

## **Narrative in Support of Special Use Application for Flowery Branch Winery and Vineyard**

Submitted to the Hall County Board of Commissioners

### **Introduction**

Flowery Branch Winery and Vineyard respectfully requests approval from the Hall County Board of Commissioners for special use of the property as an Agri-Entertainment property. This change will allow our family-owned winery to responsibly host a limited number of special events—such as outdoor weddings, themed Sunday festivals featuring local businesses, private office parties, and reception gatherings, and other gatherings—in a way that enhances both the community experience and the local economy.

Our goal is to expand opportunities for agritourism and community engagement while maintaining the peace, safety, and rural charm of the surrounding area. Situated on ten scenic acres, Flowery Branch Winery and Vineyard is a family-run farm winery rooted in sustainable agriculture, responsible land stewardship, and helping further Georgia's rapidly growing wine industry.

### **Background**

Flowery Branch Winery and Vineyard officially opened its tasting room in February of 2025 year after having had vines in the ground since approximately 2017. The Walton family has invested years of preparation, cultivation, and investment in the farm. From the beginning, our goal has been to produce high-quality, locally sourced wines while entertaining the community through fun and family friendly activities. We take pride in having created a welcoming, community-centered environment in which to ultimately enjoy our farm.

The large majority of wine we sell is made from grapes grown directly on the property. We make sure to mention the fact most of what is sampled reflects the unique flavor of the Flowery Branch soil, water, and sun. Our customer are generally interested in having a product that is 'local' and honestly representative of wine from the area and we are proud to provide that. Our vineyard operations are supported by a loyal group of volunteers who assist with harvests each year—many returning annually to participate and share in the sense of community the winery fosters. Our harvests are party for all those who participate!

Currently zoned Agricultural (AR-1), our property is limited in what it can offer regarding the quantity and quality of entertainment we can offer to the community without a special use permit. Most vineyards, particularly those with significant vineyards such as ours, in general provide additional forms of entertainment that also help generate revenue and exposure from the enjoyment people experience from the vineyard environment. Granting a special use to the property to allow for event hosting will allow us to diversify responsibly,

offering community-oriented events that align naturally with our mission of promoting local agriculture and fellowship, and entertainment to the community.

### **Proposed Event Types**

Upon approval of the AG-ENT special use, Flowery Branch Winery and Vineyard intends to host a limited number of well-managed events that will highlight Hall County's agricultural character and heritage past and present. These events would possibly include:

- **Outdoor Vineyard Weddings:** Scenic ceremonies and receptions held in designated vineyard areas or in a tent offering guests a peaceful, natural setting. Events will conclude at reasonable hours (no later than 9 p.m.), with music and activities conducted in compliance with local sound ordinances and guidelines. Maximum attendance would be capped at 50 cars / 100 guests.
- **Themed Sunday 'Festivals'** Featuring local small businesses: Community-focused festival / gathering typically hosted every couple of months, lasting approximately four hours on Sunday afternoons. Each 'festival' may showcase local artisans, food vendors, and small businesses, encouraging local commerce and tourism while maintaining a relaxed and family-friendly environment.
- **Private Office Parties and Corporate Events:** Generally small, professional gatherings for local businesses seeking an inviting indoor or outdoor setting for team-building or appreciation events.
- **Private Receptions and Celebrations:** Occasional receptions, anniversary parties, birthday parties, and small community celebrations.
- **Other events and organizations:** Local organizations that can use the space could use the property as needed for promotional events. For example, a local animal adoption group that wants to host an animal adoption event on the premises.
- All of the above would be limited in scale and duration and managed with attention to noise, parking, and safety.

### **Variances Requested**

1. Event Venue Setback Variance (Unified Development Code Section 7.7.3.B.3.)
  - a. A reduction in the required setback from 300 feet to 243.54 feet from any property line.
2. Parking Area Setback Variance (Unified Development Code Section 7.7.3.B.5.)
  - a. A reduction in the required setback from 200 feet to 34.10 feet from any property line.

### **Responsible Event Management**

Flowery Branch Winery and Vineyard places the highest importance on responsible event management and community consideration. We have plans in place to ensure that parking is managed appropriately and noise guidelines are followed. We would ensure that any event is handled safely, responsibly, and professionally.

### **Parking and Traffic**

Our property includes two designated parking lots: a main parking lot used daily for regular winery operations and a separate overflow parking lot to accommodate additional vehicles for special events (if needed). All parking and event-related traffic will be contained entirely within our 10-acre property in existing parking areas. Directional signage will guide guests to designated areas, and staff will be present to manage parking efficiently. Events will be scheduled to avoid local traffic peaks and will not obstruct or inconvenience neighboring properties.

### **Noise Control**

The natural layout of our property—including gentle slopes, vegetation, and tree coverage help provide a good deal of sound buffering but we are committed to maintaining reasonable and permissible sound levels during all events. Music sound levels will be controlled and end at established hours in compliance with Hall County regulations. Our events will be peaceful, family-friendly, and non-obtrusive, preserving the quiet enjoyment of nearby residents.

### **Economic and Community Benefits**

Granting Agri-entertainment special use to the property will generate clear economic and cultural benefits for Hall County. Nationally, wineries permitted to host events experience an average 25% increase in revenue and local economic impact, primarily through tourism, hospitality, and small business collaboration.

The Georgia wine industry contributes billions annually to the state's economy. By expanding our ability to host modest, well-regulated events, Flowery Branch Winery and Vineyard will help draw visitors to Hall County that may be going to other counties for their winery experience, stimulate spending at nearby restaurants, shops, and hotels, and create additional employment opportunities for local residents.

Importantly, these benefits will be realized without altering the rural character of the area. Our events are intentionally small in scale, seasonal, and conducted with the utmost respect for our neighbors and the environment.

### **Community Engagement**

Community engagement has always been the heart of our mission. Our volunteer-supported harvests and public tastings foster connection and pride in local agriculture. Many of our customers have become active participants in our vineyard community, returning year after year to help harvest, taste, and celebrate the fruits of Georgia's soil. Our harvests a genuine celebration a couple times a year where we provide food, music, and a good time to all those participating. We have had people from all over the state come for what is now an annual event for our community. A very large proportion of our weekly business are already multiple repeat visitors and we are quickly becoming a community hub. We have a large and engaged social media following that reflects this!

The proposed special use will allow us to extend these opportunities by hosting inclusive events that bring residents together in a shared appreciation of local food, wine, and culture. Each gathering will be an expression of our core values: sustainability, hospitality, and responsible enjoyment.

## Conclusion

Granting Agri-Entertainment special use to the Flowery Branch Winery and Vineyard will:

- Encourage responsible, small-scale agritourism;
- Strengthen Hall County's local economy;
- Support local vendors and small businesses;
- Deepen community engagement and pride; and
- Maintain respect for the land, neighbors, and rural tranquility.

Our family is deeply committed to operating with integrity and ensuring all events are conducted with professionalism, responsibility, and neighborly care. We respectfully ask for the Board's support in approving this special use application so that Flowery Branch Winery and Vineyard can continue to grow as a model of agricultural entrepreneurship and community partnership in Hall County.

Thank you for your consideration,

Brad Walton and family

10/22/2025