

Project Narrative for RL Cold PID

LOCATION – 3835 & 3875 Cornelia Highway (GA SR 365), Lula, GA 30554

ACREAGE – 80.03 acres +/- in Land Lot 7 of the 15th District, Hall County

APPLICANT – Rochester | DCCM on behalf of RL Cold

Summary

The accompanying application seeks zoning district amendment from PID (with conditions of 2021) to PID (with conditions of 2024), and minor design variances related to the GCOD for partially developed property on Cornelia Highway (GA SR 365) in north Hall County. The Property is located on the north side of SR 365, a four-lane divided median highway, approximately 2,300 linear feet (LF) west of the intersection of Cornelia Highway (SR 365) and Cagle Road. Growth in this corridor from initial zoning approval argues strongly in favor of efficient land use to maximize utility and beneficial economic impact to the County for the entire site.

This application also seeks concurrent preliminary plat approval to allow the Owner the option of:

- (1) recombining the two existing parcels into a common parcel, or
- (2) the option to subdivide the Property into two tracts of new configuration, which may be held under common or separate ownership(s). Approval of the preliminary plat will not require a specific action.

The intent is to expand the first phase cold storage facility on the eastern portion of the Property (existing Tract 1) and to develop a similar building for similar uses on the western portion of the Property (future Tract 2). This narrative proposes a unified set of standards for both Tracts. The location and proposed use is consistent with the Hall County Comprehensive Plan's designation as an "Employment Corridor" and appropriate for Hall County's Planned Industrial District (PID) with conditions. Completion of development is anticipated by 2027.



Property Description

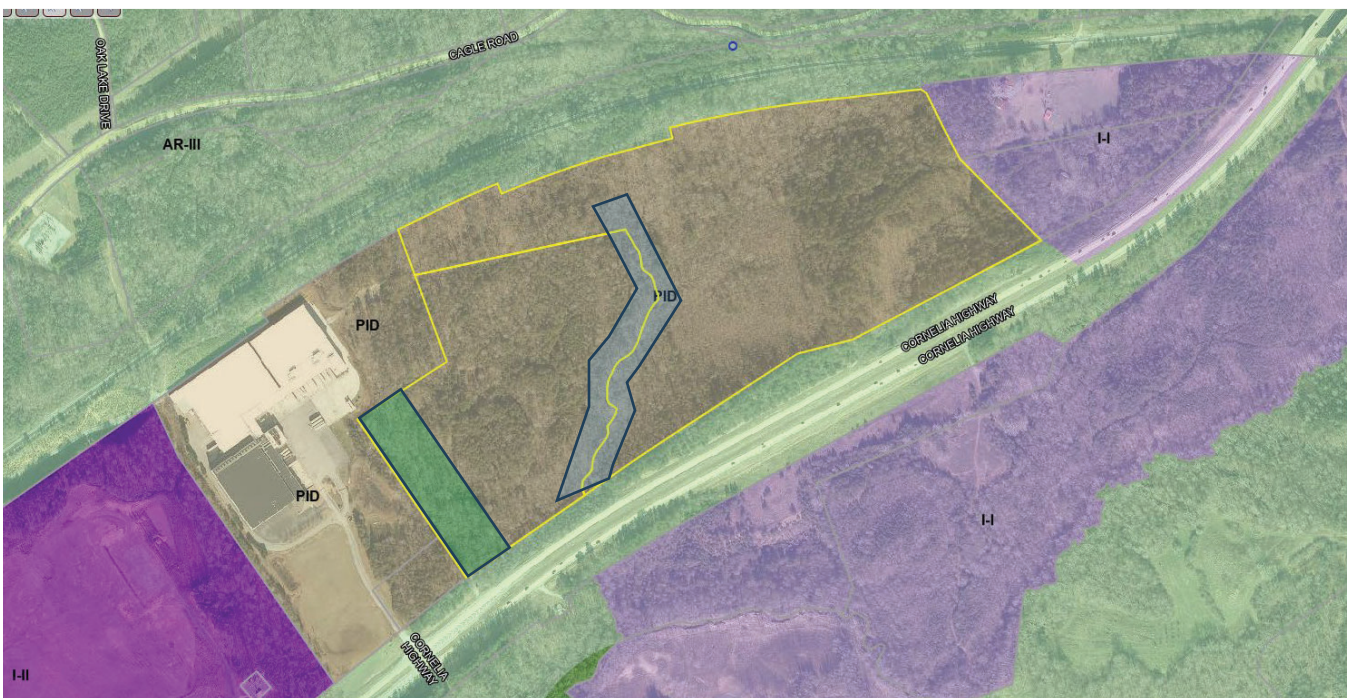
The Property has approximately 3,000 LF of frontage along Cornelia Highway (SR 365) and 2,500 LF along the railroad right-of-way. Only two entrances are planned from the GA 365 frontage and no rail crossings are planned. Either or both Tracts might be served by rail spur in the future, if permitted by Norfolk-Southern.

