Effingham County Georgia
Planning and Zoning Services

Staff Report

Subject:	2nd Reading- Zoning Map Amendment
Author:	Kimberly Barlett, Senior Planner
Department:	Development Services
Application:	RZN-26-28
Meeting Date:	November 3, 2026
Existing Zoning:	**AR-1 (Agricultural–Residential, 5 acres or more)**
Proposed Zoning:	**LI (Light Industrial)**
Map & Parcel(s):	304-10
Total Acreage Affected	± 99 acres out of ±280.50 acres
Location:	1180 Old River Road
Commissioner District:	First District
Proposed Use:	Warehouse
Applicant	Boltin Teeter 9040 Roswell Road Ste 420 Atlanta, GA 30350
Owner:	Mark Cooper P.O. Box 72 Furman, SC 29921

Rezoning Summary:

Item	Description
Request	Rezone ± 99 acres from **AR-1 to LI**
Proposed Use	Warehouse
Existing Use	Agricultural/ Residential
Future Land Use	**Transitional & Conservation**
Utilities	Public Water & septic system
Access	Old River Road

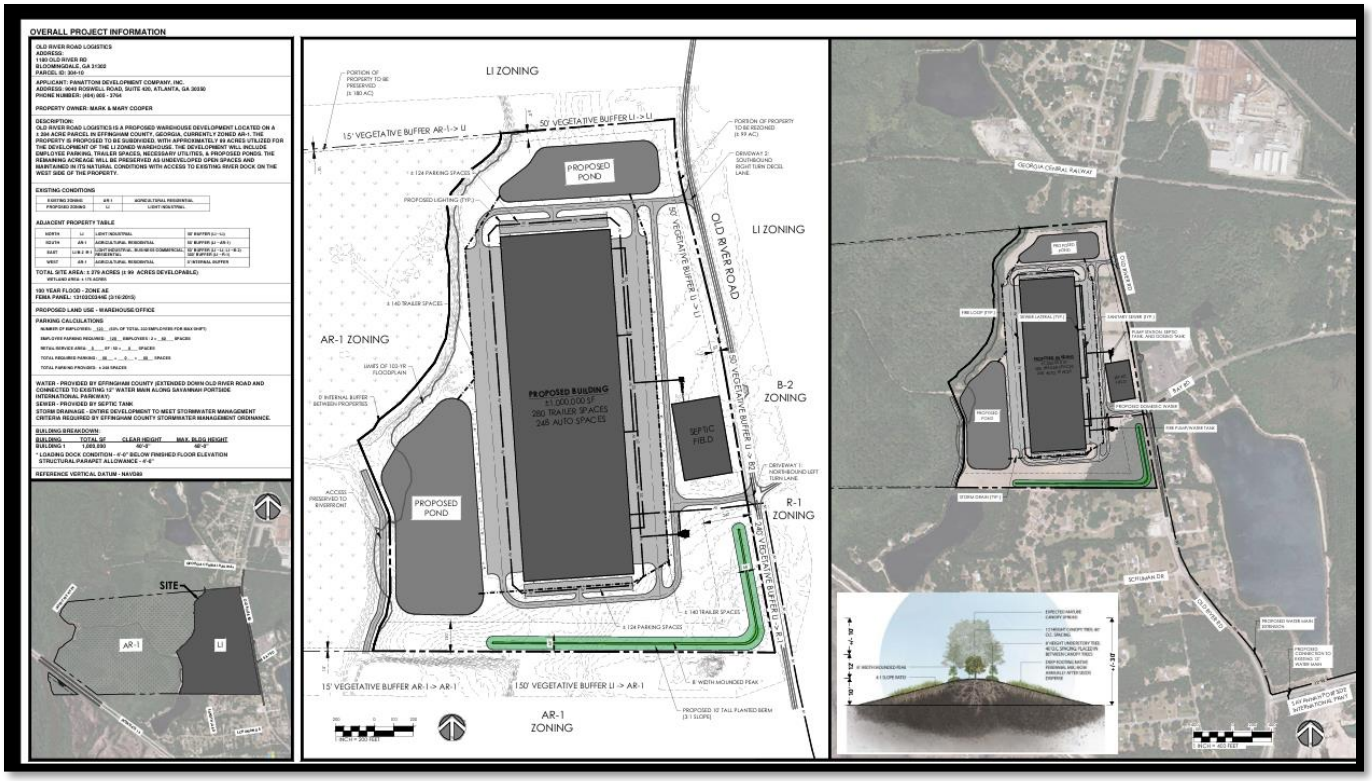
Project Summary:

