

HALL COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
RECOMMENDATION REPORT

Applicant Valiant Services c/o David Elder

Request (A) **Rezone** | from Residential 1 (R-1) & Light Industrial (I-1) to Light Industrial (I-1)

Proposed Use Indoor/outdoor storage and warehousing

Size 4.73± acres

Zoning **Current:** Residential 1 (R-1) & Light Industrial (I-1)
Proposed: Light Industrial (I-1)

Location **1119 & 1137 West Ridge Road** | Tax Parcels 00054 001040B (pt) & 001040 (pt)

Commission District Four

Planning Commission Date September 2, 2025

Staff Recommendation **(A) Approval, with conditions**, as the proposed use is consistent with the “Employment Nodes & Corridors” future land use classification within the Comprehensive Plan

Record Number..... HZON25-0034

Planning Commission Recommendation **Approval**, with conditions

Vote: 4-0 (Hunt absent)

Planning Commission Conditions:

1. The property shall be developed in accordance with the site plan and narrative dated July 22, 2025, modified as necessary for compliance with conditions herein and development standards enforced at the time of site plan approval.
2. No variances or development exceptions are granted as part of this request that are not explicitly granted by board approval. The development shall be compliant with the Unified Development Code of Hall County, as well as any state regulations or other agencies or reviewing departments including Hall County Engineering for driveway placement and compliance.

3. All conditions of zoning shall be made as part of any plats or construction plans created for the property.
4. In Phase 1, the outdoor storage area shall be screened by a planted landscape strip located parallel to West Ridge Road. The two end caps of the proposed buildings facing West Ridge Drive shall feature brick or stone facades. Final review and approval shall be subject to the Director of Planning and Zoning, or their designee.
5. In Phase 2, all end caps of the proposed buildings facing West Ridge Drive shall have brick or stone facades, including the building to be located where outdoor storage is designated in Phase 1.
6. Prior to the request being heard by the Board of Commissioners, the applicant shall revise the site plan to address the Planning Commission's recommended conditions. The revised site plan shall be submitted for review to the Director of Planning and Zoning, or their designee.

Excerpts from the minutes of the September 2, 2025 meeting

Applicant's Presentation:

Katie Greenway, Planning and Zoning Administrator, presented a summary of the request. presented the request.

David Elder, 123 Bear Creek Lane, presented the request. The applicant has submitted two concurrent requests as part of a proposed industrial development: (A) to rezone a 4.73± acre tract from Residential 1 (R-1) & Light Industrial (I-1) to Light Industrial (I-1) and (B) a variance to eliminate the 50 foot transitional buffer required between residentially-zoned property and the proposed development, as required in the Gateway Corridor Overlay District (GCOD) standards.

Public Forum:

There were no comments in support or opposition.

Planning Commission Comments:

Chairman Braswell began by requesting that the applicant, Mr. Elder, identify the location of the requested buffer variance. Mr. Elder explained that the buffer is located adjacent to Residential 1 (R-1) zoning. Chairman Braswell then asked for a time frame for Phase Two of the project, which does not include outdoor storage and therefore would not require the buffer. Mr. Elder responded that the second phase would likely not be considered for at least two years.

Chairman Braswell asked Director Garmon whether it would be possible to obtain a land disturbance permit (LDP) for both phases of the project. Director Garmon stated that she would need to confirm with the Engineering and Building Inspections departments, but from a Planning perspective, it would be acceptable to phase the development.

Chairman Braswell then inquired about the dimensions of the proposed buildings and the overall square footage. He and Mr. Elder recalculated the square footage during the meeting, and Mr. Elder stated that he would verify the numbers and provide building dimensions prior to the Board of Commissioners (BOC) meeting.

Chairman Braswell also asked for clarification regarding the narrative's mention of combining 13 remaining parcels zoned R-1. Mr. Elder explained that the lots are very small and that the remaining tracts under his client's ownership lack sufficient road frontage. Therefore, they intend to combine those tracts and address them in the future.

Finally, Chairman Braswell asked whether the applicant would be comfortable using brick or stone or a combination of both on the building facades facing West Ridge Road. Mr. Elder confirmed.