The Property is roughly rectangular in shape with a maximum depth of 1,450 LF and maximum width of 3,000 LF. It is roughly bisected by a stream into two large Tracts suited for industrial development. After zoning approval in 2021 the eastern portion of the Property has been cleared, graded, and developed with infrastructure. The large cold storage/distribution building for Tract 1 is under construction. Tract 2 is undeveloped and contains regrowth non-climax mixed hardwood forest typical for the area. Approval of this request would allow construction of an expansion to the building on Tract 1 and construction of another large cold storage warehouse (237,226 SF +/- freezer storage area and dock). GDOT gave approval for private commercial access to Tract 1. Tract 2 will be similarly accessed by private commercial access to be permitted through GDOT.

Domestic water is provided by the City of Gainesville and is located in the Cornelia Highway (SR 365) right-of-way and already serves Tract 1. Tract 2 will be served by Gainesville water and an on-site sewage management system or Hall County sewer, if accessible. All other dry utilities are located within a reasonable distance for service extensions. A stream is located midway through the Property. It commences flow near the railroad and flows south under Cornelia Highway (SR 365). Anticipated impacts to the stream will be limited to approximately 33 LF within the SR 365 right-of-way to accommodate extension of the existing concrete culvert. This extension is needed to avoid constructing a retaining wall in the right-of-way to accommodate site grading.

Along Tract 2's boundary with Tract 1 there is a planned 100' undisturbed buffer and 150' impervious setback on both sides of the meandering stream consistent with 17.225.040 A. This means 200 feet width along the stream corridor will remain undisturbed and 300 feet width will have no parking lots, buildings, or walls. Approximately 3.5 acres along the west boundary of Tract 2 will not be developed in the first phase of development of Tract 2 but may be developed in the future. There are no known physical impediments that would prevent the successful development of both Tracts for the uses proposed.

Aerial View with Zoning



Adjacencies

The property is bordered to the southwest by property used for cold storage by Americold Logistics owned by Lanier Freezer, LLC at 3801 Cornelia Highway. That site is zoned PID with conditions and is already used for a cold storage facility. Along its western and northern sides, the subject property adjoins Norfolk-Southern railroad right-of-way which is generally 300 or more feet wide. The railroad in this portion of Hall County is still zoned AR-III, which is a legacy district that does not reflect the rapidly changing character of the GA 365 corridor.

The eastern property line borders approximately 16 acres of property granted rezoning approval by the Hall County Board of Commissioners on September 10, 2024, from AR-III to Light Industrial (4518 and 4520 Cagle Road). The southeastern property line adjoins the public right-of-way for GA SR 365 which varies from 300 to 400 or more feet in vicinity of the property. Beyond the right-of-way, approximately 133 acres of privately owned property is zoned Light Industrial (I-I). With existing PID uses to the west, recently approved I-I zoning to the east and large rights-of-way for rail and highway to the east and west, there is no nearby property actually used for residential purposes for the developments to potentially impact.

Access

Truck and passenger vehicle access to Tracts 1 and 2 will be only from Cornelia Highway (SR 365), which has been approved for Tract 1 by GDOT and is subject to GDOT approval for Tract 2. Because of the stream channel and natural topography, the existing right in/right out driveway serving Tract 1 cannot provide joint access to Tract 2 without adverse environmental impact or at unreasonable cost.

