

**HALL COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION  
RECOMMENDATION REPORT**

**Applicant** ..... Northeast Georgia Health Systems Inc.

**Request** ..... Rezone from Highway Business (H-B, [17.150](#)),  
Agricultural Residential III (AR-III, [17.110](#)), and  
Residential I (R-I, [17.60](#)) to Planned Office  
Development (POD, [17.180.070](#))

**Proposed Use** ..... Mixed use office-institutional park

**Size** ..... 42.97± acres

**Zoning** ..... Current: Highway Business (H-B, [17.150](#)),  
Agricultural Residential III (AR-III, [17.110](#)), and  
Residential I (R-I, [17.60](#)) | **Proposed: Planned  
Office Development (POD, [17.180.070](#))**

**Location** ..... **3675 Thompson Bridge Road, 3510 Southers  
Road, 3709, 3719, 3739 Price Road** | Tax Parcels  
10104 000020, 10104 000022 – 000023, 000031,  
& 000059

**Commission District** ..... Two

**Planning Commission Date** ..... February 6, 2023

**Staff Recommendation** ..... **Approval as the request is consistent with a  
mixed use activity center future land use  
designation as described by the [Comprehensive  
Plan](#).**

**Planning Commission Recommendation**.....**Approval, with conditions**  
**Vote: 5-0**

**Planning Commission Conditions:**

1. The site shall be developed in accordance with the conceptual master plan dated 12/15/2022 and narrative dated 2-6-23 submitted as part of this application. Minor changes can be approved by the Planning Director provided there is no increase in the square footage of or number of buildings, there are no reductions in buffers, no changes in the structural design and materials, and the changes do not create the need for a variance in Hall County development standards.
2. The standards of the Gateway Corridors Overlay District (GCOD, [17.420](#)) shall apply to the development. No variances to these standards are granted, except those expressly granted by the Planning Commission and listed herein.
3. The development shall follow all Hall County Development Review processes and stormwater requirements as established by the Official Code of Hall County and any other applicable agency.

4. The applicant shall obtain a commercial driveway permit, for construction of the entrance at SR 60, from the Georgia Department of Transportation prior to issuance of a CO for buildings on lots 2 & 3. The applicant shall obtain a commercial driveway permit, for construction of the entrance at SR 136, from the Georgia Department of Transportation prior to issuance of the final CO for the last building on the campus.
5. The zoning conditions shall be placed on any plat or site plan prepared for the property.
6. Prior to issuance of a land disturbance permit for the individual parcels, a landscape and lighting plan shall be submitted to the Planning Director for approval.
7. Signage shall be as amended on 2-2-2023 and approved on 2-6-2023 and shall require building permits. Minor changes can be approved by the Planning Director provided there is no increase in the square footage of the sign types.
8. Allow basic architectural theme and materials as shown on attached renderings including phenolic siding.
9. TPO roof systems shall be allowed as an approved roofing material.

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### **Public Forum**

**Danny Mackey, 2101 Jonquil Court, Canton,** spoke in favor. Spoke about the material consistency.

**Rudy Lonergan, 743 Spring Street, Gainesville,** spoke in favor. Spoke about the lighting, landscaping, and material.

**Augie DeAugustine, 3743 Dove Cove Circle, Gainesville,** spoke in favor. Spoke about how favorable it is to seniors to have medical care close. Concerns were traffic.

**Margaret McGlaun, 3881 Village View Drive, Gainesville,** spoke in opposition. Concerns were the environment.

### **Summary Analysis**

The applicant is requesting to rezone the subject properties from Highway Business (H-B, [17.150](#)), Agricultural Residential III (AR-III, [17.110](#)), and Residential I (R-I, [17.60](#)) to Planned Office Development (POD, [17.180.070](#)) for the purpose of developing a mixed-use, office-institutional park. Per the narrative, this development will serve the future needs of Northeast Georgia Health Systems, (NGHS).

The narrative describes a phased development of five lots with future phases based on future demand along the growing Thompson Bridge Road / State Route 60 corridor. The proposed development will include 200,000 square feet of office area, through a combination of one and two-story buildings. The narrative states that parking will be provided per Hall County regulations, determined by the use. Additionally, shared parking may be utilized when there are no conflicts of operating hours.

Access to the site is proposed from both Thompson Bridge Road / State Route 60, and Price Road / State Route 136, subject to Hall County and Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) approval. The narrative states that the entrance onto SR 60 is proposed to be a right-in/right-out only where the SR 136 location is proposed to be a full access intersection. The property borders Southers Road to the south, where two driveway accesses are proposed. The intersection of Southers and Thompson Bridge Roads is already a full access intersection, with an existing left turn lane onto Thompson Bridge Road.