The applicant is requesting to **rezone ±99 acres** of a ±280.50-acre parent tract from AR-1 (Agricultural Residential) to **LI (Light Industrial)** to allow for the construction of an approximately 1,000,000-square-foot industrial warehouse for distribution and storage. The remaining acreage is proposed to remain zoned AR-1 and, according to the applicant, will be donated to Effingham County.

Subsequent to the **Planning Board meeting** and the Board's request for additional buffering and berms to provide greater protection and screening for adjacent property owners, the applicant submitted a revised plan incorporating additional mitigation measures.
The proposed revisions include the following:

- **Berm Addition:** A new berm, shown in green on the revised plan, has been added along the applicable property boundaries. A cross-section of the proposed berm is provided in the lower right-hand corner of the plan. The berm is approximately **68 feet wide and 10 feet in height**.
- **Landscaping:** Proposed plantings will be installed along the top of the berm and are anticipated to provide approximately **12 feet of additional height at installation**, with an estimated **10 feet of additional growth at maturity**. Once the landscaping canopy matures, the combined berm and vegetation are anticipated to provide approximately **30 feet of total screening height above finished grade**.
- **Southern Property Boundary:** The existing **150-foot buffer will remain unchanged**. The proposed berm along the southern property line will be provided **in addition to the 150-foot buffer**, providing supplemental screening for adjacent properties.
- **Eastern Property Boundary:** The proposed eastern buffer has been revised from **300 feet to 240 feet**. A **10-foot-high berm**, designed in accordance with applicable ordinance standards, has been added to provide additional visual screening and separation from adjoining properties.

Warehouse. A building or facility used for the storage, management, and distribution of goods and products. It is typically designed to hold inventory, stock, and raw materials for businesses before they are shipped to customers, retailers, or manufacturing facilities. Warehouses are critical to logistics, inventory management, and supply chain operations, serving a wide range of industries, from retail and ecommerce to manufacturing and food production. Includes cross-dock facilities and Transload facilities.



*DRI Report

A DRI report was completed for this project on July 20, 2026.

