



Staff Report

Subject: Rezoning-2nd Reading Zoning Map Amendment
Author: Kimberly Barlett, Senior Planner
Department: Development Services
Application: RZN-26-37
Meeting Date: September 1, 2026

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

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

Map & Parcel: 451-55
Parcel Size: +/- 45.5 acres
Location: 557 Goshen Road
Commissioner District: Second District

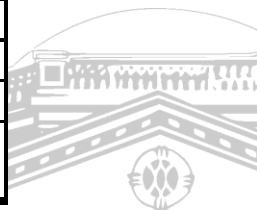
Proposed Use: Residential Development

Agent: Guy Davidson
110 Park of Commerce Drive
Savannah, GA 31405

Owner: Joan Helen Akins
557 Goshen Road
Rincon, GA 31326

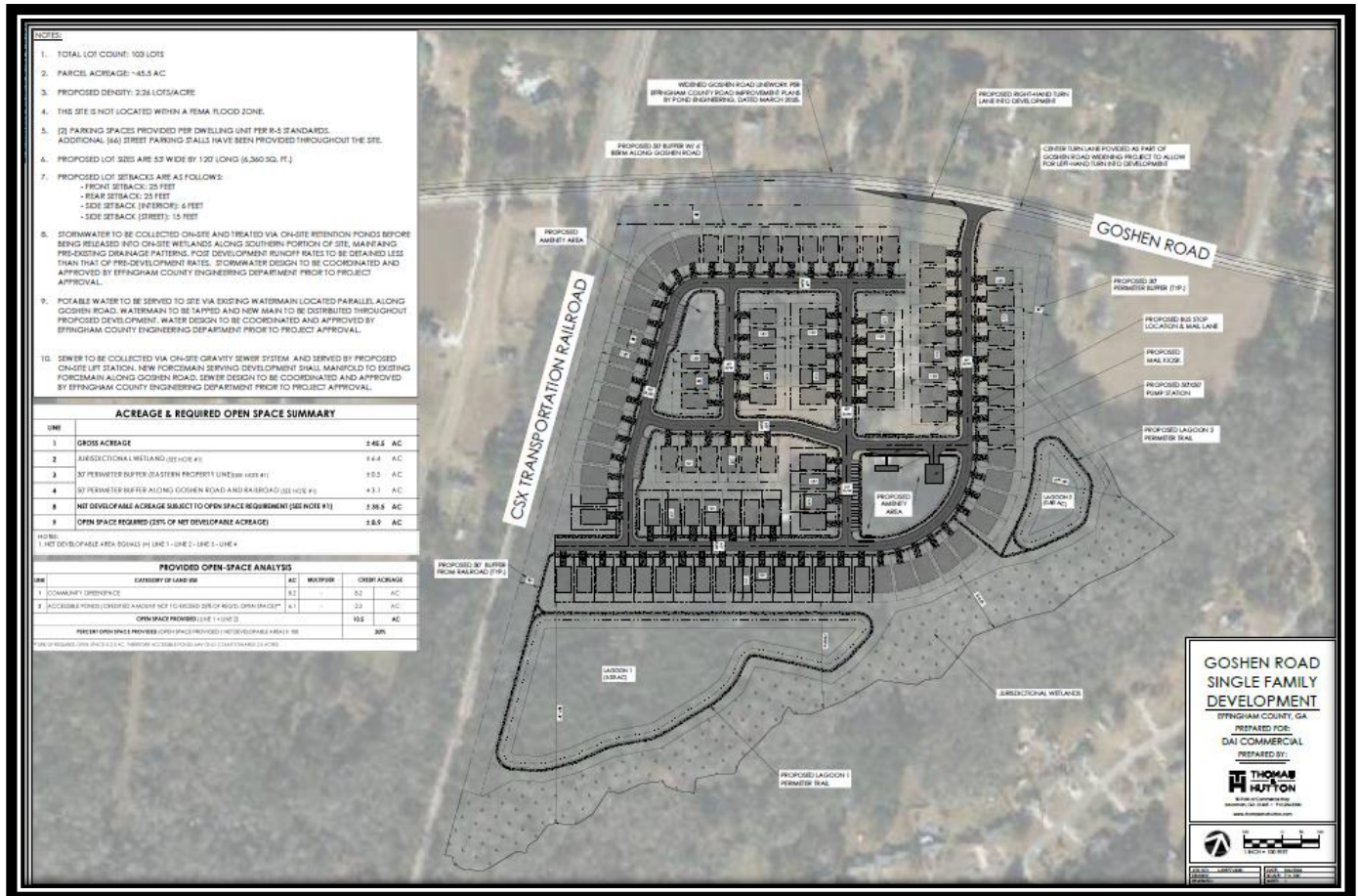
Rezoning Summary:

