Sr.
111 Parkside Blvd
Port Wentworth, GA 31407

Rezoning Summary:

Item	Description
Request	Rezone ± 2.14 acres from R-1 to B-1
Proposed Use	Funeral Home
Existing Use	Stick-built dwelling/ Former Church building
Future Land Use	Agricultural Residential
Utilities	Private well & septic system
Access	Goshen Road



Project Summary:

The applicant is requesting to rezone approximately **±2.14 acres** from R-1 (Single-Family Residential) to **B-1 (Neighborhood Commercial)** to allow for the operation of a **funeral home without a crematorium**.

The existing building on the subject property was previously utilized as a church. The applicant proposes renovating and expanding the existing structure to accommodate the funeral home. Proposed improvements include an office addition to the front of the building and the construction of a covered carport.

The proposed funeral home will include:

Hours of Operation: Monday through Sunday, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., with funeral and memorial services conducted as needed.

- **Employees:** Two full-time employees are expected.
- **Chapel Capacity:** The proposed chapel will accommodate approximately **150 persons**.
- **Parking:** Based on a maximum chapel seating capacity of 150 persons and a requirement of one space per four seats, a minimum of 38 parking spaces is required.
- **Embalming Chemicals:** Chemicals associated with embalming operations will be stored in a secured, locked storage cabinet.
- **Wastewater/Septic:** The applicant will be required to coordinate with Environmental Health regarding the adequacy of the existing septic system and the proper disposal of wastewater or fluids associated with embalming operations.

Funeral homes and services are permitted uses in B-1 on the Table of Permitted Uses.

Funeral homes and services. These services provide essential support and guidance to families and individuals during one of life's most difficult times—the death of a loved one. These services assist with the respectful care, preparation, and disposition of the deceased and often include ceremonial, legal, and emotional support components.

Zoning History

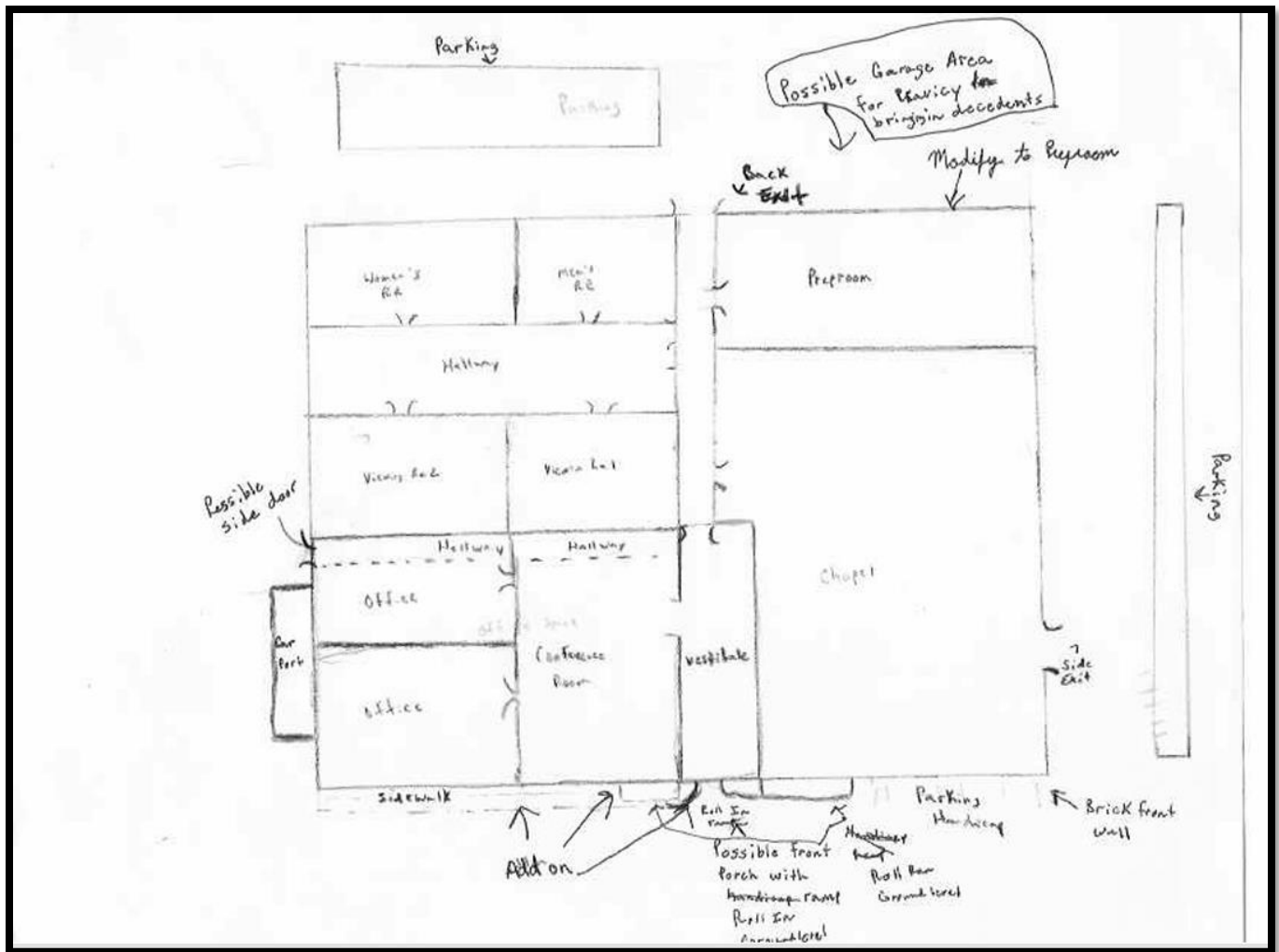
The subject property is currently zoned **R-1 (Single Family Residential)**. Prior zoning cases are on record for this property.