The narrative states that the project may contain a variety of uses consistent with those allowed in the Office Institutional (O-I, [17.130](#)) zoning district including the following uses: medical office buildings, outpatient surgical facility, and inpatient care facility (hospice unit). In addition to the medical and office uses, the applicant is proposing a limited amount of commercial space near the Price Road entrance for retail or retail service establishments.

The following are the proposed minimum standards for the development:

POD Development Standards	
Minimum Lot Area	15,000 square feet
Minimum Lot Frontage	100 feet
Front Setback	215 feet, 15 additional feet per building story
Side setback	20 feet
Rear Setback	10 feet
Exterior Buffer to Residential Zoning	25 feet
Total Acreage	43.89 acres
Parking Ratio	Per Hall County guidelines
Maximum Total Building Floor Area	200,000 square feet

The submitted site plan shows 5 proposed building lots, each containing a primary structure and associated parking. The lots are connected internally through a series of interparcel connections. The proposed lot configuration is as follows:

Lot	Area	Proposed Use
1	4.00 acres	Medical Office Building (1-story)
2	5.40 acres	Medical Office Building (2-story)
3	4.77 acres	Medical Office Building (2-story)
4	3.05 acres	Office / Commercial (1 story)
5	26.61 acres	Medical Office / Hospice Care (2 story, 38,000 square feet)

The site plan shows the proposed building setbacks and exterior buffer where adjacent to residential uses. A master signage plan and renderings were submitted for the development. The narrative notes that the site plan is conceptual in nature, and as such may require modifications during the engineering and development process. Modification to the locations and arrangements of buildings, roads, and other improvements which do not conflict with specific standards and requirements of these conditions may be made by the developer or end user so long as the modifications do not change the land use, increase the overall density of the project, or reduce any established exterior buffers or setbacks.

A number of variances have been requested by the applicant, both in relation to the standards of the Gateway Corridors Overlay District (GCOD, [17.420](#)) and the Tree Protection ([17.280](#)) for non-residential property development.

Specifically, the applicant has requested the following variances:

- Signage:
  - Allow internally illuminated signs on the buildings and monument signs.

- Allow wall signs on all 4 sides of a buildings.
- Quantity: one (1) per Tenant, per Wall Elevation
- Sign Area: 150 sq. ft. per elevation, for single tenant; 175 sq. ft. combined, per elevation,
- for multiple tenants
  - Allow one (1) Campus Monumental Sign at the intersection of SR 60 and Southers Road
  - Sign may be curved, angled (possibly greater than 60 degrees) or straight configuration, as needed
  - Stone sign structure will be approx. 6' above grade, however sign structure may be incorporated into a retaining wall which could increase overall height.
  - Sign Panels: 96 sq. ft. each, 1 per street elevation
  - 170 sq. ft. permanent banner frames to display 90 sq ft banners, 1 per street elevation.
  - Banners will be in place continuously and will change periodically.
- Allow one (1) Campus Entry Pylon at each Campus Entry Drive
  - Materials: Stone Base w/ fabricated aluminum sign cabinet
  - Sign Area: 96 sq. ft.
  - Height: 12 ft. above street grade
  - Setback: 5' from R/W
- Allow Building Monuments with Aluminum Pylon without masonry base
  - Sign Area: 64 sq. ft.
  - Height: 10 ft. above street grade
  - Setback: 5' from R/W
- Allow one (1) freestanding or building mounted Directory sign per building entry
  - Aluminum Pylon without masonry base
  - Sign Area: 44 sq. ft.
  - Height: 8' above street grade
- Building Orientation:
  - Allow buildings to orient inward and away from SR 60, provided no parking shall occur between the building and SR 60.
- Building Materials:
  - Allow basic architectural theme as shown on attached renderings.
  - Allow TPO roofing materials for any flat roof building areas.
- Hall County Tree Ordinance
  - The Applicant requests a variance from Chapter 17.280 of the Hall County Code of Ordinances. The Applicant commits to submitting a landscape plan (to include tree planting) with any Land Disturbance Permit for review by the Director

**Based on the future land-use plan, staff finds the requested zoning designation consistent with the intent of a Mixed Use Activity Center as described in the [Comprehensive Plan](#).**

### **Zoning Analysis**

The proposed development of a mixed-use, office-institutional along this portion of Thompson Bridge Road is consistent with the future land use classification of a Mixed Use Activity Center, as identified in the [Comprehensive Plan](#).