A

Motion: A motion to approve, with conditions was made by André Castleberry and seconded by Frank Sosebee. Vote: 4-0 (Hunt absent)

B

Motion: A motion to approve, with conditions was made by André Castleberry and seconded by Frank Sosebee. Vote: (Hunt absent)

(A) & (B) Conditions:

1. The property shall be developed in accordance with the site plan and narrative dated July 22, 2025, modified as necessary for compliance with conditions herein and development standards enforced at the time of site plan approval.
2. No variances or development exceptions are granted as part of this request that are not explicitly granted by board approval. The development shall be compliant with the Unified Development Code of Hall County, as well as any state regulations or other agencies or reviewing departments including Hall County Engineering for driveway placement and compliance.
3. All conditions of zoning shall be made as part of any plats or construction plans created for the property.
4. In Phase 1, the outdoor storage area shall be screened by a planted landscape strip located parallel to West Ridge Road. The two end caps of the proposed buildings facing West Ridge Drive shall feature brick or stone facades. Final review and approval shall be subject to the Director of Planning and Zoning, or their designee.
5. In Phase 2, all end caps of the proposed buildings facing West Ridge Drive shall have brick or stone facades, including the building to be located where outdoor storage is designated in Phase 1.
6. Prior to the request being heard by the Board of Commissioners, the applicant shall revise the site plan to address the Planning Commission's recommended conditions. The revised

site plan shall be submitted for review to the Director of Planning and Zoning, or their designee.

(A) Staff recommends APPROVAL of the applicant's request with the following conditions:

1. The property shall be developed in accordance with the site plan and narrative dated July 22, 2025, modified as necessary for compliance with conditions herein and development standards enforced at the time of site plan approval.
2. No variances or development exceptions are granted as part of this request that are not explicitly granted by board approval. The development shall be compliant with the Unified Development Code of Hall County, as well as any state regulations or other agencies or reviewing departments including Hall County Engineering for driveway placement and compliance.
3. All conditions of zoning shall be made as part of any plats or construction plans created for the property.

(B) Staff recommends DENIAL of the applicant's request.

Summary Analysis

The applicant has submitted two concurrent requests as part of a proposed industrial development: (A) to rezone a 4.73± acre tract from Residential 1 (R-1) & Light Industrial (I-1) to Light Industrial (I-1) and (B) a variance to eliminate the 50 foot transitional buffer required between residentially-zoned property and the proposed development, as required in the Gateway Corridor Overlay District (GCOD) standards.

The surrounding properties are zoned and developed as outlined below:

North:	Highway Business (H-B): Developed with an 8,060 square foot warehouse storage building, & Residential 1 (R-1): Developed with single-family homes
East:	Residential 1 (R-1): Developed with single-family homes, & Light Industrial (I-1): Developed with a 6,000 square foot storage building
South:	Residential 1 (R-1): Developed with single-family homes, & Light Industrial (I-1): Developed with 12,800 square feet of maintenance storage building
West:	Residential 1 (R-1): Developed with single-family homes, & Light Industrial (I-1): Developed with various industrial uses including repair garage and storage

Per the submitted narrative and site plan, the applicant is requesting to rezone a new, proposed tract consisting of a portion of 1119 and 1137 West Ridge Road from Residential 1 (R-1) and Light Industrial (I-1) to I-1. The applicant states that the remnant parcel will remain zoned residential and be combined with several adjacent parcels located along Marlow Drive to serve as road frontage to the property.

Per the submitted narrative, the property is currently used for outdoor storage. The proposed development would consist of two phases. Phase one would consist of constructing 28 indoor storage units along the exterior boundaries of the proposed tract with the central area being utilized for outdoor storage. Phase two would replace the outdoor storage area with an additional 8 indoor storage units. No elevations were provided.

