**HALL COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION**
**STAFF REPORT**

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| **Applicant** | Habitat for Humanity of Hall County, Inc. |
| **Request** | **Rezone** \| from Agricultural Residential 1 (AR-1) to Planned Development (PD) |
| **Proposed Use** | 48-unit residential development |
| **Size** | 26.21± acres |
| **Zoning** | **Current:** Agricultural Residential 1 (AR-1)<br>**Proposed:** Planned Development (PD) |
| **Location** | 0 Cagle Road **\|** Tax Parcel 15019 000159 (pt) |
| **Commission District** | Three |
| **Planning Commission Date** | November 16, 2026 |
| **Staff Recommendation** | **Approval, with conditions** as the proposed zoning and development is consistent with the Lakeside Residential future land use designation within the Comprehensive Plan in the East Hall Character Area. |
| **Record Number(s)** | HZON26-0042 |

**Staff recommends APPROVAL of the applicant's request with the following conditions:**

1. The property shall be developed in accordance with the site plan dated October 7, 2026, and as described in the project narrative received October 19, 2026, modified as necessary for compliance with conditions herein and development standards enforced at the time of site plan approval.

2. The development shall be limited to a total of 48 single-family detached residential units.

3. Access to the development shall be subject to approval by the Hall County Public Works Department. Following review and acceptance of the Traffic Impact Study (TIS) by Public Works, all required improvements shall be incorporated into the development plans for review and approval. Any costs associated with these improvements shall be the responsibility of the developer.

4. All buffers surrounding the development shall meet the definition of a "Buffer, natural" or "Buffer, landscaped" as defined in the Hall County UDC. Where the undisturbed or provided buffer does not meet this definition, the Director of Planning and Zoning, or their designee, may

require supplemental plantings or other improvements necessary to ensure the buffer achieves the intent and performance standards intended.

5. No variances or development exceptions are granted as part of this request that are not explicitly granted by board approval.

6. All conditions of zoning shall be made part of any plats created for the property.

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**Summary Analysis**

The applicant is requesting to rezone a combined 26.21± acre tract from Agricultural Residential 1 (AR-1) to Planned Development (PD) for a 48-unit single-family detached residential development. The proposed site plan includes 48 single-family detached dwellings arranged in a "cottage court" style layout at a density of 1.83 dwelling units per acre with approximately 70 percent open space provided.

The subject property is currently vacant and bordered by the Norfolk Southern Railroad to the southeast.

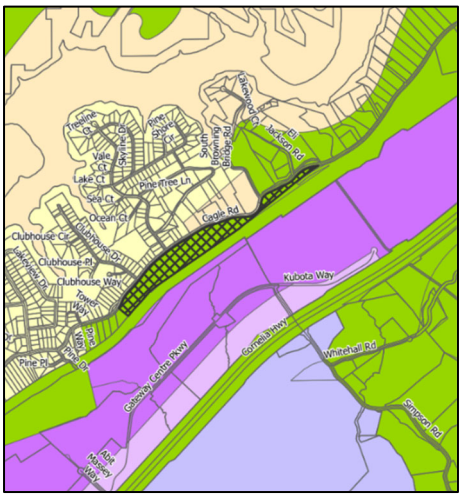
Surrounding properties are zoned and developed as follows:

**North**: Residential 1 (R-1): Surfside Club Estates & Lakepoint Subdivisions
Agricultural Residential (AR-1): single-family residences

