



Staff Report

Subject: Rezoning
Author: Kimberly Barlett, Senior Planner
Department: Development Services
Application: RZN-26-35
Meeting Date: September 1, 2026

Existing Zoning: **AR-2 (Agricultural Residential; 1 acre or more)**
Proposed Zoning: **B-1 (Neighborhood Commercial)**

Map & Parcel(s): 432-43
Total Acreage Affected ± 1.77 acres
Location: 659 Blue Jay Road
Commissioner District: Second District

Proposed Use: Commercial Use

Applicant/Owner: David Bowers
659 Blue Jay Road
Rincon, GA 31326

Rezoning Summary:

Item	Description
Request	Rezone ± 1.77 acres from AR-2 to B-1
Proposed Use	Commercial Use
Existing Use	One stick-built home
Future Land Use	Agricultural Residential/ Development-Rural Node
Utilities	Private well & septic
Access	Blue Jay Road
Planning Board Recommendation	(August 11, 2026) Planning Board voted to approve the request with added conditions – unanimously

Project Summary:

The applicant is requesting to rezone approximately **±1.77 acres** from **AR-2 (Agricultural Residential; 1 acre or more)** to **B-1 (Neighborhood Commercial)** to allow for future commercial development.

The applicant intends to establish commercial zoning to enhance the marketability of the property for future sale. The property was purchased and developed as a residence before the construction of Creekside Elementary School. Since that time, the surrounding area has experienced significant growth, including the development of the school and additional residential and commercial activity.

As a result of these changing land use patterns, the applicant no longer considers the property desirable for residential use and wishes to relocate to a more rural, lower-density area. The requested rezoning would provide an opportunity for the property to transition to a commercial use that is more compatible with the evolving character of the surrounding area.

Zoning History

The subject property is currently zoned **AR-2 (Agricultural Residential; 1 acre or more)**. The prior zoning case was on October 19, 2021. The Board of Commissioners approved 1.87 acres from AR-1 to AR-2.



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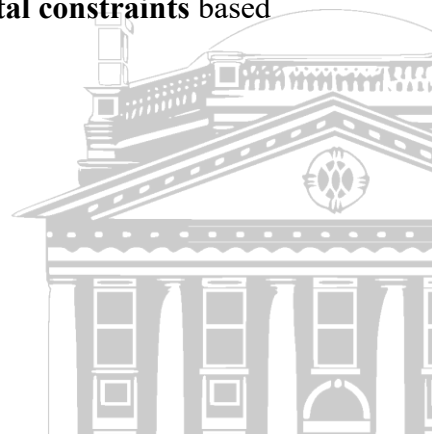
Existing Site Condition

The subject property consists of approximately **1.77 acres** and has direct frontage and access along Blue Jay Road. The property is currently developed with one stick-built residence and two accessory structures. Future development of the property would be required to comply with applicable sidewalk requirements of the County's development regulations.

The parcel does not contain any identified **wetlands, floodplains, or environmental constraints** based on County GIS mapping.

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Surrounding Use and Zoning Pattern

Surrounding Neighborhood
• North: R-6 (Single-Family Residential District)
• South: AR-1 (Agricultural–Residential, 5 acres or more)
• East: AR-1 (Agricultural–Residential, 5 acres or more) & R-1 (Single -Family Residential)
• West: AR-1 (Agricultural–Residential, 5 acres or more) & R-1 (Single -Family Residential)

A mix of single-family residential neighborhoods, multifamily residential developments, rural residential homesteads, commercial uses, public institutional facilities, and industrial development characterizes the surrounding area. The subject property is located along Blue Jay Road, a major collector roadway, within an area that has experienced significant residential growth. Its location along a major collector provides convenient access to the surrounding area.