Tract 2 has more than 650 feet of frontage and will be served via a new right in/right out driveway to serve the building site. There will be no roadway connections between Tracts 1 and 2 and no roadway connections from either Tract will be made to adjacent properties. No public roads will be created. In the future either or both tracts may make use of freight rail spur access provided by Norfolk-Southern via rail dock(s).

Comprehensive Plan Consistency

The 2022 Comprehensive Plan for Hall County depicts the project as within the GA 365 “Employment Corridor” of the Future Land Use Map. One of its goals is to “[create] employment opportunities where a location benefits from interstate access or supports industrial-focused development patterns.” It emphasizes interstate and rail access, which both Tracts have. The primary future land uses noted for “Employment Corridor” are:

- Industrial Uses, business parks, technology based operations.

The project is consistent with the Goals, Policies and Objectives of the Comprehensive Plan and is not known or believed to conflict with any of its provisions.

The Draft 2024 Update to the Comprehensive Plan is under review by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. Relative to the 2022 Comprehensive Plan, the GA 365 Corridor is even more heavily referenced in the Update for industrial development near the Inland Port.

GDOT ICE Study

It is anticipated that GDOT will require a standard ICE Study in conjunction with a driveway permit to access the site. If this is required, it will be provided to Hall County.

Proposed Uses

Each tract may contain a variety of uses over time consistent with those allowed in the Light Industrial (I-I) district and/or the Gateway Corridor Overlay District and the Project Dimensional Standards outlined below. Uses will be confined to the area in the site plan shown for grading, development of permanent parking lots and construction of buildings.

Uses to be specifically included:

- Cold storage warehousing, wholesaling, transfer and distribution, including offices
- Repacking, repackaging and labeling of frozen goods, including animal products, but no cooking or other reprocessing
- One manager’s office/apartment per Tract to support the primary uses
- Outdoor storage
- Accessory uses

Otherwise permitted uses allowed by right in the Light Industrial (I-I) district that will be specifically excluded include:

- Asphalt emulsion (water based) plants
- Astrologers, clairvoyants, fortune tellers, palmists, phrenologists and related occupations
- Automobile repair garages
- Bus stations
- Churches
- Drive-In theaters
- Hotels, motels or tourist courts
- Laboratories
- Junk yards
- Radio and television studios
- Residential subdivisions
- Service stations
- Family day care home
- Group day care home

The following, otherwise allowed Conditional uses of the Gateway Corridor District, are not being requested and are not approved:

- Self-storage warehouse
- Vehicle sales lots, new or used
- Automobile repair and maintenance
- Commercial outdoor recreation
- Car wash

Prohibited Uses in the Gateway Corridor District will also be prohibited within the RL Cold PID. These are:

- Adult establishments
- Junk yards
- Billboard signs

Hours of Operation

Operations may occur on a 24/7 basis.

Project Dimensional Standards

RL Cold PID Development Standards

For reference the 2021 zoning approval was for 331,872 square feet cold storage warehouse facility (including warehouse and office space) with guard shack, loading docks, 110 +/- parking spaces, 161 +/- truck trailer parking spaces (variance) and associated site improvements, subject to zoning conditions on Tract 1 only. At time of initial zoning in 2021 Tract 2 was believed to contain substantial wetlands which were subsequently determined not to be as extensive or limiting as first assumed.

	Comparison District Light Industrial (I-I)	PID 2021	PID 2024	
			Tract 1	Tract 2
			Developed site with building under construction	New facility
Minimum Lot Area	15,000 sf	15,000 sf	20 ac	20 acres
Minimum Lot Frontage	100'	500'	500'	500'
Front S/B from SR 365 ROW	50'	50'	50'	50'
Side S/B: I-I and I-II	20' / 30'	20'	50'	20'
Rear S/B: I-I and I-II	20' / 30'	20'	20'	20'
Width of Transitional Buffer to Residential Zoned Property	25-50'	None	N/A	N/A
Maximum Height / # of floors	75' / 3	56' Ave 65' Max	56' Ave 65' Max	56' Ave 65' Max
Maximum Floor Area (SF) including expansions		331,872	396,060*	240,000*
Parking Ratio	Per code	2021 variance	Per 2024 GCOD variance as part of PID	

**These totals represent a net increase of 304,188 above the original approval of 331,872, for a total of 636,060.*

Uses and Project Timeline

Tract 1 has been cleared and construction of the originally planned building is underway. An expansion of the building on Tract 1 is in design for a total area not to exceed 396,060 SF. Tract 2 will be developed in similar manner and improvements will include a building planned for initial construction that will be built in a single phase not to exceed 240,000 SF of building footprint.