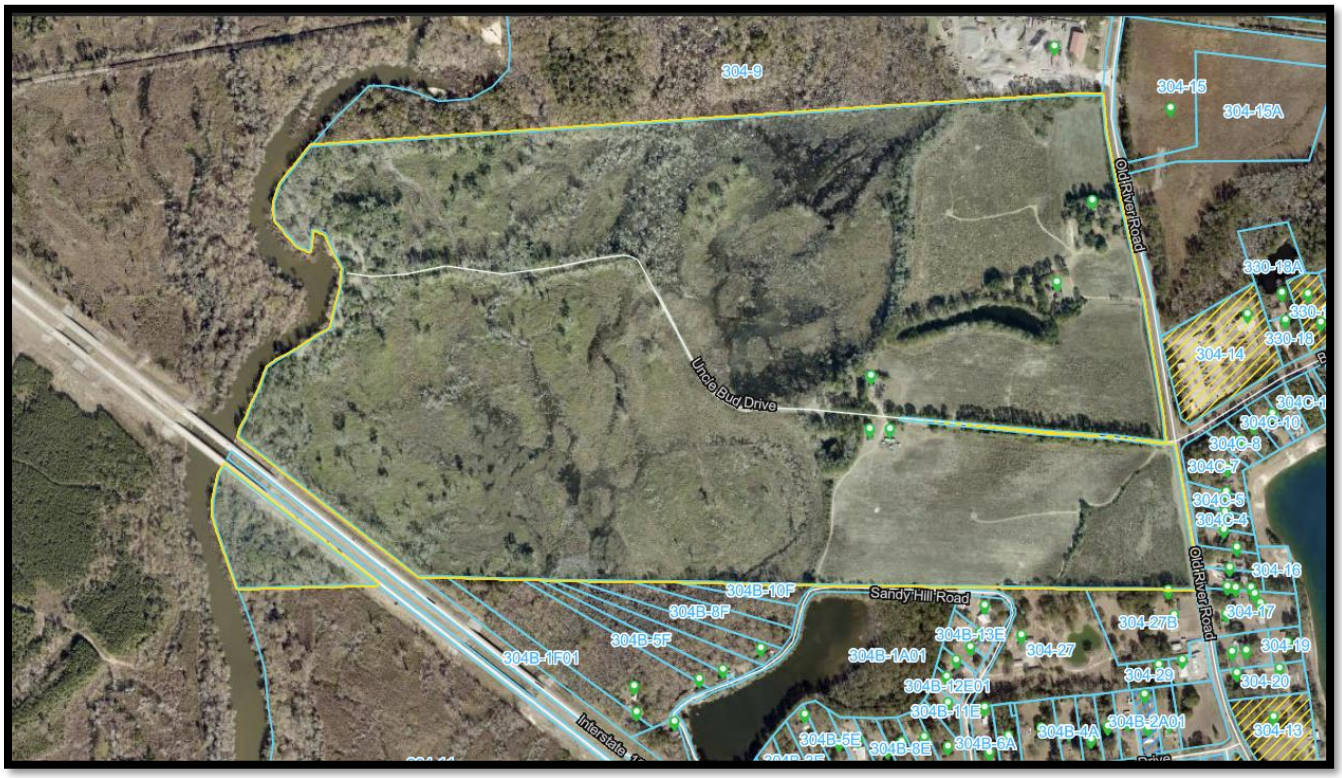
The CRC strongly encourages the use of native or drought-tolerant landscaping and recommends the applicant to review the Coastal Georgia Regional Water Plan to ensure that the best practices for water efficiency, and stormwater management are incorporated into site design. The CRC strongly advises the applicant to evaluate the potential impacts on the overall drainage system and flood risks associated with the proposed development, taking into account FEMA flood zone designation. The property is designated as an Area of Significant Natural Resources with the exception of the area to the east.

Public comments were to be received on or by July 15, 2026. The CRC has received commentary from the City of Savannah, Ogeechee Riverkeeper, and one general public comment that is in opposition to this potential development.

Zoning History

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

- April 9, 2024 – Rezoning of 280.5 acres from AR-1 to I-1 was postponed at the Planning Board and then withdrawn prior to consideration by the Board of Commissioners.