Based on the zoning map provided, the surrounding area reflects a mixed but transitioning zoning pattern, described as follows:

North/Northwest

- ✚ Agricultural- residential homesteads (AR-1)
- ✚ Pinebrook Subdivision (R-6)
- ✚ Towns at Blue Jay Townhomes (City of Rincon)
- ✚ City of Rincon Fire Station
- ✚ PUD, Planned Unit Development with B-2 commercial and Residential (City of Rincon)
- ✚ Gas station & Convenience store (B-2) (City of Rincon)
- ✚ Energy Plant (I-1)

East / Southeast

- ✚ Creekside Elementary (AR-1)
- ✚ Blandford Crossing (R-1 & R-6)

South

- ✚ Creekside Elementary (AR-1)
- ✚ Effingham Parkway Industrial Tract (I-1)

West/ Southwest

- ✚ Agricultural Residential homesteads (AR-1)
- ✚ Blue Jay Commons Subdivision (R-6)

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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
Parking	Determined by proposed use
Lighting	Must be designed to reflect light away from adjacent residentially zoned properties

Zoning Classification

The Neighborhood Commercial Districts (B-1) are 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 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 AR-2 (Agricultural Residential) to B-1 (Neighborhood Commercial) represents an increase in land-use intensity by allowing a broader range of commercial uses than are permitted under the existing residential zoning district. While no specific development has been proposed, the B-1 district is intended to accommodate neighborhood-scale commercial uses that serve nearby residential areas.

The subject property is located in an area that has experienced significant growth, including the development of a new elementary school, existing commercial uses, proposed commercial development, and recently constructed single-family and multifamily residential neighborhoods. As the area continues to transition from predominantly agricultural and residential uses to a more mixed-use development pattern, the requested zoning would provide an opportunity for future commercial development that could support the surrounding community. Any future development of the property would remain subject to the County's development regulations, including site plan review and compliance with all applicable zoning and design standards.

Infrastructure

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

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Road Routes: Blue Jay Road is classified as a Major Collector Road and a designated truck route within Effingham County.

Public Health, Safety, and Welfare

The requested rezoning is not anticipated to adversely affect public health, safety, or welfare. Although no specific commercial use has been identified, any future development on the property will be required to comply with the Effingham County Zoning Ordinance, development standards, stormwater management regulations, and all applicable local, state, and federal requirements. The property's location adjacent to existing and planned commercial development, a recently constructed elementary school, and expanding residential neighborhoods supports the potential for neighborhood-oriented commercial services that may reduce travel distances for area residents. Future site development will also be reviewed to ensure adequate access, traffic circulation, buffering, landscaping, and infrastructure improvements, as necessary, to protect adjacent properties and promote the health, safety, and welfare of the community.

Consistency with Comprehensive Plan

The subject property is designated **Agricultural Residential** on the **Future Land Use Map (FLUM)**, which generally supports agricultural activities and low-density residential development. As such, the requested **B-1 (Neighborhood Commercial)** zoning is not directly consistent with the Agricultural Residential land use designation.

However, the property is also located within a **Development Suburban Node**, where the Comprehensive Plan encourages the concentration of residential, commercial, and institutional uses to serve surrounding neighborhoods and accommodate future growth. The Development Suburban Node is intended to promote a mix of compatible land uses that support connectivity, community services, and opportunities for neighborhood-oriented commercial development. Given the property's proximity to a newly constructed elementary school, existing commercial uses, proposed commercial development, and recently developed single-family and multifamily residential neighborhoods, the requested rezoning is generally consistent with the planning objectives of the Development Suburban Node.

