

**HALL COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
STAFF REPORT**

**Applicant** ..... Benji Wood

**Request** ..... (A) **Rezone** | from Agricultural Residential 1 (AR-1) to Light Industrial (I-1)  
(B) **Special Use** | Outdoor storage within GCOD  
(C) **Variance** | GCOD standards

**Proposed Use** ..... (A) Office warehouse  
(B) Outdoor storage  
(C) Office warehouse

**Size** ..... 8.08± acres

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

**Location** ..... **5989 Lanier Islands Parkway** | Tax Parcel 07329 002001D

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

**Commission Date** ..... May 28, 2026

**Staff Recommendation** ..... (A) **Approval, with conditions**, as the proposed zoning is consistent with the “Business Nodes & Corridors” future land use classification within the Comprehensive Plan.  
(B) **Approval, with conditions**, as the proposed use is consistent with the “Business Nodes and Corridors” future land use classification within the Comprehensive Plan.  
(C) **Denial**, as no hardship exists pursuant to the criteria of 11.1.1.D.11.

**Record Number**..... (A) HZON26-0013  
(B) HZCU26-0014  
(C) HVAR26-0017

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

1. The property shall be developed in accordance with the site plan dated April 20, 2026, and as described in the project narrative dated March 16, 2026, 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.
3. All conditions of zoning shall be made a part of any plats or construction plans created for the property.

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

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**The following should be considered as variances to the Unified Development Code of Hall County, and shall warrant further determination by the Board should it choose to approve the submitted narrative and site plan:**

- **Section 6.2.5.C.2.d – Parking Lot Design – Surface** – All parking areas must be paved with asphalt, concrete or pervious materials as approved by the Director.
    - Gravel surface is proposed within the outdoor storage yard area.
  - **Section 6.2.5.C.2.e – Parking Lot Design – Location** - Off-street parking must be located to the side or rear of the principal building and may not be located between the principal building and the street.
    - Parking proposed between the building and Lanier Islands Parkway.
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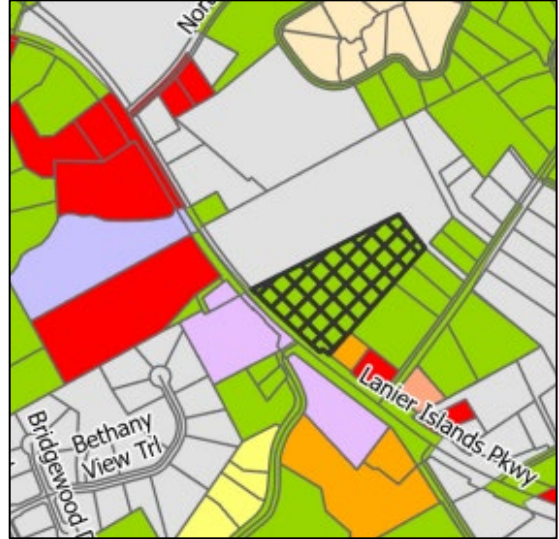
**Summary Analysis**

The applicant has submitted three concurrent requests: (A) to rezone an 8.08± acre tract from Agricultural Residential 1 (AR-1) to Light Industrial (I-1) for a new office warehouse; (B) a Special Use to allow outdoor storage within the Gateway Corridor Overlay District (GCOD); and (C) a variance to the Gateway Corridor Overlay District (GCOD) standards.

According to the Hall County Tax Assessor records, the property is currently developed with a 2,152 square foot single-family residence constructed in 1967. Water service is currently provided by the City of Gainesville Department of Water Resources, and sanitary sewer services are provided by private septic.

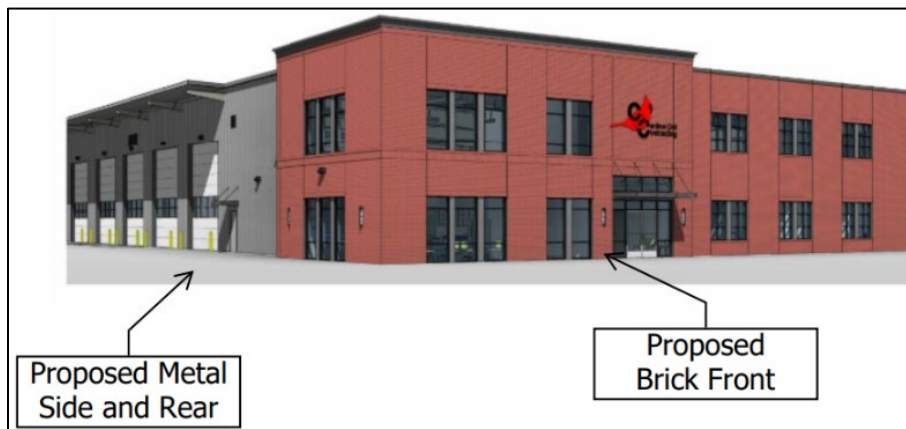
The surrounding properties are zoned and developed as outlined below:

