HALL COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT

Applicant	Cook Communities
Request	(A) **Rezone** | from Planned Residential Development (PRD), Agricultural Residential 1 (AR-1) & Residential 1 (R-1) to Residential Mixed(R-X) (B) **Special Use** | for a subdivision, residential
Proposed Use	234-unit mixed residential development
Size	105.69± acres
Zoning	**Current:** Planned Residential Development (PRD), Agricultural Residential 1 (AR-1) & Residential 1 (R-1) **Proposed:** Residential Single-Family Detached (R-SF)
Location	3054, 3056 & 3060 Poplar Springs Church Road, 0 Poplar Springs Road, 3531, 3535, 3545, 3547 & 3549 Gilleland Extension **|** Tax Parcels 15036 00010, 000010B, 000009, 000013A; 15036D000002I, 000002H, 000002B, 000002C, 000002A
Commission Districts	Three and Four
Planning Commission Date	November 16, 2026
Staff Recommendation	(A) **Approval, with conditions** as the proposed development is consistent with the "Suburban Neighborhood, Medium Density" future land use classification within the Comprehensive Plan in the Gainesville character area. (B) **Approval, with conditions** as the proposed use meets all minimum standards of the Residential Mixed (R-X) zoning district.
Record Number(s)	(A) HZON26-0036 (B) HZCU26-0044

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 September 30, 2026, and as described in the project narrative dated September 17, 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 234 lots: 51 townhomes and 183 single-family detached.

3. Access to the development shall be approved by Hall County Public Works Department. Following review 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. The following statement regarding the potential impacts of agricultural operations in the area shall be made a part of any plat recorded on the property:
   "Owners, occupants, and users of property shown on this plat are hereby informed of the impacts associated with normal farming practices which may take place on adjacent and nearby property including, but not limited to, noise, odors, dust, the operation of machinery of any kind, the storage and disposal of manure, and the application of fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides. Therefore, owners, occupants, and users of the property shown on this plat should be prepared to expect the effects of such practices."

6. 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 other agencies or reviewing departments, including, but not limited to Environmental Health, the Fire Marshal, and Hall County Engineering. Where there are discrepancies between the proposed standards and County regulations, the County regulations shall overrule unless otherwise approved herein.

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

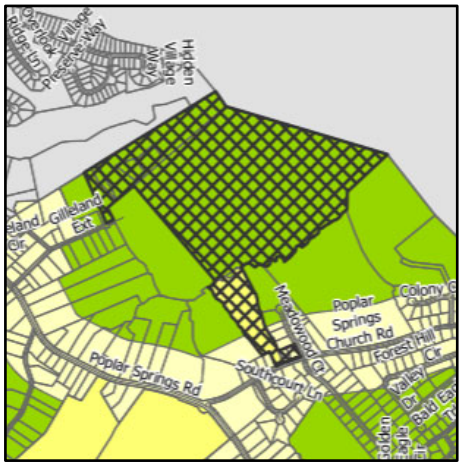
Summary Analysis

The applicant is requesting to rezone a combined 105.69± acre tract from Planned Residential Development (PRD), Agricultural Residential 1 (AR-1), and Residential 1 (R-1) to Residential Mixed (R-X) for a 234-unit mixed residential development. The proposed development includes 183 single-family detached lots, 51 townhome lots and several amenity features with an overall density of 2.21 dwelling units per acre.

The subject properties are currently either undeveloped or developed with single-family dwellings and accessory structures, all of which will be removed. The parcel at 3060 Poplar Springs Church Road (Tax Parcel 15036 000009) was rezoned from Residential I (R-I) and Agricultural Residential III (AR-III) to Planned Residential Development (PRD) on August 14, 1989, to allow a second residence and rental of the primary residence. Several creeks run through the project area, and portions of the site contain both FEMA-designated and County-studied flood zones.