**East**: Heavy Industrial (I-2): Kubota Manufacturing of America Corp.

**South**: Heavy Industrial (I-2): Inland Port, RaceTrac commercial center & Auto Metal Direct

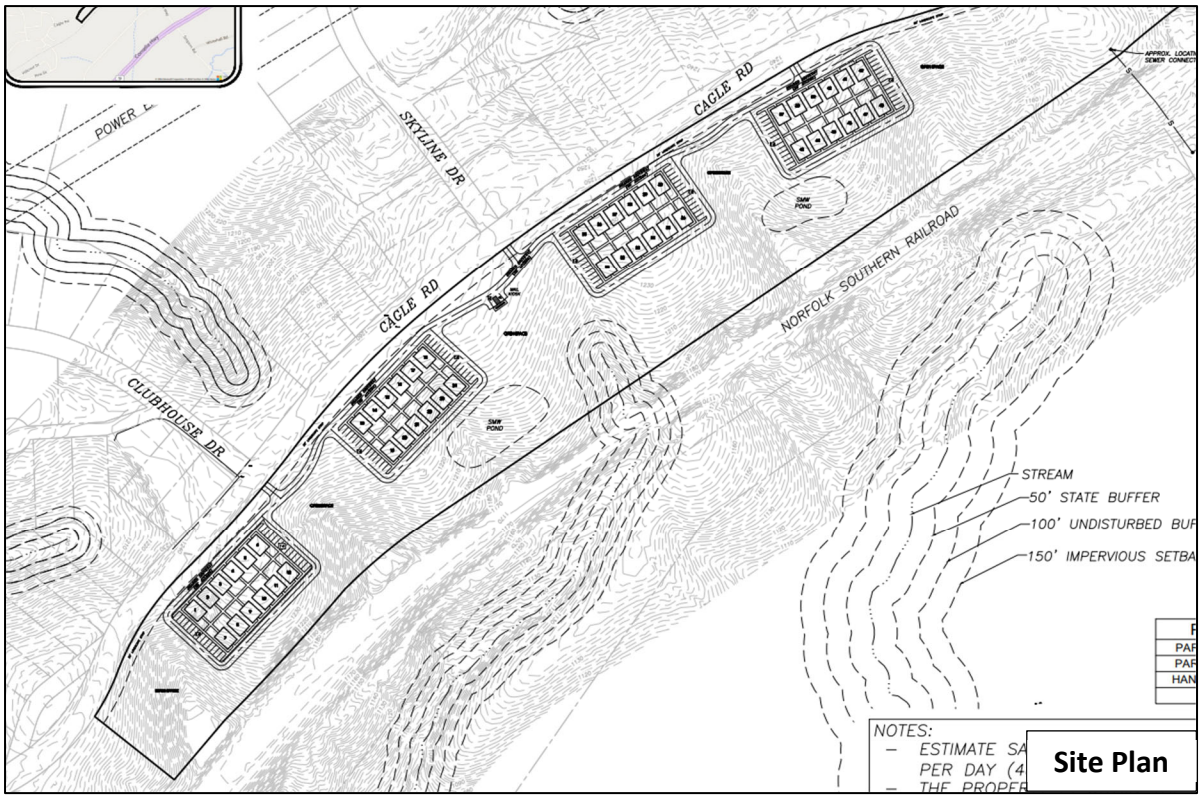
**West**: Residential 1 (R-1): Surfside Club Estates & Lakepoint Subdivisions; Heavy Industrial (I-2): Inland Port; Agricultural Residential (AR-1): undeveloped




Per the submitted narrative, the proposed lots will have a minimum area of 1,200 square feet with ownership limited to the home footprint. This approach is intended to reduce individual property maintenance while responsibility for the maintenance and management of common areas being assigned to a land trust or community association. The homes would be arranged in clusters around shared common areas, consistent with the cottage court development pattern.

Per the submitted site plan, vehicular access and internal circulation would be provided by three access points distributed along approximately 4,755± feet of frontage along Cagle Road. The development is organized into four residential clusters of twelve homes connected by a 20-foot-wide shared driveway, providing interconnectivity throughout the site. Each cluster of homes includes parking for residents and guests. Approximately 70% of the site will remain as undisturbed open space. Stormwater management facilities are located in the southeastern portion of the development. A 25-foot-wide landscape strip and 50-foot building setback is proposed along Cagle Road. A community mailbox unit is centrally located to serve the four clusters of homes.

Water service will be provided by either the City of Gainesville or community wells. Water availability is confirmed in a letter from Nick Swafford, Permitting Services & GIS Manager, dated October 23, 2026. Sanitary sewer service will be provided by Hall County as confirmed in a letter from Jason Skarda, Assistant Public Works Director, dated October 14, 2026.