If economic conditions warrant use of either or both Tracts for other than cold storage use, the land, building(s) and related improvements may be used for general warehousing, storage, and distribution of goods, and for tractor trailer parking and shipping container storage. If the site is to be used for short- or long-term storage of shipping containers, the storage use will be neatly organized with high security standards in place. Security fencing with opaque slats would be installed along storage areas which face the perimeter.

North Oconee Reservoir Watershed Protection District

The Property is located within the North Oconee Reservoir Watershed Protection District and within seven (7) miles of the water supply intake. Required perennial stream buffers, where applicable, have been increased in the accompanying site plan per Chapter 17.25.040.A. Consistent with Hall County practice the impervious restriction described in Chapter 17.25.040.C.1 is monitored on the basis of the overall watershed and not for individual sites.

Gateway Corridor Overlay District

The property lies within the Hall County Gateway Corridor Overlay District. The GCOD portion of the Hall County UDC details eleven pages of requirements. Specific variances to the GCOD's requirements within the RL Cold PID Tracts are limited only to the following (in sequence as they occur in the UDC):

Chapter 17.420.050 D. 4. b. - Rooftop mechanical equipment, including HVAC and utility equipment, greater than four (4) feet in height and within 150 feet of a public road right-of-way, and visible above a horizontal sightline from the roadway, if any, shall be screened from adjacent streets, sidewalks, residential, public and institutional uses. Screening shall consist of parapet walls or an opaque enclosure around the equipment that is of the same color as of one of the materials used on the primary facade of the principal structure. Use of the same material on the roof as on the primary façade shall not be required.

Chapter 17.420.050 D. 4. d – Outdoor storage shall be allowed on all parking lots and graded/gravel (GAB) portions of the site, provided adequate room is maintained for typical operating speeds of fire department equipment within an industrial site. Even though no transitional buffer is required, to the extent any storage area is within 150 feet from Cornelia Highway (SR 365), it shall be screened by augmenting post-site development natural vegetation with two rows of staggered evergreen shrub and tree materials, with an installation height of no less than 6', or other equivalent arrangement approved by the Director as referenced in Chapter 17.420.05.C.3.

Chapter 17.420.050 E. b - The minimum and maximum number of parking spaces for passenger vehicles, truck tractors, and trailers for each Tract shall be as determined to be necessary by the Owner. The extent and use of parking areas within each Tract devoted to parking and the effective ratio of parking spaces per 1,000 square feet or other measure of building space may vary over time.

Chapter 17.420.050 G. – The location and topography of the stream and configuration of the parcels and adjoining are site-specific constraints that render the Property unfeasible for interparcel access, joint driveways, cross access drives and access easement. None shall be required.

Chapter 17.420.050 H. 1. b – Because of the unique nature of modern cold storage facilities, including but not limited to the need to accommodate automated storage and retrieval systems the number of "stories" within portions of each building may range from one (1) to five (5) stories, provided the average height of buildings on each Tract does not exceed 56 feet and the maximum height for any building component (e.g., elevators, etc.) does not exceed 65 feet.

Chapter 17.420.050 H. 2. c – Allowable building materials shall include expanding/contracting tilt-up insulated panels that expand/contract with heating/cooling of the structure. These panels shall be allowed without facing block, brick, stucco or other material that would limit wall performance.

Chapter 17.420.050 H. 3 – Allowable roof materials shall include TPO membrane roofing.

Chapter 17.420.050. E. 3 – Paving materials for parking (storage) areas shall include graded aggregate base (GAB). All driveways located within existing rights-of-way shall be paved with asphalt or concrete.