- March 12, 2009 – Approximately 9.52 acres rezoned from R-1
- November 12, 2025 – A request to rezone the property from R-1 to AR-2, together with a Conditional Use request for an event venue, was recommended for denial by the Planning Board and subsequently withdrawn prior to consideration by the Board of Commissioners.

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Existing Site Condition

The subject property consists of approximately **2.14 acres** and is located along Goshen Road. The property is currently developed with a stick-built residence.

County GIS mapping indicates **wetlands** on portions of the property; however, no mapped **FEMA flood hazard areas** have been identified on the parcel.

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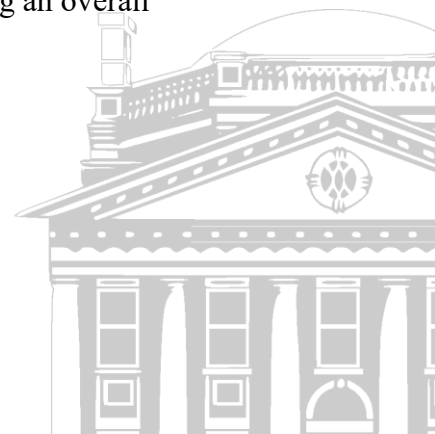
Surrounding Use and Zoning Pattern

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

The surrounding area is characterized by a mix of rural residential homesteads, established single-family subdivisions, multifamily residential development, and agricultural properties. Lot sizes range from approximately one-half acre within nearby subdivisions to larger agricultural tracts, illustrating the area's gradual transition toward higher-density residential development while maintaining an overall residential character.

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North/ Northwest

- ✚ Agricultural Residential homesteads (AR-1)
- ✚ Pine Point Estates subdivision (AR-1)

East

- ✚ Agricultural Residential homesteads (AR-1 & R-1)
- ✚ Waterford Subdivision (R-1)
- ✚ Waterford Apartments (R-3)
- ✚ The Learning Treehouse Day Care (B-1)

South/ Southeast

- ✚ Goshen Villa Subdivision (R-1)
- ✚ Townhomes (R-2)

West

- ✚ Agricultural-Residential homesteads (AR-1 & AR-2, R-1)
- ✚ Goshen Hill Farms (AR-1)



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Applicable Ordinance Sections

Section 3.4.2 – Adjacent Public Street Buffers:

“All development excluding industrial development shall maintain a ten-foot-wide landscaped buffer between any parking or loading area and an adjacent accessed public right-of-way (ROW).”

Section 5.11.3 – Sidewalk Requirement:

“Sidewalks shall be required along all public street frontages within commercial districts. If no existing sidewalk or pedestrian network is located within 500 feet of the subject property, the developer may provide a payment in lieu of construction. The payment shall be equal to the estimated cost of sidewalk installation and shall be used by the County for future pedestrian infrastructure improvements in the area.”