A Trip Generation Memo prepared by Keck + Wood, dated October 23, 2026, states that the development will generate a total of 653 new weekday trips with 38 trips in the AM peak hour and 49 in the PM peak hour. The Memo states that, given the low number of peak hour trips, coupled with proposed access points, the development is expected to have minimal impact on the local roadway network. However, the Hall County Public Works Department commented that a Traffic Impact Study (TIS) will be required prior to issuance of a Land Disturbance Permit (LDP) and any improvements recommended in the approved TIS must be included in the LDP.

**Development Standards Analysis**

**Section 6.1.5. Establishment of Standards and Relationship to Base Zoning:**
For purposes of evaluation, the Planning Director or designee shall identify the conventional zoning district or districts most comparable to the proposed development based on land use, density or intensity, and the Comprehensive Plan designation which shall serve as a baseline for evaluating the appropriateness of the proposed PD. Where development standards are not expressly established as part of the PD approval, the standards of the identified comparable zoning district(s) shall apply, as determined by the Planning Director or designee.

The development standards for the project are summarized in the table below and are compared against the Residential-1 (R-1) district standards and the applicable Article 7.2.3.I Cottage Courts and Article 8 Site Development requirements of the Hall County Unified Development Code (UDC):

| Development Standard (§) | Proposed | UDC Standard | Compliance |
|---|---|---|---|
| Site Area | 26.21± acres | N/A | N/A |
| R-1 Standards (§4.3) | | | |
| Density | 1.84 U/A | 1 dwelling per 0.5 acre lot (2U/A maximum) | Complies |
| Maximum Building Height | Unspecified | 35 feet | Shall Comply |
| Minimum Lot Area | 1,200 sf | N/A – Cottage Courts (§7.2.3.I) | Complies |
| Minimum Lot Width | 30 feet | N/A – Cottage Courts (§7.2.3.I) | Complies |
| Front Yard | 0 feet | N/A – Cottage Courts (§7.2.3.I) | Complies |
| Side Yard | 0 feet | N/A – Cottage Courts (§7.2.3.I) | Complies |
| Rear Yard | 0 feet | N/A – Cottage Courts (§7.2.3.I) | Complies |
| Cottage Court Use Standards (§7.2.3.I) | | | |
| 7.2.3.I.2.a | 12 detached DUs for each central common area | 4-12 detached DUs for each central common area | Complies |
| 7.2.3.I.2.b | Each DU has frontage on and direct access to the central common area | Each DU must have frontage on and direct access to the central common area | Complies |
| 7.2.3.I.2.c | Not specified | Front porches must be provided for each individual DU | Shall comply |
| 7.2.3.I.2.d | Each courtyard is a minimum of 3,000SF | Common areas must have a ratio of 600sf/DU nor less than 3,000SF | Complies |
| 7.2.3.I.2.e | Not specified | Common areas should consist of pervious materials except for walkways, trails, benches, | Shall comply |

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| | | decorative elements, and other impervious materials as approved by the Director | |
| 7.2.3.I.2.f | Common parking is located to the side of the DUs. Access is via 20 ft wide driveway. | Common parking must be located to the side or rear of the DUs. Access to parking areas must be provided by a shared 20 ft wide driveway. | Complies |
| 7.2.3.I.2.g | N/A | Individual parking, where provided, must be located to the side or rear of the DUs. Access to parking areas must be provided by a shared driveway or alley at least 20 ft in width. | N/A |
| Article 8 | | | |
| Parking (Table 8.1.1) | 28 spaces/12 DU cottage court cluster | 1.5 spaces/DU + 1 guest space/4 DU = 21 spaces | Complies |
| Buffers (§8.2.3) | **Front:** 25-foot landscape strip; **Side:** 200+ feet show as "Open space" **Rear:** 50+ feet show as "Open space" | 50 feet undisturbed | Deviation from Code |
| Landscaping (§8.2.4.H.2) | Unspecified | 2 trees per lot | Shall comply |
| Frontage Landscape Strip (§8.2.5) | 25-foot front landscape strip | 20 feet planted unless 50 ft undisturbed buffer provided | Deviation from Code- 50-foot undisturbed buffer required |
| Sidewalks (§8.4, 9.4.8.C) | Provided within Cottage Courts but size unspecified | 5 feet wide on both sides of street | Shall comply |
| Open Space (§8.5) | 70% | 30% | Complies |
| Architectural Standards (§8.7) | Unspecified | Various | Shall comply |