Per the submitted site plan, a stormwater detention facility is proposed on the south side of the development with 20 foot rear and side yard setbacks being maintained and a 50 foot front yard setback. A 50 foot buffer is required between any industrial development with outdoor activity and residentially-zoned property; however, the applicant requests that the development be exempt from the requirement. Per the submitted narrative, the applicant states that outdoor storage is an existing use that will only remain until the second phase of the project is constructed. The application states that outdoor storage will be in the center of the property and the buildings proposed for the first phase will serve as screening of the outdoor storage; once the second phase is constructed, this storage area will be eliminated.

Per the site plan, two access points are proposed; one would be aligned with Stallworth Street and the other slightly south of that point.

Water and sewer service will be provided by the City of Gainesville Department of Water Resources as confirmed in an email dated May 12, 2025. This email states that in order for the development to connect to public sewer, an annexation agreement will be required as the properties are not currently contiguous with the city limits of Gainesville. The fully executed agreement would be required prior to approval of any land development permits.

Based on the future land use plan, staff finds the rezoning request is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan's future land use classification of Employment Nodes & Corridors. The intent of this future land use designation is for new development along major road corridors and intersections to consist of industrial and/or office uses housed in either formalized campuses or along major road corridors that have existing or future access to water and sewer. These areas may also include higher density residential uses, where appropriate. Site designs should use the quality development principals to the fullest extent possible.

(A) Zoning Analysis – Rezone

When considering a zoning amendment to the zoning maps, the Planning Commission must study the need and justification for the change based on a determination of the facts applicable to the particular case, and the following general lines of inquiry must be considered:

- a. Whether the zoning proposal will permit a use that is suitable in view of the use, development and zoning of adjacent and nearby property; **The proposed Light Industrial (I-1) zoning district and proposed use is consistent with the use, development, and zoning of adjacent and nearby properties.**
- b. Whether the zoning proposal will adversely affect the existing use or usability of adjacent or nearby property; **It is not anticipated that the use would adversely affect adjacent or nearby property provided required buffers are maintained.**

- c. Whether the property to be affected by the zoning proposal has a reasonable economic use as currently zoned; **The property has reasonable economic use as currently zoned.**
- d. Whether the zoning proposal will result in a use which will or could cause an excessive or burdensome use of existing streets, transportation facilities, utilities, schools, police protection, fire protection, public health facilities or emergency medical service; ; **The proposed rezoning is not expected to cause an excessive or burdensome use of the existing streets, transportation facilities, utilities, schools, police protection, fire protection, public facilities, or emergency medical service.**
- e. Whether the zoning proposal is in conformity with the policy and intent of the future land use plan for the physical development of the area; **The proposed use is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Employment Nodes & Corridors future land use designation.**
- f. The extent to which property values are diminished by the existing zoning restrictions; **Staff is unable to determine the extent to which property values are affected by the existing zoning restrictions.**
- g. 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 values 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.**
- h. 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.**
- i. The length of time the property has been vacant as zoned considered in the context of land development in the area in the vicinity of the property; **According to GIS imagery, 1119 West Ridge Road appears to have been utilized for a variety of storage over the past 25 years. Between 2015 and 2017 all previous structures on the property were removed, and a demolition permit was issued for a single-family home in 2017. A commercial building occupied 1137 West Ridge Road until 2022 when a demolition permit was obtained to remove the structure due to fire damage.**
- j. 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; **Staff is not aware of any changing conditions affecting the use or development of the property.**
- k. Whether the change would create an isolated district unrelated to the surrounding districts; **The proposed zoning of Light Industrial (I-1) would not create an isolated district as other surrounding properties are also zoned I-1.**

- l. Whether the present zoning district boundaries are illogically drawn in relation to existing conditions in the area; **There is no evidence that the present zoning district boundaries are illogically drawn.**
- m. 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 not out of scale with the needs of the county as a whole.**
- n. Whether it is impossible to find adequate sites for the proposed use in districts permitting such use and already appropriately zoned; **There are other properties within the County that support light industrial uses based on the Future Land Use Map; however, the development as proposed requires rezoning approval by the Board of Commissioners.**
- o. Whether the need for rezoning could be handled instead by a variance request to the Planning Commission; **The request could not be handled alternatively as a variance.**
- p. 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 are no anticipated ecological or pollution impacts resulting from any modification to the land if the request is granted.**
- q. 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.**

