

**HALL COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
STAFF REPORT**

Applicant Cherokee Gun Club, Inc.

Request (A) **Rezone** | from Light Industrial 1 (I-1) and Agricultural Residential 1 (AR-1) to Light Industrial (I-1)
(B) **Special Use** | Outdoor shooting range

Proposed Use (A) Private gun club
(B) Outdoor shooting range

Size 132± acres

Zoning **Current:** Light Industrial 1 (I-1) and Agricultural Residential 1 (AR-1) | **Proposed:** Light Industrial (I-1)

Location **1658 & 1700 Candler Road** | Tax Parcels 15031 000026 & 15031 000025A

Commission District Four

Commission Date March 12, 2026

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

Record Number..... (A) HZON25-0057
(B) HZCU25-0060

(A) and (B) Staff recommends APPROVAL of the applicant’s requests with the following conditions:

1. Any expansion to the outdoor shooting ranges shall be subject to the review and approval of the Board of Commissioners.
2. The days of operation are limited to Monday through Saturday, opening 30 minutes after sunrise and closing 30 minutes after sunset. Sunday operating hours are 12:30 p.m. until 30 minutes after sunset.

3. All conditions of zoning shall be made a part of any plats or construction plans created for the property.

Summary Analysis

The applicant is requesting to rezone a combined 132± acre tract from Light Industrial (I-1) and Agricultural Residential 1 (AR-1) to Light Industrial (I-1) for the expansion of a private gun club. A concurrent Special Use approval is requested to allow an outdoor shooting range. The site is currently developed as a private gun club featuring a clubhouse, skeet and trap shooting ranges, two rifle ranges, seven pistol ranges, and a sporting clays course. No plans have been submitted with this request to expand any buildings or shooting range areas at this time. Furthermore, according to the submitted site plan, the applicants do not intend to expand the use of the property located at 1658 Candler Road which is being added to the total acreage.



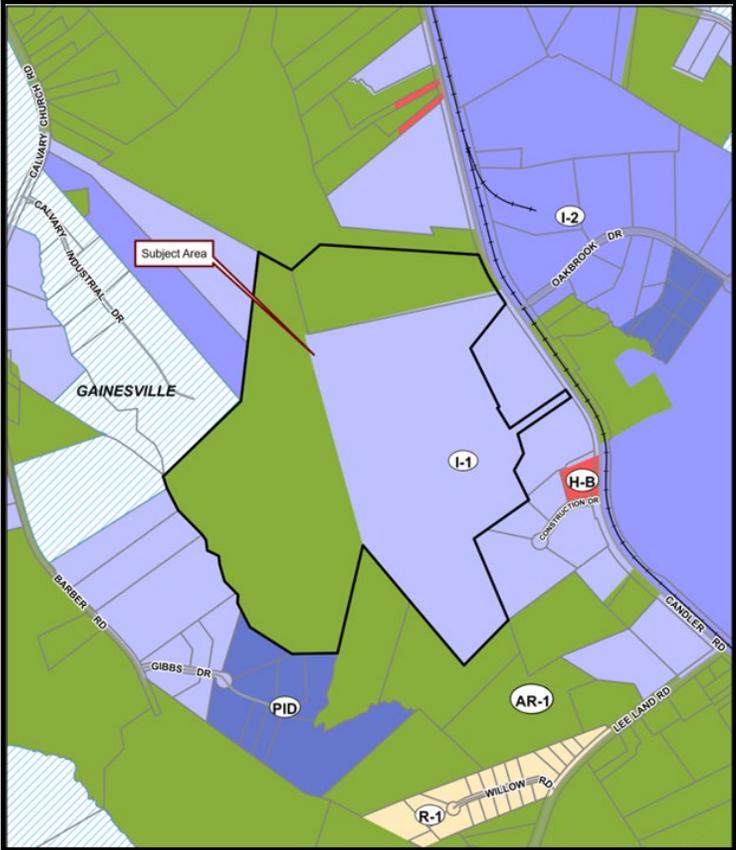
On March 17, 1986, a 55± acre portion of the subject property, zoned Light Industrial (L-I) was approved by the Planning Commissioners as a firing range. On November 9, 2000, an adjacent 51.72± acre tract, zoned Agricultural Residential III (AR-III), was approved by the Board of Commissioners to expand the gun club facilities with the following condition:

1. The days of operation are limited to Monday through Saturday, opening 30 minutes after sunrise and closing 30 minutes after sunset, Sunday operating hours is 12:30 p.m. until 30 minutes after sunset.

Under the recently adopted Hall County Unified Development Code, outdoor shooting ranges are permitted only within Light Industrial (I-1) or Heavy Industrial (I-2) zoning districts and require special use approval. Therefore, any addition of land to the property would necessitate a zoning change and the approval of a special use permit for the remainder of the parcel.