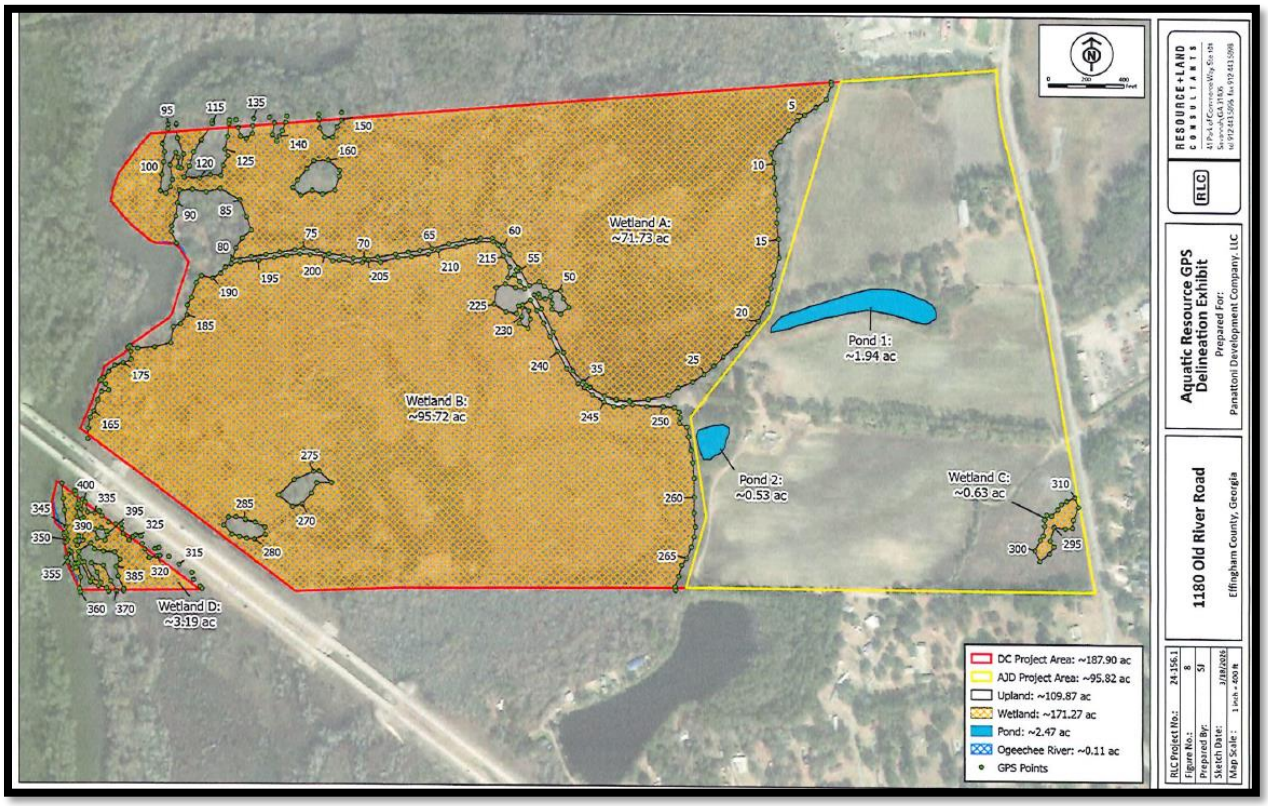


Existing Site Condition

The subject property consists of approximately **280.50 acres** with frontage along **Old River Road**. The property is currently developed with four stick-built single-family residences, one mobile home, and several associated accessory structures.

The parcel does contain identified **wetlands and floodplains AE** based on **County GIS mapping. A Level III soil study and a wetlands delineation submittal have been provided. A traffic study has**

been completed at this site.



Surrounding Use and Zoning Pattern

Surrounding Neighborhood
• North: I-1 (Industrial Districts)
• South: AR-1 (Agricultural–Residential, 5 acres or more)

• East: R-1 (Single-Family Residential) & I-1 (Industrial Districts) & B-2 (General Commercial Districts) & AR-2 (Agricultural residential, 1 acre or more)
• West: Bryan County

The surrounding area is characterized by a mix of rural residential, commercial, and industrial uses. Lot sizes range from approximately one-half acre within nearby residential subdivisions to large agricultural tracts. The development pattern reflects an area in transition, with established residential and agricultural uses located near existing and proposed commercial and industrial development.

North/ Northeast

- Agricultural Residential homesteads (AR-1)
- Pecan Grove Subdivision (AR-1)
- Transloading Facility (I-1)
- Lumber Manufacturing (I-1)