Surrounding properties are zoned and developed as follows:

- **North**: City of Gainesville PUD: Amberleigh subdivision; City of Gainesville R-I-A: Chicopee Woods Nature Preserve
- **East**: Agricultural Residential 1 (AR-1) & Residential 1 (R-1): single-family dwellings
  City of Gainesville R-I-A: Chicopee Woods Nature Preserve
- **South**: Agricultural Residential 1 (AR-1) & Residential 1 (R-1): single-family dwellings
- **West**: Agricultural Residential 1 (AR-1) & Residential 1 (R-1): single-family dwellings & mobile home park

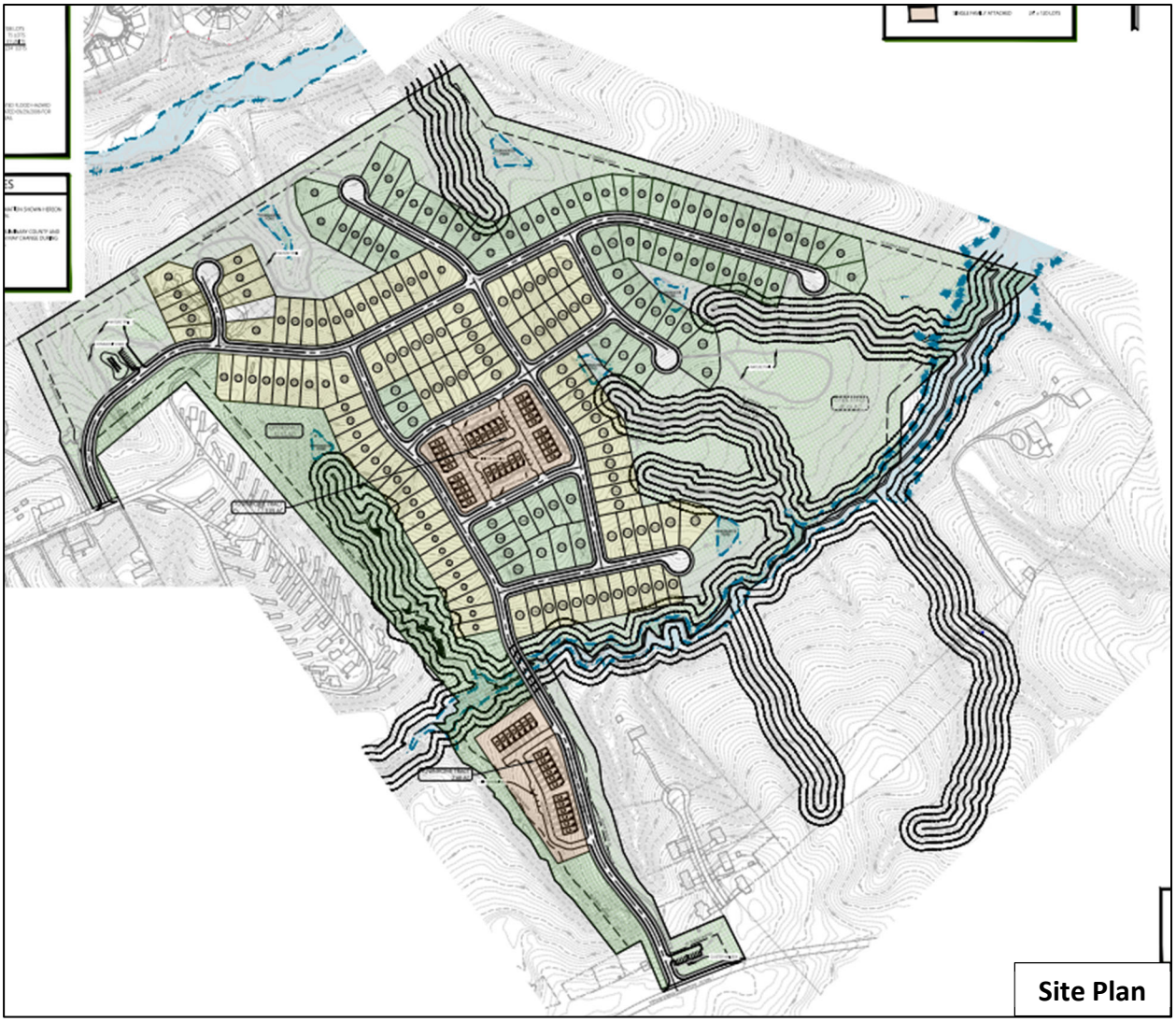


Per the submitted narrative and site plan, the proposed single-family detached lots will have a minimum area of 8,000 square feet and widths of 60 feet by 135 feet and 50 feet by 160 feet. Two townhome neighborhoods are identified within the development area and lots measure 24 feet by 120 feet. Residences will have a minimum heated floor area of 1,000 square feet and typically a minimum of two bedrooms and two bathrooms. The intent of the development is to vary the architectural styles for different portions of the neighborhood. Amenities proposed for the development include a playground, sidewalks with connected walking trails, pocket parks and landscaping. Approximately 51.98± acres, or 49.2% of the site, will remain as undisturbed open space consisting of streams, stream buffers, and wetlands.

The development will be served by a primary access point from Poplar Springs Church Road and a secondary emergency access from Gilleland Extension. The project will include a 50-foot undisturbed buffer along the exterior property boundary.

Water and sanitary sewer services will be provided by the City of Gainesville as confirmed in a letter from Nick Swafford, Permitting Services & GIS Manager, dated September 17, 2026.