The surrounding properties are zoned and developed as outlined below:

- North: Agricultural Residential 1 (AR-1) – Single family residence
- East: Agricultural Residential 1 (AR-1) – Single-family residences
Light Industrial (I-1) – General freight trucking; Heavy Industrial (I-2) – Industrial park and landfill; Planned Industrial Development (PID) – Warehouses, offices and retail
- South: Agricultural Residential 1 (AR-1) – Developed with single family residences; Light Industrial (I-1) – Developed with an industrial park, offices and warehouses
- West: Light Industrial (I-1) – Developed with general freight trucking; Heavy Industrial (I-2) – Developed with warehouse and office; Planned Industrial Development (PID) – Developed with offices and warehouses; City of Gainesville Light Industrial (L-I)



Water service is currently provided by the City of Gainesville Department of Water Resources, and sanitary sewer services are provided by private septic.

Based on the future land use plan, staff finds the requested rezoning *is consistent* with the Hall County Comprehensive Plan and the future land use designation of Employment Nodes and Corridors. Hall County has an economy that is not only strong, but continues to grow, necessitating a need for land that can accommodate both the uses and activity they will generate. These new employment nodes and corridors should 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 discussed earlier to the fullest extent possible.

(A) & (B) Zoning Analysis – Rezone and Special Use

When considering a zoning amendment to the zoning maps, the 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 requested use may be suitable in view of the use and development of adjacent and nearby properties. The surrounding area consists of a variety of development including single family residences, industrial parks, warehouses and offices.**
- b) Whether the zoning proposal will adversely affect the existing use or usability of adjacent or nearby property; **No, it is not anticipated that the proposed rezoning or special use will adversely affect the existing use or usability of adjacent or nearby properties. The existing business is not proposing to expand its current operations; however, they are requesting to add additional acreage to the overall site which requires the full extent of the property be brought into compliance with the current zoning code (i.e. zoned to Light Industrial (I-1) and approved for a special use).**
- 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, however, the applicant cannot develop the property as proposed without approval by the Board of Commissioners.**
- 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; **If approved and in compliance with all Georgia Department of Transportation and Hall County standards, the use is not anticipated 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 intent of the Employment Nodes and Corridors future land use designation in the Comprehensive Plan in that these new employment nodes and corridors should 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.**
- 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. **The property has been developed with a private gun club and outdoor shooting range since 1986. The current requests is to allow for the future expansion of the private gun club and addition of an outdoor shooting range.**
- 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 would not create an isolated district unrelated to the surrounding developments and districts. Adjacent parcels are also zoned Light Industrial (I-1) with other adjacent parcels zoned Heavy Industrial (I-2).**
- 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; **The request does not appear to be out of scale with the needs of the county.**
- n) Whether it is impossible to find adequate sites for the proposed use in districts permitting such use and already appropriately zoned; **There are no adequate sites for the proposed use as the outdoor shooting range is not a permitted use in any residentially zoned districts and requires a special use approval from the Board of Commissioners in all commercially zoned districts.**
- 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.**

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 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 January 15, 2026, Emily McGahee stated:

“Must meet all Environmental Health commercial septic system permitting requirements. Further determination will be made during the civil plan review process. A detailed business plan must be submitted to Hall County Environmental Health for review. Additional items, including, but not limited to: recorded plat, soil evaluation, and septic system installation/modification may be required after review of business plan.”

Georgia Department of Transportation

In an email dated January 13, 2026, Christopher Hash, D1 Traffic Operations Supervisor, stated:

“No improvements appear needed at this time. Expanding the facility in the future may require improvements to the access to be made.”

Gainesville-Hall Metropolitan Planning Organization

In an email dated January 12, 2026, Joseph Boyd, MPO Director, stated:

“This parcel is along State Route 60, which is scheduled to be widened to four lanes in the long range of the MPO’s Metropolitan Transportation Plan (GH-111B). There is currently no construction year assigned and this is not yet a project in the Georgia Department of Transportation’s system, so there are no documents to reference for potential right-of-way impact at this time.”

Hall County Public Works and Utilities

In a memorandum dated January 16, 2026, Jason Skarda, Assistant Director of Public Works and Utilities, provided the following comments:

Engineering:

No comment.

Traffic:

No traffic or access issues with this request. A traffic impact study may be required in the future if the use changes regardless of the zoning.

Utilities:

Gainesville sewer service area; infrastructure is about 0.22 miles south, across from parcel 15031 00017/15031 00016.

Hall County Fire Marshal

In an email dated January 16, 2026, John Hornick, NPQ Fire Service Plans Examiner 1, provided the following comment:

“The Hall County Fire Marshal’s Office has no comments as proposed.”