Buffer Reduction Provision (Section 3.4, Fence-Based Reduction):

“If a privacy fence is used, the material needs approval by Development Services, the fence maximum height is seven (7) feet in height, then the adjacent buffer may be reduced by ten (10) feet — 30 feet to 20 feet for residential required buffers only.”

Zoning Development Standards for B-1

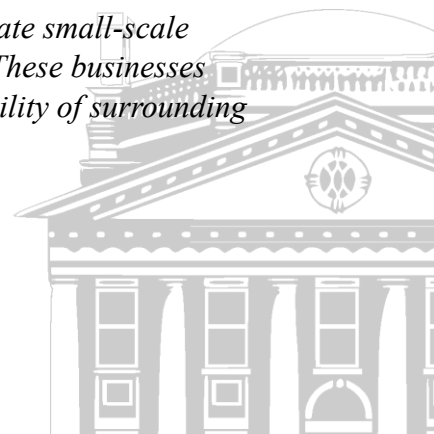
Requirement	Standard
Greenspace	Minimum 20% of site area
Sidewalks	Required along all public street frontages
Buffers	30-foot vegetated buffer required on all sides. 10-foot landscaped buffer along Goshen Road.
Parking (Sec. 30.30)	1 for every 4 seats of maximum seating capacity in principal assembly area
Lighting	Must be designed to reflect light away from adjacent residentially zoned properties
Mx sq. footage for building	8,000 sq ft.

Zoning Classification

5.10.1 Intent. The Neighborhood-Business District (B-1) is intended to accommodate small-scale commercial uses that primarily serve the daily needs of nearby residential areas. These businesses provide convenient shopping, dining, and personal services that enhance the livability of surrounding

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neighborhoods without generating excessive traffic, noise, or other disruptions. Due to their close proximity to residences, businesses within this district are expected to operate at a low-intensity level, maintaining a scale and character that harmonizes with adjacent residential development. Design and site standards emphasize compatibility with the neighborhood, encouraging pedestrian-friendly environments, attractive landscaping, and architectural styles that blend with residential surroundings. Public service demands, including infrastructure, utilities, and transportation impacts, remain minimal, ensuring that the district supports economic activity without overburdening community resources.

Intensity of Use

The proposed rezoning from R-1 (Single-Family Residential) to **B-1 (Neighborhood Commercial)** would increase the intensity of use by introducing a commercial operation within a residentially zoned area. However, the proposed funeral home, without a crematorium, is generally a lower-intensity commercial use. Funeral homes are service-oriented uses in which higher levels of activity generally occur intermittently in association with scheduled funeral or memorial services rather than continuously throughout the day. The business would utilize the former church building, with a proposed office addition and covered carport.

Traffic and parking demand would generally be concentrated around scheduled services rather than occurring continuously throughout the day. The proposed 150-seat chapel may generate periodic increases in traffic, parking demand, and activity; however, these impacts may be managed through adequate on-site parking, safe access, appropriate buffering, and compliance with applicable development standards. Overall, the proposed use represents an increase in intensity compared with the existing R-1 zoning but may be appropriate if the site can adequately accommodate the anticipated traffic, parking, septic, buffering, and operational needs.

Infrastructure

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

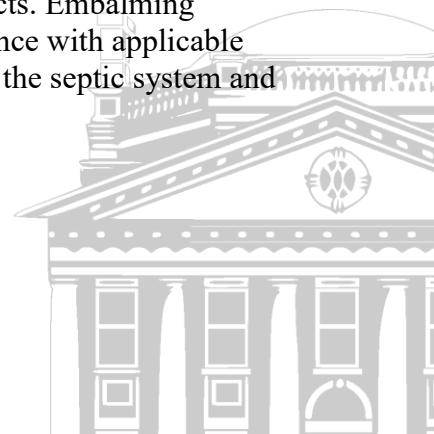
Roadway Classification: The proposed development will access Goshen Road, which is classified as a Major Collector within Effingham County.