When considering a zoning amendment to the zoning maps, the following items must be considered:

1. Whether the zoning proposal will permit a use that is suitable in view of the use and development of adjacent and nearby property; **The proposed use is suitable in view of the uses and development of adjacent and nearby properties. The intersection of Thompson Bridge Road / SR 60 and Price Road / SR 136 is an area of the county currently experiencing both commercial and residential growth. Having access to medical facilities nearby is a logical progression of development in the region.**
2. Whether the zoning proposal will adversely affect the existing use or usability of adjacent or nearby property; **The proposed development should not have an adverse effect on the existing uses or usability of adjacent or nearby property. The proposed use will be subject to all applicable local, state, and federal development regulations.**
3. Whether the property to be affected by the zoning proposal has reasonable economic use as currently zoned. **The property has reasonable economic values as currently zoned; allowable uses within the Highway Business (H-B, [17.150](#)), Agricultural Residential III (AR-III, [17.110](#)), and Residential I (R-I, [17.60](#)) zoning districts.**
4. Whether the zoning proposal will result in a use which will or could cause an excessive or burdensome use of existing streets, transportation facilities, or utilities; **As the end users have not been identified, it is difficult to determine the frequency and intensity of traffic using the site. The development does not trigger the need for a DRI review nor is a traffic study required as part of the rezoning application.**
5. Whether the zoning proposal is in conformity with the policy and intent of the land use plan; **The proposal is consistent with the [Comprehensive Plan](#) and the future land use classification of an Activity Center.**
6. The extent to which property values are diminished by the existing zoning restrictions; **Staff has not identified that the existing property values have been impacted by the existing zoning.**
7. The extent to which the destruction of the subject property's value under the existing zoning promotes the health, safety, morals or general welfare of the public; **Staff is unable to comment on the impact of property values without a full market analysis. Multiple factors impact property value including construction types, proposed uses, and maintenance. Often it is difficult to determine the effect of a development on adjacent properties until the development is completed.**
8. The relative gain to the public as compared to the hardship imposed upon the individual property owner; **Staff has not identified a hardship imposed on the property owner as the property is currently zoned.**
9. Whether there are other existing or changing conditions affecting the use or development of the property which give supporting grounds for either approval or disapproval of the zoning proposal; **This portion of the county is rapidly changing as both residential and commercial growth is occurring in the area.**
10. Whether the change would create an isolated district unrelated to the surrounding districts; **While there is not another parcel zoned Planned Office Development (POD, [17.180.070](#)) in the immediate vicinity, the proposal is consistent with the intended development pattern along the Thompson Bridge Road corridor as described by the [Comprehensive Plan](#).**
11. Whether the present zoning district boundaries are illogically drawn in relation to existing conditions in the area; **There is no evidence the present zoning district boundaries or illogical drawn.**

12. Whether the change requested is out of scale with the needs of the county as a whole or the immediate neighborhood; **No, the request is in scale with the needs of the county as a whole.**
13. Whether it is impossible to find adequate sites for the proposed use in districts permitting such use and already appropriately zoned; **While there are potentially other areas in the county identified for this sort of development in the [Comprehensive Plan](#), the applicant would still be required to go through a rezoning request to develop the project as proposed.**
14. Whether the need for rezoning could be handled instead by a variance request to the [Planning Commission]; **No, the need for rezoning could not be handled instead by a variance request to the Planning Commission. The proposed uses are not permitted in the current zoning districts.**
15. Whether there would be an ecological or pollution impact resulting from major modifications to the land if the request is granted; **Any land disturbance activities on the property shall be required to go through the land development permitting process, and as a result are subject to local, state, and federal regulations. As a result there should not be an ecological or pollution impact resulting from any modification to the land if the request is granted.**
16. Whether there is reasonable evidence based upon existing and anticipated land use that would indicate a mistake was made in the original zoning of the property; **There is no indication that a mistake was made in the original zoning.**

Per the requirements of **Planned Office Development (POD, [17.180.070](#))**, a planned office development should contain orderly, well-designed office and institutional uses upon a site that results in minimum impact upon the surrounding area. The site plans and building designs should produce a development that can be constructed to achieve maximum utilization of space while maintaining a low-intensity office character protected from more intensive commercial and industrial development and protecting any nearby residential uses. Such a development may also include a limited number of residential and commercial uses.

Additionally, applicant for planned office developments are required to submit the following information as part of the application:

1. The site plan shall indicate the proposed size, location, number of stories and estimated number of employees in each office building. **The applicant has provided all of the information with the exception of an estimate of the number of employees in each office building. Since the end users have not been identified, the applicant cannot provide the number of employees for each building.**
2. A proposed development schedule and a listing of proposed uses shall be provided. **The narrative states that initial development is expected to be completed by 2025, though as it is a phased development the entire site development will not be complete.**

The subject property falls within the **Gateway Corridors Overlay District (GCOD, [17.420](#))** which provides supplemental design standards for non-residential property development.

**[17.380.050](#) submission requirements for a rezoning request have been met.**

### **Development Support and Constraints / Departmental Comments**

#### **Hall County Environmental Health**

An email dated January 23, 2023 from Emily McGahee states “Connection to public sewer required. Any abandoned well shall be properly closed as per Water Well Standards Act. Any abandoned septic tank shall be pumped by a State certified pumper/hauler and crushed/filled.”