Item	Description
Project Name	Goshen Road Single Family Development
Applicant Request	Rezone approximately 45.5 acres from AR-1 to R-5 .
Current Use	Two homesites
Proposed Development	Single- Family Detached lots
Proposed Density	Approximately 103 Residential Units
Housing Types	Single-Family Homes
Utilities	Effingham County Public Water & Sewer
Future Land Use Map	Agricultural-Residential
Access	Goshen Road
Planning Board Recommendation	(August 11, 2026) Tie vote: no action taken



Project Summary:

The applicant is requesting to rezone approximately +/-45.5 acres from AR-1 (Agricultural Residential; 5 acres or more) to R-5 (Single-family traditional neighborhood) to develop a single-family detached-lot subdivision.



According to the concept plan, the development includes:

- 103 single-family lots (53' X 120'), 6,360 square feet
- Two lagoon ponds area with perimeter trails (± 6.13 acres)
- Community open space: approximately 10.5 acres
- 30% open space provided
- 30-foot perimeter vegetated buffer around the eastern property line, including a 50-foot buffer along the railroad and a 50-foot buffer with a 6-foot berm along Goshen Road where rear-facing lots are proposed.

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- Proposed right- turn lane into development
- Two proposed amenity areas
- A center turn lane is provided as part of the Goshen Road widening project to allow for a left-hand turn into the development.
- Proposed bus stop location and mail lane
- Proposed mail kiosk
- Proposed 50'x 50' pump station

Zoning History

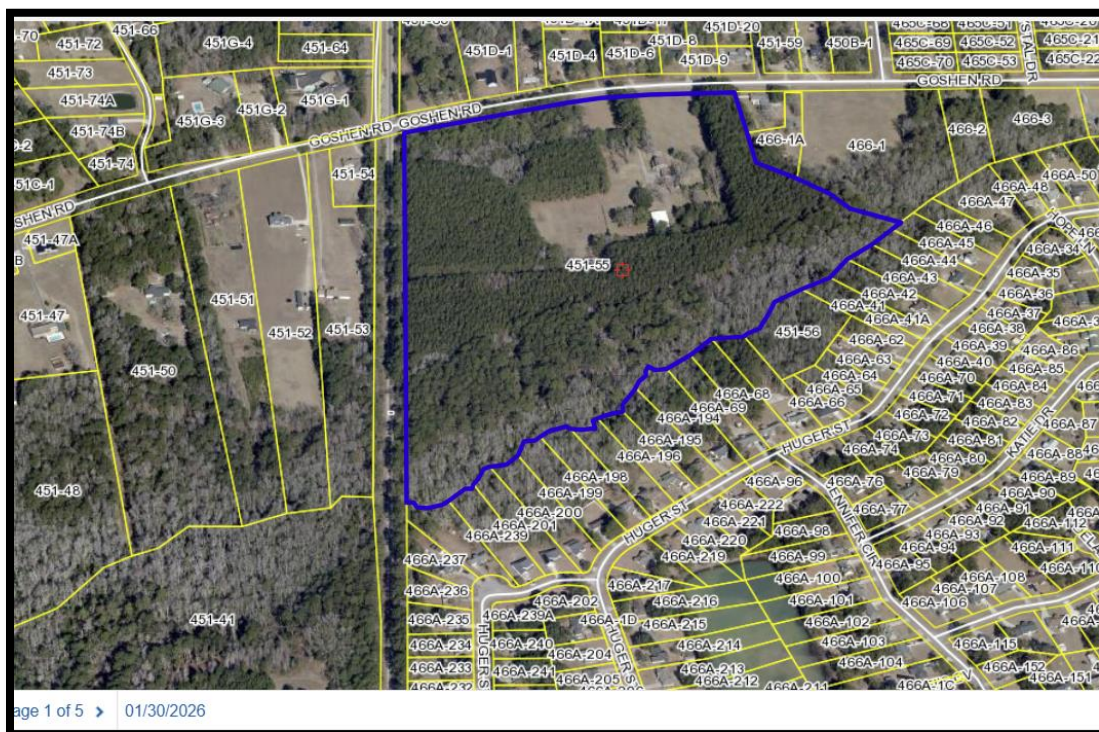
The subject property is currently zoned **AR-1 (Agricultural Residential)**. Several prior zoning cases are on record for the subject property.

