

**HALL COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT**

Applicant Jay Wilhoite
Request Use Subject to County Commission approval
Proposed Use Retail units and self-storage warehouses
Size 4.75± acres
Zoning AR-IV
Location On the west side of Candler Road approximately 189 feet from its intersection with Roy Parks Road; a.k.a. 2654 Candler Road; Tax Parcel 15030 000008
Commission District Three
Planning Commission Date May 16, 2022
Staff Recommendation **Approval, with conditions**

Planning Commission Recommendation: Approval, with conditions
Vote: 5-0

Conditions:

1. *The development shall conform substantially with the proposed site plan and narrative with approved variances as follows:*
 - i *RV and boat storage shall be allowed to be gravel surface (§17.420.050.E.3).*
 - ii *There shall be a 30 foot front setback variance (§17.240.040).*
 - iii *Buildings 1-3 closest to Candler Road shall be non-metal three sided and buildings 4-6 shall have non-metal sides only (§17.420.050.H.2).*
2. *All development of the property shall conform with §17.420, Gateway Corridors Overlay District (GCOD) standards with the exception of variances granted.*
3. *All conditions of zoning shall be made a part of any plat of the property.*
4. *All exterior colors and materials shall be approved by the Director of Planning and Development.*
5. *This conditional use approval shall be granted for this applicant only and shall be applicant specific.*
6. *All external lighting shall meet Hall County standards specified in code.*

Applicant Proposal

The applicant is requesting a Use Subject to County Commission approval for a self-storage warehouse facility on a 4.75± acre parcel zoned Highway Business (H-B). According to the

narrative, the proposed development will consist of 6 mini-storage buildings, totaling 21,040 square feet of storage area, and plans to convert the existing residence into an office for storage management. Additionally, the applicant intends to utilize a gravel area in the southwest corner of the property for boat and RV storage. The business will include U-Haul rentals with these vehicles to be parked behind the remodeled office.

The applicant's narrative states that the storage building fronting Candler Road will include full height brick masonry on the front and sides of the building, with no roll-up doors fronting the roadway, to be in compliance with the Gateway Corridors Overlay District (GCOD) standards. The remaining 5 buildings will be constructed of typical factory finish colored metal wall/roof panel construction with roll-up doors. The narrative states that the terrain of the property slopes away from the road and that the first storage building will conceal the others from view from the road.

The applicant proposes to plant the front of the property with trees and shrubbery and evergreen trees (Green Giant Arborvitae) will be planted along the side property lines to provide a buffer/screening.

Ornamental fencing with brick column accents will border the side fronting Candler Road, with black vinyl chain link located along the side and rear property lines to secure the facility. Lighting will be provided by Jackson EMC in the storage areas. There is a proposed monument sign to be constructed from materials matching the decorative fencing positioned perpendicular to Candler Road/State Route 60. The sign will be externally illuminated with non-spill up lighting for nighttime visibility. The masonry for the sign will not exceed 13 feet in width and 10 feet in height with the sign area proposed to be 8 foot by 4 foot/32 square feet.

The proposed hours of operation for the management office are Monday – Friday 9:00am to 5:00pm and Saturdays from 9:00am to 12:00noon. Customers will have 24/7 access to the storage area through a gate.

History and Existing Land Uses

The subject property measures approximately 4.75± acres and is zoned Agricultural Residential-IV (AR-IV). This appears to be the original zoning designation. Records from Hall County Tax Assessors indicate that there is one single-family residence which was constructed in 1938.

The subject property was rezoned to Highway Business (H-B) on December 12, 2019 for the proposed use of a self-storage warehouse development with five conditions:

1. The development shall conform substantially with the proposed site plan and narrative, modified as necessary for compliance with current development standards at time of site plan approval.
2. All development of the property shall conform with §17.420, Gateway Corridors Overlay District (GCOD) standards.
3. All conditions of zoning shall be made a part of any plat of the property.
4. The front of the property shall be bordered by a decorative wrought iron style fence with masonry column accents. The remainder of the property shall be fenced per GCOD standards. The fencing is subject to the approval of the Planning Director.

5. There shall be a 25 foot landscaped buffer in accordance with the GCOD standards where the property abuts a residential or agricultural property.

The surrounding properties are zoned AR-IV, with the property to the southwest being occupied by Myers Elementary School. To the north along Candler Road is a Dollar General store, which is zoned Highway Business (H-B). Across Candler Road and the train tracks is both AR-IV and Heavy Industrial (I-II) zoned property.