East

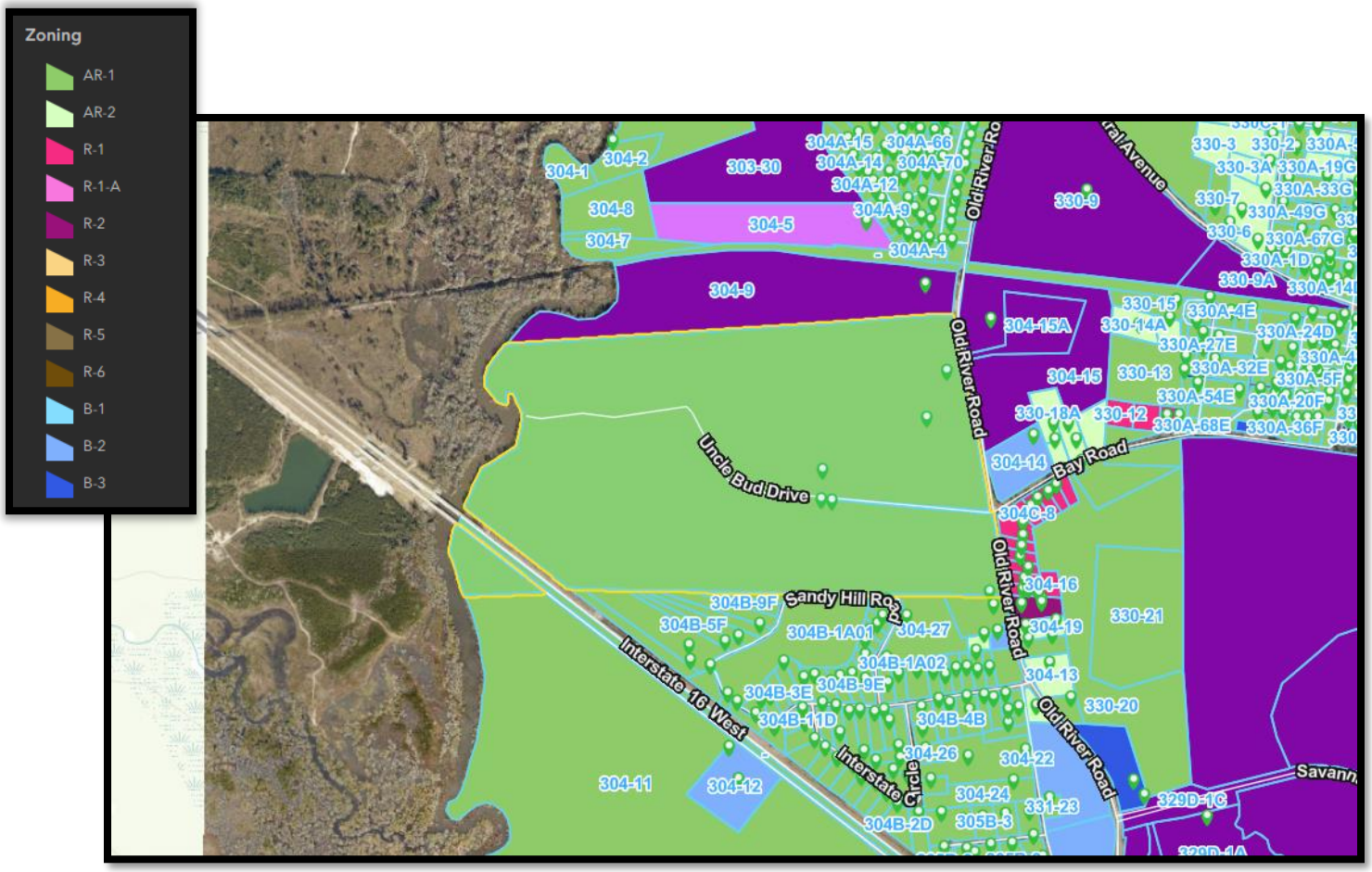
- Agricultural Residential homesteads (AR-1 & R-1& AR-2)
- Proposed Asphalt Plant (I-1)
- Dump Truck Company (B-2)
- Megans Bay Subdivision (R-1)

South

- Meldrim Lakes Subdivision (AR-1)

West

- Bryan County



Applicable Ordinance Sections

Section 3.4.2(c) – Adjacent Public Street Buffers:

" Street buffers for industrial property shall equal the required buffer for the use on the other side of the street in the above chart."