March 2, 2010 – Conditional Use approved to operate a retail nursery.

March 2, 2010 – Approximately 0.50 acre rezoned from AR-1 to B-1.

December 11, 2012 – Approximately 0.50 acre rezoned from B-1 to AR-1.

April 18, 2026 – Conditional Use removed due to inactivity.



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Existing Site Condition

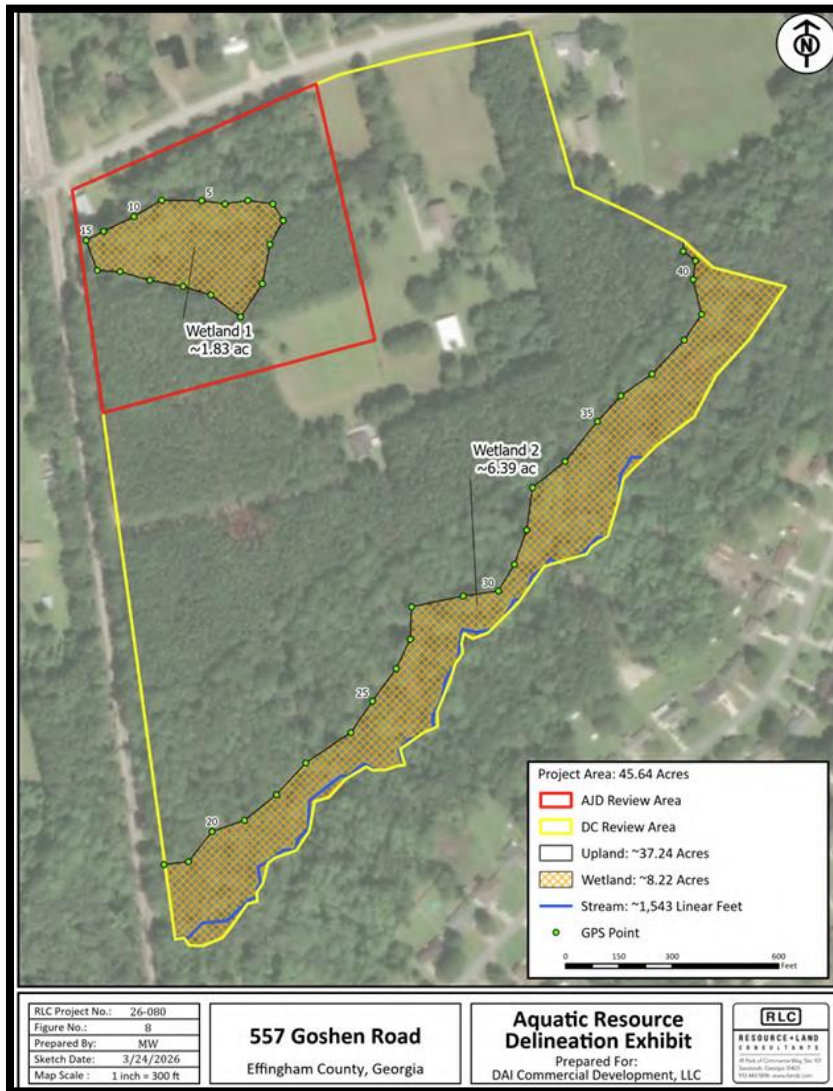
The subject property is located along Goshen Road. The property currently has two stick-built homes and accessory structures. The remainder of the property is predominantly undeveloped and wooded, with no additional significant site improvements.

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County GIS mapping indicates the property contains **freshwater wetlands** but no identified FEMA flood hazard areas. A wetlands delineation has been submitted for review.



Surrounding Use and Zoning Pattern

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

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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 & R-1& AR-2)
- ✚ Clary Acres subdivision (R-1)
- ✚ Pine Point Estates Subdivision (AR-1)
- ✚ Waterford Subdivision (R-1)
- ✚ Waterford Apartments (R-3)
- ✚ The Learning Treehouse Day Care (B-1)