Comprehensive Plan Land Use Designation

The subject area falls within the “Employment Corridor” future land use designation. These corridors have been identified as having the potential to enhance and maintain well-functioning, attractive corridors that facilitate vehicular traffic flow and pedestrian/bicycle connectivity, serve local needs, and coordinate land use patterns without encroaching on adjacent neighborhoods. Also these corridors intend to create employment opportunities where a location benefits from interstate access or supports industrial-focused development patterns.

The subject parcel also falls within the Gateway Corridors Overlay District (GCOD) and is supplemental to the underlying zoning district classifications. The GCOD governs non-residential property development standards.

The request is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

Development Support and Constraints

Hall County Environmental Health

In an email dated April 29, 2022, Emily McGahee provided the following comment: “A detailed business plan must be submitted to Hall County Environmental Health for review. Must meet all Environmental Health commercial septic system permitting requirements if septic system is required.”

Hall County Fire Services

The subject property is located approximately 0.6 miles from Hall County Fire Station #9 located at 5040 Poplar Springs Road, Gainesville. The nearest fire hydrant is located just south of the property along Candler Road, approximately 25 feet away.

Hall County Public Works and Utilities

Per a memo dated April 28, 2022, from Bill Nash, Interim Director of Public Works and Utilities, the following comments were provided:

Engineering

The 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 wretched vegetation, not centerline of creek.

Traffic Engineering

Driveway would be permitted by GDOT.

Utilities

Located in Gainesville-Hall County joint sewer district. Currently, Hall County has no sanitary sewer in this area.

Hall County Tax Assessors

No comment provided.

Gainesville Water Resources

Public water is available from the City of Gainesville along Candler Road.

Georgia Department of Transportation

In an email dated April 26, 2022, Parker Niebauer, D1TO Traffic Operations Supervisor for the Georgia Department of Transportation, acknowledged that this project would require GDOT coordination.

Zoning Analysis

- The applicant is requesting a Use Subject to County Commission approval in order to develop a 21,040 square foot self-storage facility.
 - The proposed use is consistent with the Hall County Comprehensive Plan.
- §17.240.040 of the Official Code of Hall County provides standards for setbacks from arterial streets.
 - Specifically, no structure may be placed less than 100 feet from the center line of an arterial street.
 - **It cannot be determined** if this standard as met, but it appears that the proposed storage building is located approximately 70 feet from the centerline of Candler Road.
- In 2007, the Hall County Board of Commissioners adopted the Gateway Corridors Overlay District (GCOD) standards as part of the Official Code of Hall County. The GCOD governs non-residential property development standards.
 - A self-storage facility is a conditional use subject to county commissioner approval within the Gateway Corridor Overlay District. This application addresses this approval requirement.
- §17.420.050.C. of the Official Code of Hall County provides standards for transitional buffers for properties within the GCOD.
 - Specifically, a transitional buffer shall be required along and inside the property line of a non-residential property abutting a residentially zoned property. Where a commercial zoning district abuts property zoned for single-family residential or agricultural use, the minimum width shall be 25 feet.
 - The site plan shows a 25 foot buffer along the southern, western, and the rear portion of the northern property line where it is adjacent to AR-IV zoned parcels. This standard **is met**.
 - Transitional buffers that are 25 feet in width or greater shall meet at least two of the three following criteria: be planted with a staggered double row of evergreen trees at least six feet in height, a single row of deciduous shade trees at least two inches caliper dbh, (minimum 30 feet height at maturity) and two staggered rows of evergreen shrubs

at least three feet in height, planted a maximum of four feet on center, or other arrangement approved by the director that provides a dense visual screen.