(B) Zoning Analysis – Variance to table 8.2.3

The Planning Commission may grant variances in individual cases of unnecessary hardship upon a finding of the board that:

- 1. There are extraordinary and exceptional conditions pertaining to the particular lot in question because of its size, shape, or topography (the hardship must relate to the physical character of the lot and not to a personal or economic hardship); **No, there are no extraordinary or exceptional conditions pertaining to the physical character of the lot to prevent the project design from meeting development standards.**
- 2. The application of the requirements of this UDC to this particular piece of property would create an unusual hardship; **No evidence has been provided that an unusual hardship exists to prevent the development from complying with this requirements.**
- 3. Such conditions are peculiar to the property involved and are not common to other properties in the neighborhood; **There are no conditions peculiar to the property involved that are not common to other properties in the neighborhood.**
- 4. Such conditions are not the result of any actions of the property owner; **The elimination of the required buffer is a direct request of the property owner.**

5. Relief, if granted, would not cause substantial detriment to the public good or impair the purposes and intent of this UDC; provided, however, that no variance may be granted for a use of land or building or structure that is prohibited by this UDC or for a Conditional Use Permit which has been denied by the Planning Commission. **Relief, if granted, will not impair the purposes and intent of the Unified Development Code of Hall County.**

11.2.6.E - Submission requirements

1. Any person or persons requesting a change in the official zoning map or use subject to approval of the County Commission must file an application with a plat or map of the property attached thereto, together with payment of such fees set forth in this Sec 11.2. to cover administrative and advertising costs, in the Planning and Zoning Department office. Such person or persons or their authorized agent must appear in person at the public hearing held to consider the district change. **The proposal meets the requirement. The applicant has paid the appropriate fees and understands that someone must be present at both the Hall County Planning Commission meeting and the voting meeting of the Hall County Board of Commissioners.**
2. All applications for a change of zoning classification or use subject to approval of the County Commission must include:
 - a. A narrative statement identifying the existing and proposed use of the property and addressing each of the criteria set forth in this Sec. 11.2. **The proposal provides a narrative outlining the intent of the development; however, the applicant has not prepared a response to each of the criteria listed in 11.2.6.E.2.**
 - b. A site plan drawn to scale designating the area covered by the application and identifying existing and proposed buildings and uses, adjacent existing land uses, zoning on contiguous parcels, including those across an abutting public right-of-way, and any other significant site improvements proposed to accommodate the proposed use or buffer adjacent uses, etc., or a plat of the subject property where no specific land use is proposed. In cases where only a plat or map is provided and no land use is proposed, the Planning Commission and County Commission may evaluate the application based on the most intense possible land use permitted in the proposed district. **The proposal meets the requirement.**
 - c. For any application for a slow rate land treatment system as defined in 7.6.9.D.1, additional requirements apply. **This standard is not applicable to the applicant's request**
 - d. For any application proposing the development of 100 or more residential dwelling units, a traffic impact study must be submitted prior to consideration of the application by the County Commission. At the applicant's expense, the traffic impact study must be prepared by a professional engineer in accordance with requirements established by the Hall County Engineering Department. The Engineering Department must review the traffic impact study and forward any comments to the County Commission. **This standard is not applicable to the applicant's request.**

Development Support and Constraints

Hall County Environmental Health

In an email dated August 1, 2025, Emily McGahee stated, "No comment. Public sewer."

Georgia Department of Transportation

In an email dated July 28, 2025, Nakia Nembhard, GDOT Civil Engineer 3, stated that GDOT coordination is not required.

Hall County Public Works and Utilities

In a memo dated August 1, 2025, Bill Nash, 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 surfaces and/or disturbed acreage. Show stream buffer and impervious setback from wrested vegetation not centerline of stream.

Traffic:

No comment

Utilities:

Gainesville sewer service area. Infrastructure is onsite

Hall County Fire Marshal

In an email dated July 25, 2025, John Hornick, NPQ Fire Service Plans Examiner 1, stated, "If approved the site development plan may require modifications during the development review process."