#### **Hall County Fire Marshal**

An email dated January 24, 2023 John Hornick, NPQ Fire Inspector 1, Plans Review Lieutenant states, “Hall County Fire Marshal concept plan comments for 3675 Thompson Bridge Rd.

- 1) Lot 1-5 will require an underground water distribution line with fire hydrant(s) installed to meet the 400 foot hose lay distance requirements to each building as the fire truck travels.
- 2) Lot 1-5 dead end turnarounds greater than 150’ will require an approved fire apparatus turnaround.
- 3) Any building requiring a fire protection system will be required to install a fire service vault for each building, see Gainesville Water fire service vault detail.
- 4) Fire access lane around building on lot 5 will require an approved asphalt or concrete surface, no gravel or turf surfaced fire lane will be accepted.
- 5) Lot 1-5 Aerial fire apparatus access roads shall have a minimum unobstructed width of 26 ft. exclusive of shoulders, in the immediate vicinity of the building or portion thereof.”

#### **Hall County Public Works and Utilities**

In a memo dated January 23, 2023 from Srikanth Yamala, Director of Public Works and Utilities, provided the following comments:

##### **Engineering:**

This site may require a stormwater management report, should the site plan indicate the proposed development meets stormwater thresholds for impervious surface and/or disturbed acreage.

##### **Traffic:**

Permit from GDOT will be required from driveway connection. Driveways on Southers will require widening. Check distance between proposed driveways.

##### **Utilities**

Gainesville sewer district.

#### **Georgia Department of Transportation**

In an email dated January 19, 2023, Parker Niebauer, D1TO Traffic Operations Supervisor, confirmed that this project will require GDOT coordination.

#### **➤ Excerpts from the minutes of the February 6, 2023 meeting**

##### **Applicant’s Presentation:**

**Randi Doveton, Planning Director**, presented a summary of the request.

**Brian Rochester, 425 Oak Street, Gainesville**, presented the request. The applicant stated that the building off Price Road could be utilized as retail. He pointed out that there is a 25 foot buffer along the property against residential properties and that the development is pushed closer to Thompson Bridge Road. The applicant stated that there will be un-spilled lighting in the parking lots. The applicant went over the renderings and signage for the development. The applicant went over the proffered conditions: 1. No change; 2. No change; 3. No change; 4. The applicant shall obtain a commercial driveway permit, for construction of the entrance at SR 60, from the Georgia Department of Transportation prior to

issuance of a CO for buildings on lots 2 & 3. The applicant shall obtain a commercial driveway permit, for construction of the entrance at SR 136, from the Georgia Department of Transportation prior to issuance of the final CO for the last building on the campus; 5. No change; 6. No change; 7. Signage shall be as amended on 2-2-2023 and approved on 2-6-2023 and shall require building permits. Minor changes can be approved by the Planning Director provided there is no increase in the square footage of the sign types; 8. Allow basic architectural theme and materials as shown on attached renderings.

***Rebuttal***

The applicant stated that not all of the land will be developed, there will be plenty of green space. The applicant stated that there will be an Interstate Control Evaluation for each proposed improvements on state routes.

**Public Forum:**

**Danny Mackey, 2101 Jonquil Court, Canton**, spoke in favor. Spoke about the material consistency.

**Rudy Lonergan, 743 Spring Street, Gainesville**, spoke in favor. Spoke about the lighting, landscaping, and material.

**Augie DeAugustine, 3743 Dove Cove Circle, Gainesville**, spoke in favor. Spoke about how favorable it is to seniors to have medical care close. Concerns were traffic.

**Margaret McGlaun, 3881 Village View Drive, Gainesville**, spoke in opposition. Concerns were the environment.

**Planning Commission Comments:**

No comments.

**Motion: A motion to approve, with conditions was made by Mr. Hunt and seconded by Ms. Pilcher.**

**Vote: 5-0**

**Conditions:**

1. The site shall be developed in accordance with the conceptual master plan dated 12/15/2022 and narrative dated 2-6-23 submitted as part of this application. Minor changes can be approved by the Planning Director provided there is no increase in the square footage of or number of buildings, there are no reductions in buffers, no changes in the structural design and materials, and the changes do not create the need for a variance in Hall County development standards.
2. The standards of the Gateway Corridors Overlay District (GCOD, [17.420](#)) shall apply to the development. No variances to these standards are granted, except those expressly granted by the Planning Commission and listed herein.
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- construction of the entrance at SR 136, from the Georgia Department of Transportation prior to issuance of the final CO for the last building on the campus.
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  8. Allow basic architectural theme and materials as shown on attached renderings including phenolic siding.
  9. TVO roof systems shall be allowed as an approved roofing material.