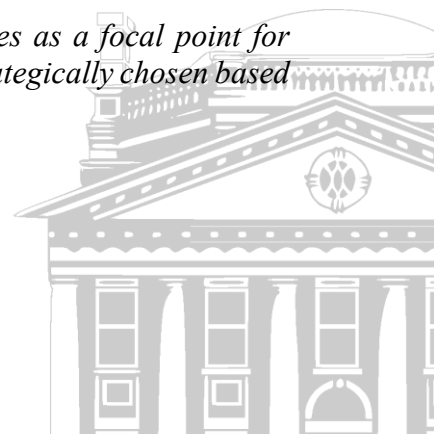
*The parcel is designated **Agricultural-Residential** on the **Future Land Use Map (FLUM)**. This category supports single-family and multifamily residential uses arranged within general net-density ranges. The intent is to ensure residential development patterns that are compatible with surrounding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

The Development Suburban Node

Areas designated for concentrated growth, development, and investment. It serves as a focal point for economic activity, infrastructure development, and urban expansion. Nodes are strategically chosen based

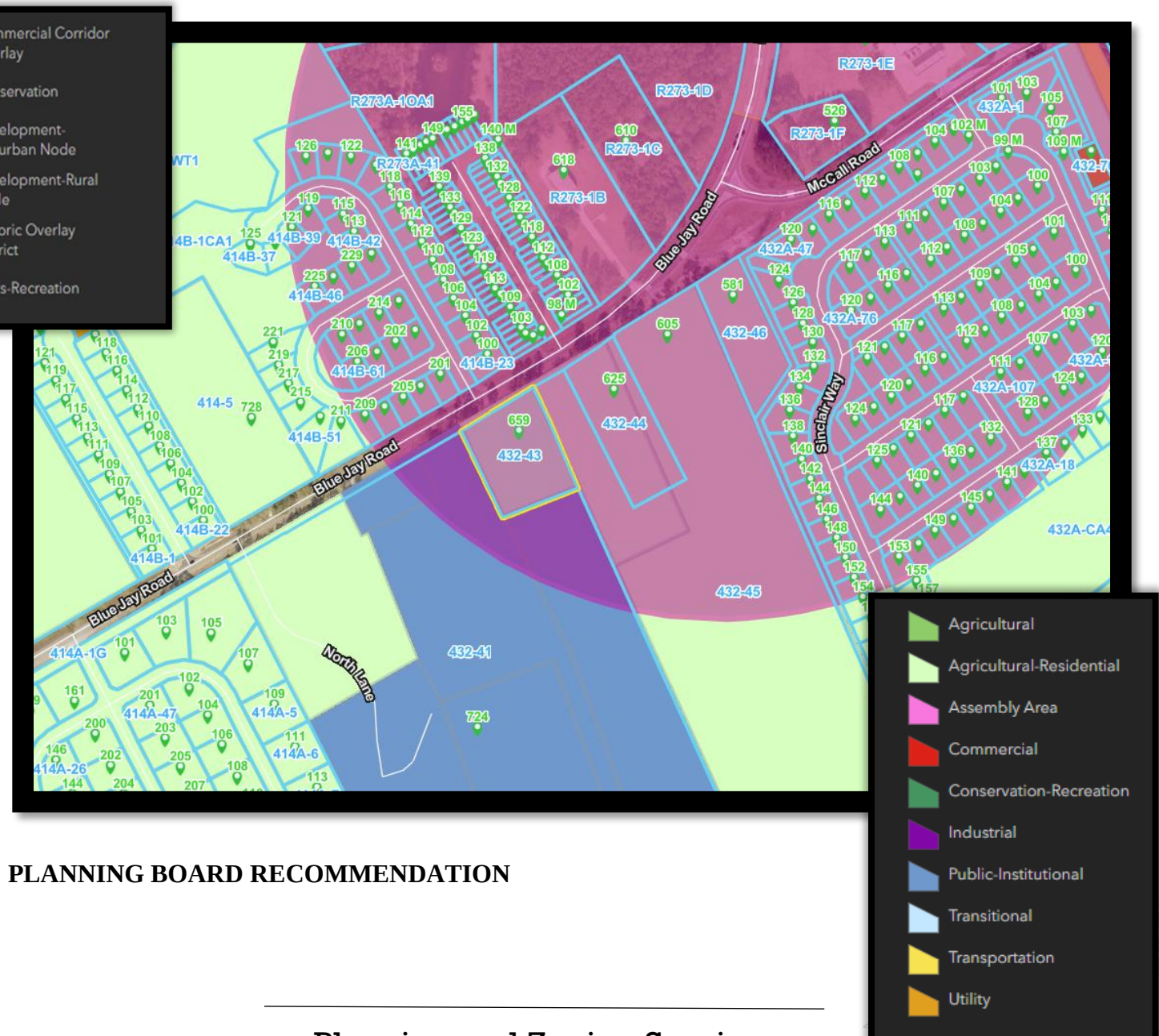
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on factors such as accessibility, connectivity, availability of services, and potential for sustainable growth to create vibrant and resilient communities. This area is subject to overlay node development standards.