A Traffic Impact Study (TIS) prepared by Southeastern Engineering, Inc., dated September 18, 2026, concluded several improvements may be warranted. Hall County Public Works commented that the Traffic Impact Study (TIS) is under review and all recommended improvements from the approved TIS will be required in the LDP. The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) commented that impacts are expected to the State Highway System, and that potential improvements for State Route 332 and Poplar Springs Church Road and State Route 332 and Gilleland Cir may be needed.



Development Standards Analysis

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

Development Standard (§)	Proposed	UDC Standard	Compliance
Overall R-X Standards (§4.7)			
Lot Area	105.69± acres	5 acres (min)	Complies
Density	2.21 U/A	8 U/A max (urbanized)	Complies
Site Coverage	50.8%	60% max	Complies
Overall Yard Setbacks	50 feet	50 feet	Complies
R-SF Standards (§4.5)			
Minimum Lot Area	8,000 sf (min)	8,000 sf (min)	Complies
Front Yard	Not specified	25 feet	Shall comply

Side Yard	Not specified	5 feet	Shall comply
Rear Yard	Not specified	20 feet	Shall comply
Maximum Building Height	35 feet	35 feet	Complies
Minimum Heated Floor Area	1,000 sf	N/A	N/A
R-TH Standards (§4.6)			
Minimum Lot Area	2,880 sf	2,000 sf	Complies
Front Yard	Not specified	15 feet	Shall comply
Side Yard	Not specified	10 feet (bldg. separation)	Shall comply
Rear Yard	Not specified	20 feet	Shall comply
Maximum Building Height	35 feet	35 feet	Complies
Minimum Heated Floor Area	1,000 sf	N/A	N/A
Article 8			
Parking	Not specified	2 spaces per DU TH: additional 1 guest space for every 4 DU	Shall comply
Buffers (§8.2.3)	50 feet undisturbed perimeter buffer	50 feet undisturbed perimeter buffer	Complies
Landscaping (§8.2.4.H.2)	Not specified	2 trees per lot/unit	Shall comply
Frontage Landscape Strip (§8.2.5)	50 ft undisturbed buffer	20 feet planted unless 50 ft undisturbed buffer provided	Complies
Sidewalks (§8.4, 9.4.8.C)	Not specified	5 feet wide on both sides of street	Shall comply
Open Space (§8.5)	49.2%	30%	Complies
Architectural Standards (§8.7)	Shall comply per narrative	Various	Complies
Amenities Maintenance (§8.8.5)	Not specified	HOA required	Shall comply
Cluster Mailbox Unit (CBU) (§8.10)	CBU with parking spaces	CBU with parking spaces	Shall comply