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| Amenities Maintenance (§8.8.5) | Land Trust or Community Association | HOA required | Shall comply |
| Cluster Mailbox Unit (CBU) (§8.10) | CBU with 4 parking spaces | CBU with 3 parking spaces | Complies |

**Comprehensive Plan Analysis**

**Based on the Hall County Comprehensive Plan, staff finds that the requested rezoning to Planned Development (PD) *is consistent* with the future land use designation of *Lakeside Residential* within the East Hall Character Area.** While some of these areas are not located directly on the lake, they have a development pattern similar to their lakeside neighbors or are likely to see a style of development that is denser than Rural Neighborhood or slightly less dense than Suburban Neighborhood, Low Density. Depending on the character area and what zoning districts they allow, residential densities can be up to 8 dwellings per acre in an urbanized zone and up to 6 dwellings per acre outside of an urbanized zone.

As the subject property is located outside of the urbanized portion of the East Hall Character Area and where water and sewer services are available, the proposed development density of 1.84 dwelling units per acre is within the permitted residential density range of the Lakeside Residential future land use designation.

**6.1.4.A Findings of Facts**

The County Commission shall approve a Planned Development District only upon making findings that:

1. Complies with the intent, eligibility, and superior design standards set forth in Sections 6.1.1–6.1.3; **The proposed development complies with the intent, eligibility, and superior design standards of Sections 6.1.1–6.1.3 by providing an integrated and efficient neighborhood layout, over 70% functional open space, substantial buffering, and coordinated internal infrastructure. The availability of public water and sewer reflects sufficient infrastructure capacity along with the trip generation memo noting limited impact to the roadway. Flexibility from UDC standards is limited and directly tied to achieving a cohesive design that meets or exceeds the intent of the code. As a Habitat for Humanity project, the development also delivers a meaningful public benefit through the creation of high-quality affordable housing, further satisfying the superior design requirements.**

2. The proposed development is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and applicable adopted policies; **The Lakeside Residential character area is intended to preserve established lakefront neighborhoods while supporting low-density residential development, with allowable densities up to 6 dwelling units per acre outside an urbanized zone. In East Hall, the supported zoning districts include AG-1, AR-1, R-1-L, V-C, R-1, and PD. Although R-X is the district that typically allows cottage courts, the R-X zoning is not supported in this character area due to its higher density potential. The proposed development, however, remains fully within the allowable R-1 density at 1.84 units per acre, consistent with sewer-served areas of East Hall. Given the site's**

**significant topographic constraints, a cottage-court configuration provides a practical way to cluster homes, preserve substantial open space, and minimize land disturbance without increasing density beyond Comprehensive Plan limitations. This combination of lower density, open space preservation, and a clustered housing design tailored to terrain makes the Planned Development district the appropriate tool to implement the character area's intent while maintaining full consistency with the Comprehensive Plan.**

3. The proposed development is compatible with surrounding land uses and includes appropriate transitions, buffering, and mitigation of impacts; **The subject property is located directly across Cagle Road from the established Surfside Club Estates and Lake Point subdivisions, making the proposal compatible with the existing development pattern in the area. To the rear, the site is separated from industrial uses by the Norfolk Southern Railroad which provides a substantial physical buffer between the proposed residences and adjacent industrial uses. In addition, the development incorporates significant open space and a rear yard undisturbed buffer to further mitigate potential impacts. Along Cagle Road, the proposed 50-foot building setback and 25-foot-wide landscape strip provide an appropriate visual transition from the public roadway and enhance the visual character of the corridor. Collectively, these design elements support compatibility with surrounding land uses and minimize potential impacts on adjacent properties**.