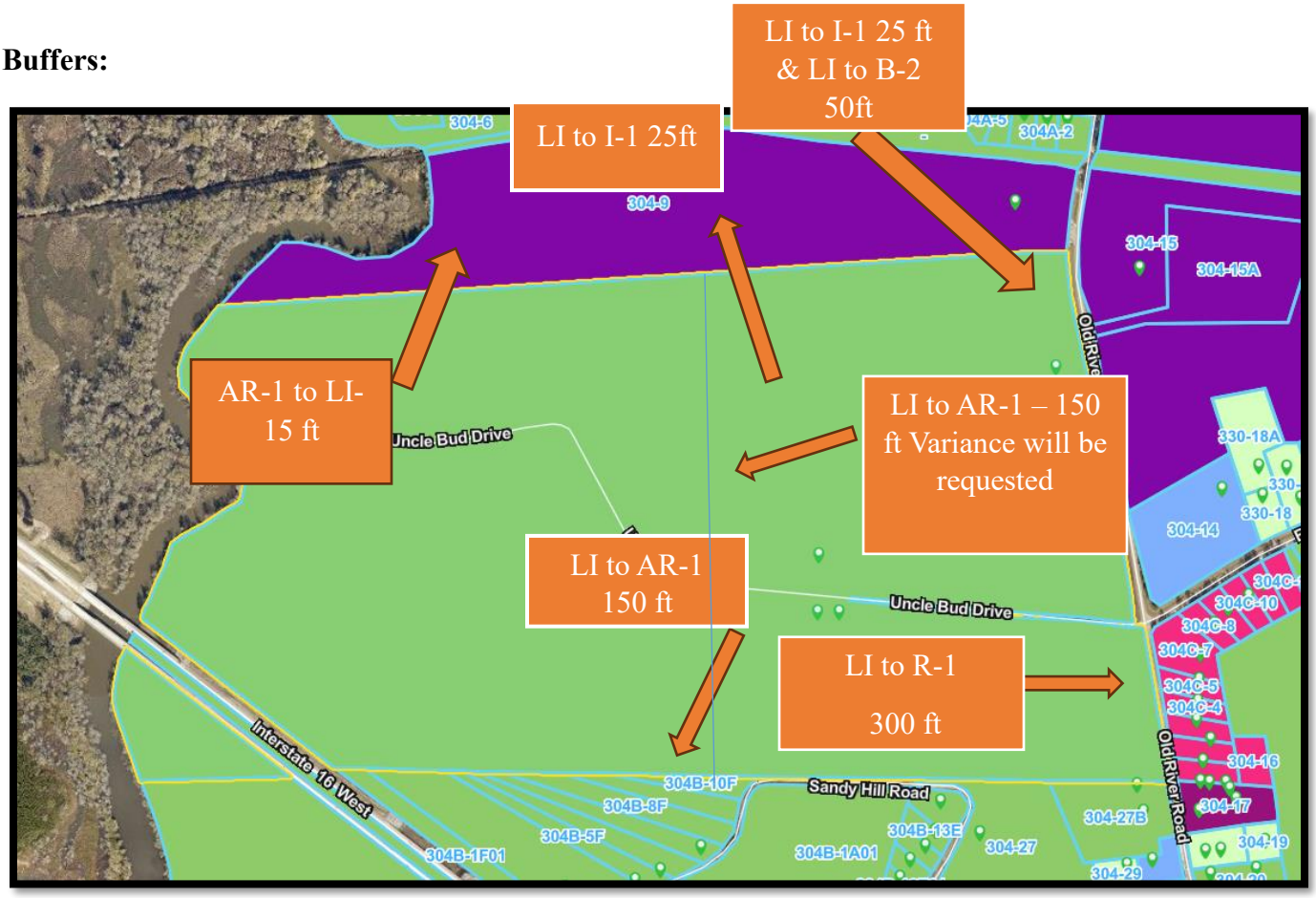
Zoning Development Standards for LI

Requirement	Standard
Greenspace	Minimum 15% of site area
Buffers	Based on adjacent zoning
Parking (Sec. 30.30)	1 for every 2 employees, plus 1 for every 50 square feet of retail sales or service
Lighting	Must be designed to reflect light away from adjacent residentially zoned properties

Zoning Classification

5.14.1 Intent. The Light Industrial District (L-I) is established to promote and sustain economic growth and employment opportunities by providing dedicated areas for a broad range of industrial, manufacturing, processing, and distribution activities. This district is designed to accommodate industries that operate in a clean, efficient, and non-intrusive manner, ensuring compatibility with adjacent commercial and residential areas while supporting the needs of industrial businesses. Serving as a hub for businesses that require flexible operational space but do not generate excessive noise, pollution, vibration, or other nuisances that could negatively impact surrounding properties.

Buffers:



Planning and Zoning Services
804 South Laurel St., Springfield, Georgia 31329
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Intensity of Use

The proposed rezoning from AR-1 (Agricultural–Residential) to **LI (Light Industrial)** for the development of an approximately 1-million-square-foot warehouse would substantially increase the intensity of use. The development would change a low-density agricultural residential property to a large-scale industrial and distribution use, resulting in significantly greater building coverage, impervious surface, lighting, stormwater runoff, utility demand, and traffic—particularly from trucks and employee vehicles.