Comprehensive Plan Analysis

Based on the Hall County Comprehensive Plan, staff finds that the requested rezoning to Residential Mixed (R-X) *is consistent* with the future land use designation of *Suburban Neighborhood, Medium-Density* within the Gainesville Character Area. This designation supports medium-density single-family housing, either attached or detached, in areas served by existing water and sewer infrastructure or where such infrastructure is planned for future expansion. Future infrastructure improvements may be guided by the Sewer System Master Plan & Rate Study or may be provided by developers in areas where service is not currently planned.

As the subject property is located within the urbanized portion of the Gainesville Character Area, where water and sewer services are available, the Residential Mixed (R-X) zoning district allows a maximum density of 8 dwelling units per acre. The proposed development has an overall density of 2.21 dwelling units per acre, which is within the permitted range.

Zoning Analysis – Rezone & Special Use

When considering a zoning amendment to the zoning maps and use subject to approval by 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 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 systems. Any transportation improvements identified in the final approved Traffic Study and required by Hall County Public Works and/or the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) 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 proposed Residential Mixed (R-X) zoning and subdivision design are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan's future land use designation of "Suburban Neighborhood, Medium-Density." As the subject property is located within the urbanized portion of the Gainesville Character Area, where water and sewer services are available, the Residential Mixed (R-X) zoning district allows a maximum density of 8 dwelling units per acre. The proposed development has an overall density of 2.21 dwelling units per acre, which is within the permitted range.**

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; **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 subject parcels are developed with single-family residences and various accessory structures.**

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 Residential Mixed (R-X) is a new zoning district effective November 2024. Previously this type of development would have been proposed under the Planned Residential Development (PRD) district which no longer exists. The subject property is adjacent to a Planned Unit Development (PUD) within the City of Gainesville, known as the Amberleigh subdivision, and within 0.2 miles of an undeveloped Planned Residential Development (PRD) at 3580 Poplar Springs Road (ZON2021-00097 for 192 SFR on 96.44 ± acres), both of which are of similar design and residential character. Therefore, the proposed zoning change would not create an isolated district unrelated to surrounding districts.**

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 does not appear to be out of scale with the needs of the county as a whole, as there is a need for additional housing to support population growth.**

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 permit the mix of residential uses, density and lot sizes proposed in this subdivision. Because the R-X district is newly established, an appropriately zoned site for this residential pattern is not yet available elsewhere.**

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. Any abandoned well shall be properly closed as per Water Well Standards Act. Any abandoned septic tank shall be pumped by a State certified pumper/hauler and crushed/filled."

Georgia Department of Transportation
In an email dated October 7, 2026, Christopher Hash, D1 Traffic Operations Supervisor, stated, "Off-system. Impacts expected to the State Highway System. Applicant to submit TIS to GDOT District 1 for review. Potential improvements for SR332 and Poplar Springs Church Rd and SR332 and Gilleland Cir may be needed."

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 FEMA and Hall County studied Flood plains that are present on site.
Show stream buffer and impervious setback from wrested vegetation not centerline of stream.

Traffic:
The Traffic Impact Study (TIS) is under review. All recommended improvements from the approved TIS will be required in the LDP.

Utilities
Property is in the Gainesville service district.

Hall County Fire Marshal
In a memorandum October 6, 2026, the Hall County Fire Marshal's Office stated, "The Hall County Fire Marshal's Office has no comments as proposed."

Hall County Building Inspections
In a memorandum dated October 19, 2026, Barry Shaw, Interim Director of Development Services, provided the following comments:

Applicants will be required to get demo permits for all structures from Building Inspections before building new structures apart from 2 structures all were built prior to 1980 and will require asbestos inspections and reports by a state licensed asbestos inspector. 3060 Poplar Springs Church Road and 3549 Gilleland Extension were both built in 1980 and will not require asbestos inspections and reports before demolition.