- North: City of Buford General Business (C-2): Boat Storage
- East: City of Buford General Business (C-2): Boat storage; Agricultural Residential 1 (AR-1): Single-family residences;
- South: Light Industrial (I-1): Equipment rentals; Agricultural Residential 1 (AR-1): Single-family residences; Planned Commercial Development (PCD): Boat repair
- West: Light Industrial (I-1): Equipment rentals

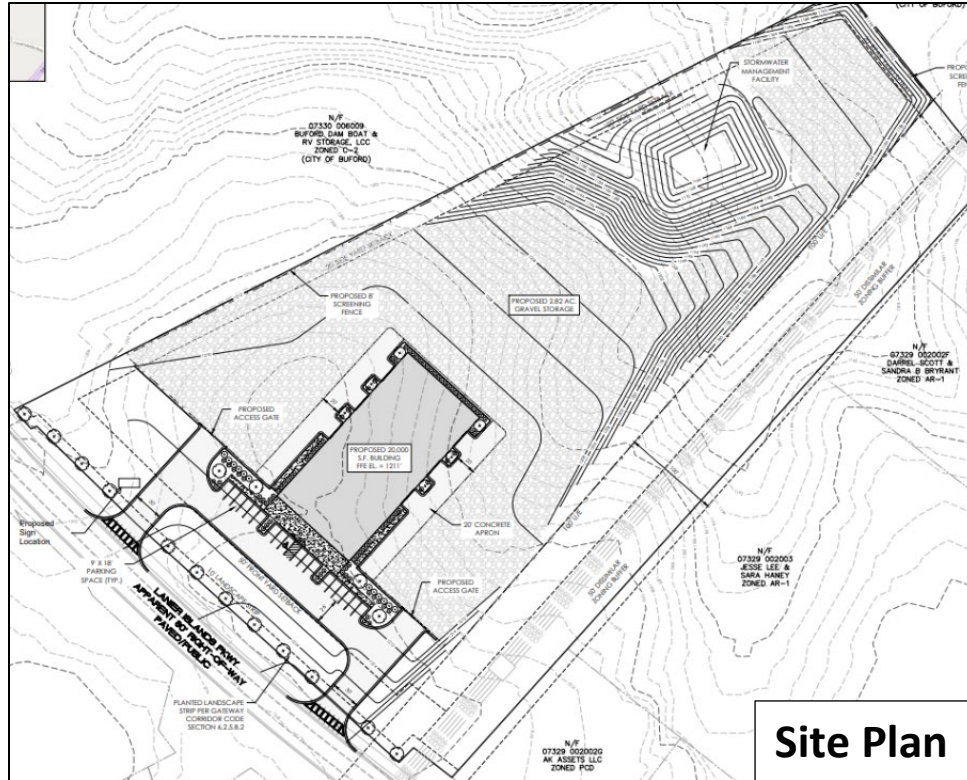


Per the submitted narrative, the applicant is proposing to develop the site for a contracting business. The project includes a 20,000 square-foot building with associated parking and an outdoor storage yard. Project details on the site plan identify approximately 4,000 square feet designated for office use and 16,000 square feet for warehouse operations. The business proposes operating hours of 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

The elevations submitted by the applicant reflect the proposed appearance of the 20,000 square-foot building.



Per the submitted site plan, the site would be accessed by two driveways on Lanier Islands Parkway. The development includes a paved parking lot in front of the building, with a gravel surface extending beyond the gated entries to the storage yard. Perimeter fencing is identified as well as a 50-foot landscape buffer along the eastern property line where the site abuts residentially-zoned properties.