These impacts would be most significant where the property adjoins residential or agricultural uses. Adequate roadway capacity, safe truck access, turn lanes, stormwater management, utility availability, and required buffers and screening will be necessary to mitigate potential impacts. Overall, the proposed development constitutes a high-intensity change from the existing AR-1 zoning and should be evaluated based on the site's location, surrounding land uses, infrastructure capacity, and compliance with applicable development standards.

Infrastructure

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

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

Public Health, Safety, and Welfare

The proposed rezoning from AR-1 (Agricultural–Residential) to **LI (Light Industrial)** may have significant implications for the public health, safety, and welfare due to the scale of the development. Potential impacts include increased large truck and employee traffic, roadway congestion, noise, lighting, air emissions from vehicle activity, stormwater runoff, and increased demand on utilities.

Appropriate buffers and screening may also be necessary to protect nearby agricultural and residential properties. Provided these impacts are adequately evaluated and mitigated through the development-review process, the proposed use may operate without creating an unreasonable adverse effect on the public health, safety, or welfare.

Consistency with Comprehensive Plan

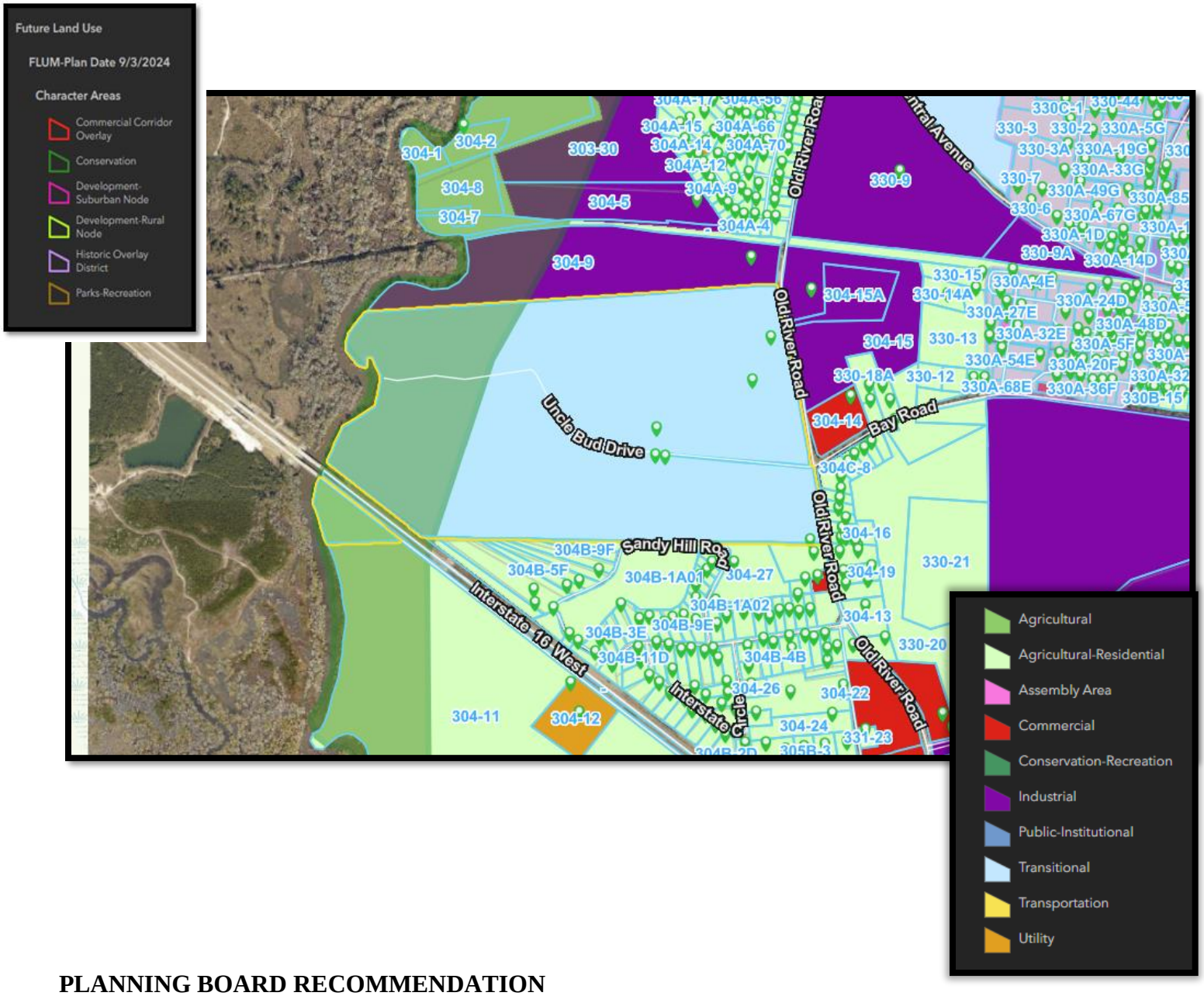
The subject property is designated **Transitional** on the **Future Land Use Map**, while the portion proposed to remain zoned AR-1 (Agricultural–Residential) is designated **Conservation.** The proposed