East

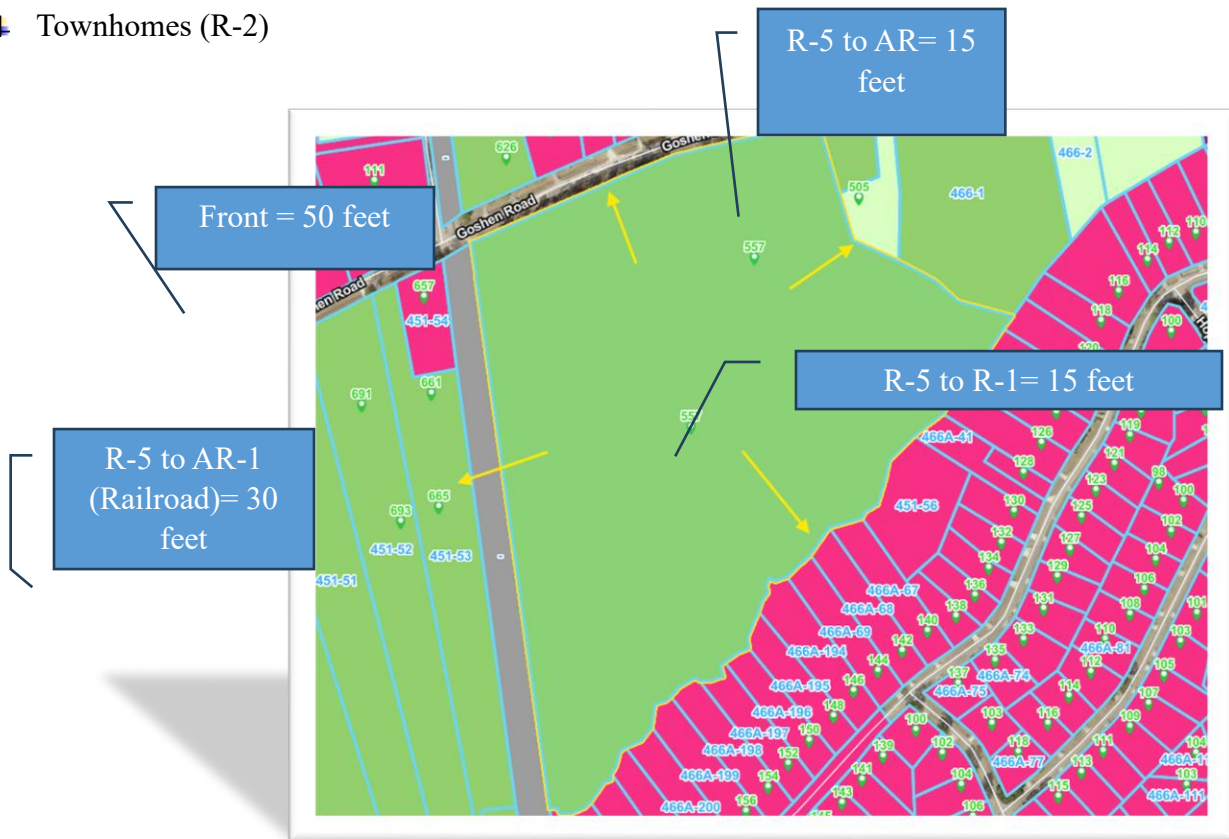
- ✚ Agricultural Residential homesteads (AR-1 & R-1)

South

- ✚ Goshen Villa Subdivision (R-1)

West

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



Buffers:

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R-5 Development Standards

Development Standard	Ordinance Requirement	Proposed Development
Buffers	Based on adjacent zoning	30-foot vegetated buffer on the eastern border 50- foot buffer along railroad Approximately 168 to 589 feet from southern wetlands border
Goshen 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	30% open space provided
Minimum Lot Area	6,000 square feet	6,360 square feet
On-Street Parking (1 space per every five units) w/ street trees	21 spaces required	66 street parking stalls proposed
Sidewalks	Shall be ADA compliant	To be provided in accordance with the approved preliminary plat.
Utilities	Public water & sewer	Effingham County water and sewer

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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

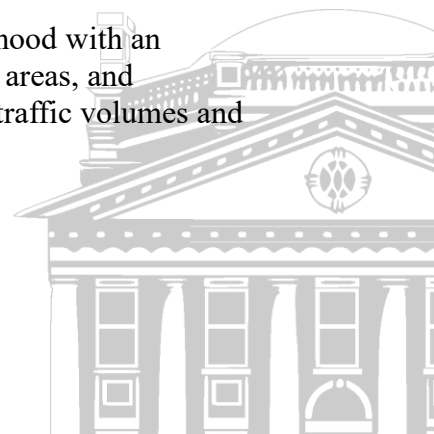
The proposed rezoning from AR-1 (Agricultural Residential) to **R-5 (Single-family traditional neighborhood)** for the development of a 103-lot single-family subdivision represents an increase in density relative to surrounding homesteads.