• **Suburban nodes** are areas that are developed with significant economic, social, or environmental impact. These nodes often service major commercial and industrial districts or places that attract large numbers of people and generate significant economic activity. High-impact nodes may require extensive infrastructure development and higher levels of resource use compared to rural nodes.
(Effingham County 2020–2040 Joint Comprehensive Plan, p. 43).



At the **August 11, 2026**, Planning Board meeting, the Planning Board conducted a public hearing regarding the requested rezoning application to rezone approximately $\pm$ 1.77 acres from AR-2 to B-1 to allow for commercial development.

During its deliberations, the Planning Board discussed the proposed zoning classification, the need for additional goods and services in the area, and the uses permitted within the B-1 zoning district.

Citizen concerns included:

- Introduction of commercial development within a predominantly residential area;
- Increased development and the need to accommodate anticipated growth, including growth associated with the data center;
- The potential for the rezoning to establish a precedent for additional commercial development in the area;
- Traffic patterns and related safety concerns;
- The need for roadway improvements.

Following the public hearing and discussion, **the Planning Board voted to recommend approval of the rezoning request, subject to the conditions proposed by the applicant.**

As a condition of approval, the following uses otherwise permitted within the B-1 zoning district would be **excluded from the subject property**:

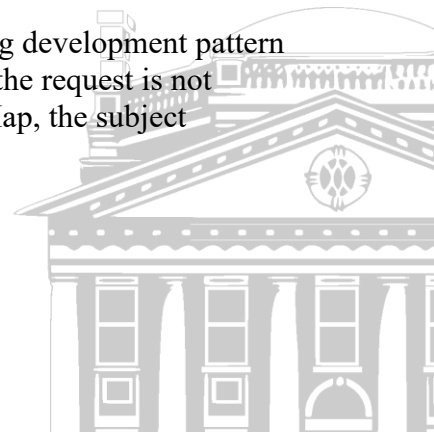
Hotel/Motel up to 75 rooms
Hotel/Motel over 75 rooms
Pharmacy for medical cannabis dispensary or medical marijuana dispensary
Mortician-Mortuary
Automotive sales, service and storage
Boat sales and repairs
Convenience store (no gas pumps)
Gas Stations (less than 10 pumps)
Movie Theaters
Telecommunications Towers
Nursing Homes
Cemeteries
Funeral Homes

STAFF ANALYSIS

Staff finds that the requested rezoning is generally compatible with the surrounding development pattern and the intent of the **B-1 (Neighborhood Commercial)** zoning district. Although the request is not consistent with the Agricultural Residential designation on the Future Land Use Map, the subject

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property is located within a designated Development Suburban Node, where the Comprehensive Plan encourages a mix of residential, commercial, and institutional uses to serve the surrounding community.

The area's recent growth, including the development of an elementary school, existing and proposed commercial uses, and new single-family and multifamily residential neighborhoods, supports the potential for neighborhood-oriented commercial development.

The proposed rezoning is not anticipated to adversely affect the public health, safety, or welfare, as any future development of the property will be subject to the County's site development standards and zoning regulations.

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