4. Adequate public facilities and infrastructure are available to serve the development; **Adequate public facilities and infrastructure are available to support the proposed development. The applicant has provided water and sewer availability letters confirming sufficient utility capacity to serve the site. The provided Trip Generation Memo indicates that the projected traffic volumes associated with the development are low, however a Traffic Impact Study will be required prior to approval of the Land Disturbance Permit (LDP) to ensure any required improvements are completed.**

5. The proposed development is designed and intended to function as a unified and coordinated project. **The development functions as a unified project of four residential courtyard cottage nodules connected with an internal circulation network that factors in the site topography with a mechanism to ensure coordinated management of common areas.**

## Zoning Analysis

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 proposed rezoning and use is suitable in view of 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; **The proposed rezoning does not appear to adversely affect the existing use or usability of adjacent or nearby properties.**

c) Whether the property to be affected by the zoning proposal has a reasonable economic use as currently zoned; **The property appears to have 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 existing streets, transportation facilities, utilities, schools, police protection, fire protection public facilities, or emergency medical service. The property will be served by City of Gainesville public water, and sanitary sewer service will be provided by Hall County. Any improvements identified in the final approved Traffic Study and required by Hall County Public Works will be addressed with the Land Disturbance Permit (LDP).**

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 Lakeside Residential character area is intended to preserve established lakefront neighborhoods while supporting low-density residential development, with allowable densities up to 6 dwelling units per acre outside an urbanized zone. In East Hall, the supported zoning districts include AG-1, AR-1, R-1-L, V-C, R-1, and PD. Although R-X is the district that typically allows cottage courts, the R-X zoning is not supported in this character area due to its higher density potential. The proposed development, however, remains fully within the allowable R-1 density at 1.84 units per acre, consistent with sewer-served areas of East Hall.**

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 value including construction types, proposed uses, and maintenance.**

h) The relative gain to the public as compared to the hardship imposed upon the individual property owner; **Habitat for Humanity is developing this donated property using federal funding and is pursuing additional support through the Georgia DCA Rural Workforce Housing Initiative, which provides higher infrastructure grant eligibility for developments with more housing units, including awards of up to $2,000,000 for projects with 41–60 units. The donated nature of the property further enhances public benefit by enabling affordable homeownership opportunities without land acquisition costs. These combined factors result in a substantial public gain, while the PD flexibility requested minimizes site-specific hardship without creating disproportionate benefit to the property owner**

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 subject property is currently vacant and has no history of building permits on file.**

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 Planned Development (PD) is considered a floating zoning district. Its compliance with the comprehensive plan and overall compliance with the PD Findings of Fact prevent it from being considered an isolated district.**

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 proposed development is not out of scale with the needs of the county as a whole, or the immediate neighborhood, as there is a need for additional affordable housing.**

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 other zoning districts that would permit this type of development within the East Hall Character Area.**

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.**

**Development Support and Constraints**

**Hall County Environmental Health**
In a memorandum dated October 19, 2026, the Hall County Environmental Health Department stated, "Public sewer. Community septic systems and/or community wells to be permitted by EPD."

**Georgia Department of Transportation**
In an email dated October 15, 2026, Christopher Hash, D1 Traffic Operations Supervisor, stated, "Off-system, no impacts expected to the State Highway system."

**Hall County Public Works and Utilities**

In a memorandum dated October 19, 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.
Show stream buffer and impervious setback from wrested vegetation not centerline of stream

**Traffic:**
A Traffic Impact Study (TIS) will be required. The improvements recommended in the approval TIS will be included in the LDP.

**Utilities**
Property is in the Hall County service district and will to connect to Hall County sewer. Any easements or improvements required for connection/system upgrades shall be obtained and funded by the developer/development owner.

**Hall County Fire Marshal**
In a memorandum October 6, 2026, the Hall County Fire Marshal's Office provided the following comments:

A 48-unit residential development will require fire hydrants to be installed for potential fire suppression needs. Currently the nearest fire hydrant is located over 1 mile south at Cagle and Buffington Farm Road. See Code requirement below.

**International Fire Code 2024 Edition 507.5.1 Where required.**
Where a portion of the facility or building hereafter constructed or moved into or within the jurisdiction is more than 500 feet from a hydrant on a fire apparatus access road, as measured by an approved route around the exterior of the facility or building, on-site fire hydrants and mains shall be provided where required by the fire code official.