The development standards for the project are identified in the table below and compared to the GCOD requirements:

**GCOD Analysis**

<b>Standard</b>	<b>Proposed</b>	<b>Notes</b>	<b>Compliance</b>
<b>6.2.5.A.– Transitional buffers</b>	50-foot buffer along the eastern property boundary.	Where an industrial zoning district abuts property zoned for residential or agricultural use, the buffer width must be at least 50 feet.	Complies
<b>6.2.5.C.2.d – Parking Lot Design - Surface</b>	Gravel surface within the storage yard area.	All parking areas must be paved with asphalt, concrete or pervious materials approved by the director.	Deficient
<b>6.2.5.C.2.e – Parking Lot Design – Off-street parking</b>	Off-street parking area is identified between the building and the street.	Off-street parking must be located to the side or rear of the principal building and may not be located between the principal building and the street	Deficient

6.2.5.C.3.b – Perimeter Landscaping	Where parking lots abut public streets, a frontage landscape strip is required as provided in Section 8.1.3. The depth of such strip is 10 feet for industrial zoned property.	10-foot landscape strip provided	Complies
6.2.6.B.3 – Architectural Standards	The front elevation of the proposed building will comply with GCOD standards, while the side and rear elevations will utilize metal siding, as these façades are not visible from the public right-of-way.	Architectural metal panels are restricted to no more than 50 percent of the surface area of each side of a building.	Deficient
6.2.7 – Signs	Ground style sign complying with Hall County standards	Signage shall comply with GCOD standards.	Shall comply

**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 Business Nodes and Corridors within the South Hall character area.** Many of the county's major roadways have strong connections to infrastructure, employment, and housing, making them desirable for larger scale commercial development. New development along these major road corridors and intersections should consist of higher-intensity commercial uses, low-intensity, consumer-facing industrial uses that house businesses that serve nearby communities, and with some higher density residential, where appropriate. Site designs should use the Quality Development Principals, particularly natural resource protections and high quality landscape installations, to the fullest extent possible.

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

When considering a zoning amendment to the zoning maps and use subject to approval of the County Commission, 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 as the surrounding area consists of a variety of development including industrial uses, 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 as the buffer requirement from adjacent residential properties is being met.**

- 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 Business Nodes and Corridors future land use designation in the Comprehensive Plan in that the proposed business is a consumer-facing industrial use that will serve nearby communities.**
- 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 is developed with a 2,152 square foot single-family residence constructed in 1967. The current request is to rezone the property to Light Industrial (I-1) to allow for a new office warehouse and outdoor storage area.**
- 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 across Lanier Islands Parkway are also zoned Light Industrial (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; **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 other properties within the County that support light industrial uses based on the Future Land Use Map; however, the current development 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.**

**(C) Zoning Analysis – Variance to Section 6.2, Gateway Corridor Overlay District**

The 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); **The applicant has cited operational needs and circulation preferences related to equipment maneuvering, gravel surfacing, parking layout and architectural standards. However, these factors reflect choices in site design and business operations rather than extraordinary or exceptional physical conditions inherent to the lot itself. The lot's size, shape, and topography do not create a hardship that necessitates the requested variance.**
2. The application of the requirements of this UDC to this particular piece of property would create an unusual hardship; **The applicant's justification is based on operational needs and circulation preferences. These considerations reflect choices in site design and business operations rather than demonstrating that the UDC's requirements themselves impose an unusual hardship.**
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. The cited operational needs and circulation preferences related to equipment maneuvering, gravel surfacing, parking layout and architectural standards are specific to the proposed business operations rather than conditions beyond the owner's control.**

4. Such conditions are not the result of any actions of the property owner; **The cited operational needs and circulation preferences related to equipment maneuvering, gravel surfacing, parking layout, and architectural standards are specific to the proposed business operations rather than conditions beyond the owner's control.**
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; **Based on the information provided, the requested variances do not demonstrate consistency with the purposes and intent of the Unified Development Code, including the standards of the Gateway Corridor Overlay District related to site design, architectural treatment, and development character. Granting relief in this case would weaken the application of these requirements and could impair the regulatory intent of the UDC.**

#### **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 a memorandum dated April 29, 2026, the Hall County Environmental Health Department 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 April 17, 2026, Christopher Hash, D1 Traffic Operations Supervisor, stated: "Applicant will need to coordinate with GDOT District 1 Traffic Operations Office for consideration of driveways."

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

In a memorandum dated April 28, 2026, Jorge Gomez, 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.

##### **Traffic:**

Access to the proposed development is from SR 347. A GDOT access permit will be required.

##### **Utilities:**

No Comment. Property is not located in the Hall County service delivery area.

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

In a memorandum dated April 20, 2026, the Hall County Fire Marshal's Office provided the following comments:

- 1) The 20,000 SF building will require a supervised fire protection system.
- 2) Based off the location of the existing fire hydrants additional fire hydrant(s) may be required.

- 3) The building shall be tested for approved emergency responders radio coverage within the building based on existing coverage levels of the public safety communication system utilized by the jurisdiction.

**Hall County Business License Division**

In a memorandum dated April 21, 2026, Brandi Smith, Business License Director stated: “Any future businesses will need to obtain a business license with the Hall County Business License department.”