rezoning of the Transitional portion to LI (Light Industrial) may be generally consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, as the Transitional designation is intended to accommodate areas changing land-use character that may support appropriately located employment or industrial development where adequate infrastructure is available.

Retaining the Conservation-designated portion under the existing AR-1 zoning would help preserve environmentally sensitive land and separate the proposed warehouse development from surrounding properties.

*This parcel is designated **Transitional** on the **Future Land Use Map**, which is an area that buffers between commercial, Industrial, and less intense residential areas and allows for development opportunities. Future development will allow for mixed use and adaptive use opportunities. This area is designed to allow for transition from residential uses to compatible nonresidential developments. Transitional areas are often exhibit characteristics of neighboring zones and may undergo changes in land use, density, or character over time. A blend of residential, commercial, or industrial uses that bridge the gap between adjacent zones.(Effingham County 2020–2040 Joint Comprehensive Plan, p. 37).*

*This parcel is designated **Conservation** in the **Character Area** on the **Future Land Use Map**, which is Environmentally Sensitive Areas refers to the management and protection of natural areas and resources to preserve habitats and species, protect ecosystems, and maintain environmental quality. Areas of open space that follow natural and manmade linear features for recreation and conservation purposes that link ecological, cultural, and recreational amenities. Conservation land use may involve activities such as wildlife conservation, sustainable agriculture, and protection of water resources. These lands are characterized by low-impact development and recreation. Some of these areas represent 100-year floodplains along river and stream corridor and identified wetlands. (Effingham County 2020–2040 Joint Comprehensive Plan, p. 41).*



PLANNING BOARD RECOMMENDATION

At the **September 8, 2026,** Planning Board meeting, the Planning Board conducted a public hearing regarding the requested rezoning application to rezone approximately ± 99 acres from AR-1 to LI to allow for permitted uses in LI.

During its deliberations, the Planning Board discussed the proposed zoning classification and the donation of land to the county, transitional designation, growth in the area, and residential areas surrounded by industrial uses, buffers and berms.

Citizen concerns included:

- Traffic
- No protection to the residential areas
- Concerned about buffers
-

Following the public hearing and discussion, the Planning Board voted to recommend approval of the rezoning request, subject to the stipulations

At the October 20, 2026 meeting, the Board of Commissioners voted to approve with the following stipulations:

1. **For additional buffer and berms to protect the adjacent landowners.**
2. **Prohibition of Data Center Use:** The subject property shall not be developed, operated, or utilized for a data center at any time.
3. **Truck Traffic Mitigation:** The applicant shall coordinate with County staff to identify and implement feasible engineering and traffic control measures intended to prevent or minimize truck traffic traveling through the Meldrim community.

Staff Summary

Staff finds that the requested rezoning is consistent with the Transitional and Conservation designations of the Future Land Use Map and with the intent of the LI (Light Industrial) zoning district. The portion designated Conservation will remain zoned AR-1 (Agricultural–Residential), thereby supporting the preservation of environmentally sensitive areas.