Public Health, Safety, and Welfare

The proposed rezoning from R-1 (Single-Family Residential) to **B-1 (Neighborhood Commercial)** to allow a funeral home without a crematorium is not anticipated to adversely affect public health, safety, or welfare, provided all applicable development requirements are satisfied. Because no crematorium is proposed, the use would not generate cremation-related emissions or similar impacts. Embalming chemicals and waste must be properly stored, handled, and disposed of in accordance with applicable state and local regulations. Environmental Health must determine the adequacy of the septic system and applicable wastewater requirements associated with embalming operations.

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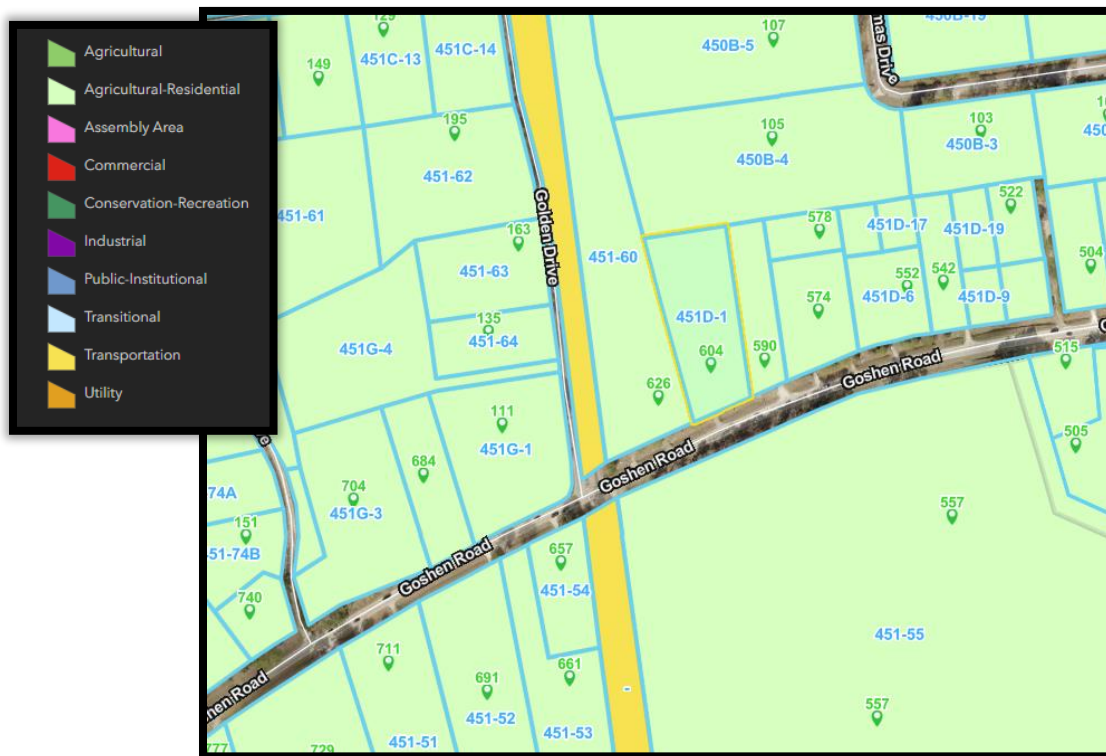


The 150-seat chapel may generate temporary increases in traffic and parking demand during scheduled services. Adequate on-site parking, safe ingress and egress, emergency-vehicle access, buffering, lighting controls, and compliance with applicable building and fire codes will be necessary to minimize impacts on surrounding residential properties. Subject to these requirements, the proposed use is not expected to create unreasonable noise, traffic, environmental, or public-safety impacts.

Consistency with Comprehensive Plan

The subject property is designated **Agricultural-Residential** on the **Future Land Use Map**. This designation primarily supports low-density residential and agricultural uses intended to preserve the surrounding area's rural character. Therefore, the proposed rezoning from R-1 (Single-Family Residential) to B-1 (Neighborhood Commercial) for a funeral home is not consistent with the property's future land-use designation.

*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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Staff Summary

Staff finds that the requested rezoning is not consistent with the Agricultural–Residential designation of the Future Land Use Map or compatible with the surrounding zoning pattern. The proposed funeral home is consistent with the intent of the B-1 (Neighborhood Commercial) zoning district, which is intended to accommodate lower-intensity commercial uses that serve the surrounding community.

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