The current Agricultural Residential 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 dwelling units will result in higher daily traffic volumes and

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increased demand on public infrastructure, utilities, schools, emergency services, and other public facilities.

The proposal represents a substantial increase in development intensity. However, the applicant has incorporated design elements intended to mitigate potential impacts, including approximately 30% open space, perimeter buffering, 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.

Although the proposal represents a substantial increase in residential density, the property is located within an area that has experienced continued residential growth and is served by public water and sewer. The surrounding area already contains multiple residential subdivisions, multifamily development, public road infrastructure, and community services, making the site suitable for a traditional neighborhood development at the proposed density.

Infrastructure

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

Road Routes: The development will access Goshen Road, a County Major Collector roadway designed to accommodate higher traffic volumes than local residential streets.

Public Health, Safety, and Welfare

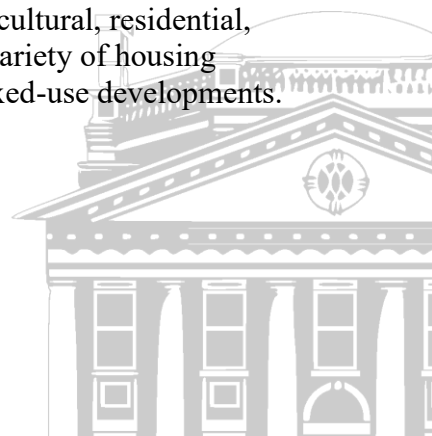
The proposed rezoning to R-5 (Single-Family Traditional Neighborhood) could promote public health, safety, and welfare by providing additional housing opportunities within the County while requiring development that meets current subdivision and engineering standards. The proposed subdivision will include public streets, sidewalks, stormwater management facilities, utility infrastructure, buffering, and other required improvements intended to protect public safety and neighborhood compatibility. Any future subdivision will remain subject to County engineering review, stormwater review, utility approval, traffic review, and preliminary and final plat approval before development.

Consistency with Comprehensive Plan

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.

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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).*



PLANNING BOARD RECOMMENDATION

At the **August 11, 2026**, Planning Board meeting, the Planning Board conducted a public hearing regarding the requested rezoning application to rezone approximately $\pm$ 45.5 acres from AR-1 to R-5 to allow for residential development.

During its discussion, the Planning Board considered the proposed zoning classification, infrastructure needs associated with the potential development, proposed lot sizes, the lower density compared to previous requests, potential wetland impacts, open space requirements, approximately 5,000 previously approved residential units within the County, the traffic study, and anticipated traffic and roadway improvements along Goshen Road.

Citizen concerns included:

- Proposed lot sizes;
- Preservation of the rural character of the surrounding area;
- Protection of residents and properties surrounding the subject property;
- Potential impacts on livestock and agricultural activities;
- The ability of Goshen Road to accommodate additional traffic associated with increased residential density;
- Proposed setbacks;
- Access to and evacuation from the development;
- Increased demands on infrastructure and public services;
- The number of residential units previously approved throughout the County;
- Increased traffic and related safety concerns; and
- The need for roadway and transportation improvements, including road widening, completion of the parkway, and completion of planned roundabouts.

Planning Board Action

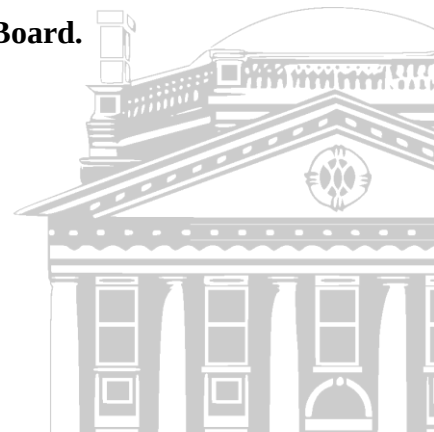
Following the public hearing and deliberation, the Planning Board voted on the rezoning request. **Two members voted to recommend denial (Districts 3 and 4), and two members voted to recommend approval (Districts 1 and 2).**

The resulting 2–2 tie vote resulted in no recommendation from the Planning Board.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

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Staff finds that the proposed rezoning is generally compatible with surrounding land uses and 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 amenities designed to minimize impacts on adjacent properties and protect the public health, safety, and welfare.

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