- The applicant has indicated that Green Giant Arborvitae evergreen trees will be planted to provide buffer and screening, but there was no detailed landscape plan submitted so **it cannot be determined** if this standard is met.
- §17.420.050.D. of the Official Code of Hall County provides standards for other landscaping requirements, including building perimeter walls, street frontage, loading and service areas, and screening of storage and accessory equipment.
 - Based on the submitted narrative and site plan it **cannot be determined** if these standards are met.
- §17.420.050.E. of the Official Code of Hall County provides standards for parking lot design including paving materials and landscaping requirements.
 - Specifically, §17.420.050.E.3 requires all parking areas to be paved with asphalt or concrete.
 - The proposed boat and RV storage area is proposed to be gravel and as such **does not meet** this standard and **a variance would be required**.
- §17.420.050.F. of the Official Code of Hall County provides standards for outdoor lighting for the development. The applicant has stated that the lighting would be provided by Jackson EMC but has not detailed the proposed type of lighting.
 - Only incandescent, florescent, metal halide, low-pressure sodium, or color corrected, high-pressure sodium may be used. The same type of lighting must be used for the same or similar types of lighting on any one site.
 - **It cannot be determined** if this standard is met.
- §17.420.050.G of the Official Code of Hall County discusses interparcel access.
 - Interparcel access, joint driveways, cross access drives and access easements shall be strongly encouraged for adjacent non-residential development along an arterial or collector street, except where the director determines that they are unfeasible because of topographic or other site-specific constraints.
 - There is no proposed interparcel access between this development and the Dollar General property to the north. This standards **is not met**.
- §17.420.050.H. of the Official Code of Hall County provides detailed architectural standards for non-residential buildings, including the use of a common palette of building materials maintained for all sides of principal buildings.
 - Building materials used for all four sides of new or reconstructed buildings are restricted to the following: brick, stone, split-face block/concrete masonry unit (CMU, restricted to 50 percent of the surface area of each side of a principal building), stucco (restricted to 50 percent of the surface area of each side of a building), glass and glass block. Exposed metal is prohibited, as is exposed or painted concrete block and pre-cast concrete walls.
 - The applicant has requested a variance from this standard and is proposing that the building closest to Candler Road meet the GCOD standards but all elevations of the remaining self-storage building include metal. No elevations were included as part of the application. This **does not meet** GCOD standards and **a variance would be required**.
- §17.420.060. of the Official Code of Hall County discusses sign standards for the Gateway Corridor Overlay district.
 - There is a proposed monument sign to be constructed from materials matching the decorative fencing positioned perpendicular to Candler Road/State Route 60. The sign will be externally illuminated with non-spill up lighting for nighttime visibility. The

masonry for the sign will not exceed 13 feet in width and 10 feet in height with the sign area proposed to be 8 foot by 4 foot/32 square feet.

- The maximum height of the sign and square footage of the sign face based upon gross floor area of the building:
 - 0—10,000 sq. ft. of gross floor area
 - 32 sq. ft. (each side)
 - 8 ft. above street grade
 - 10,001—50,000 sq. ft.
 - 48 sq. ft. (each side)
 - 8 ft. above street grade
 - 50,001—100,000 sq. ft.
 - 64 sq. ft. (each side)
 - 10 ft. above street grade
 - Over 100,000 sq. ft.
 - 96 sq. ft. (each side)
 - 12 ft. above street grade
- Additionally, §17.270.030.M outlines the standards for the supporting structures a sign. Specifically, supporting structures of natural finish brick masonry, stone masonry, or wood shall not be counted in the sign area, provided that:
 - a. Such structures do not extend more than one foot above or two feet beyond the ends of the sign;
 - The proposed height of the monument is 10 feet and the proposed width is 13 feet. This **does not meet** the standard as the sign area is only proposed to be 8 feet in width and 4 feet in height. **A variance would be required.**
 - b. The height of the combined sign and supporting structure does not exceed the maximum height allowed in this chapter; and
 - The proposed height of 10 feet exceed the maximum height of 8 feet above grade. This **does not meet** the standard and **a variance would be required.**
 - c. The area of the combined sign and supporting structure does not exceed twice the area of the sign itself.
 - The combined sign and supporting structure is 132 square feet, which does exceed twice the area of the sign itself. This **does not meet** the standard and **a variance would be required.**

Variances to the Official Code of Hall County

Based upon the applicant's narrative and submitted materials, the following variances would be needed for the project as described. Staff recommends **denial** to the following variances to maintain the integrity of the Gateway Corridors Overlay District standards:

1. §17.240.040 requires that no structure be placed less than 100 feet from the center line of an arterial street.
2. §17.420.050.E.3 requires all parking areas to be paved with asphalt or concrete.
3. §17.420.050.H.2 requires the use of a common pallet of building materials for all four sides of principal buildings.
4. §17.270.030.M and §17.420.060 provide the sign standards for this development.

Staff Recommendation

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

1. The development shall conform substantially with the proposed site plan and narrative, modified as necessary for compliance with current development standards at time of site plan approval.
2. All development of the property shall conform with §17.420, Gateway Corridors Overlay District (GCOD) standards.
3. No variance to the Official Code of Hall County are granted as part of this request.
4. All conditions of zoning shall be made a part of any plat of the property.
5. All exterior architectural standards of the Gateway Corridors Overlay District shall be subject to review and approval of the Planning Director prior to site plan and building permit approval.
6. Any change of ownership of the property or substantial change to the proposed use will require a new use permit application to be submitted for review as specified in the Hall County Code of Ordinances.

Excerpts from the minutes of the May 16, 2022 meeting

Applicant's Presentation:

Randi Doveton, Planning Director, presented a summary of the request.

James Irvin, 164 Professional Drive, Baldwin, presented the request. The applicant stated that the owner would like to only have masonry siding on three sides of the first building adjacent to Candler Road because it was the only building visible from the road. The applicant presented a rendering of the fence facing Candler Road. The applicant stated they are willing to make the buildings 20 feet wide rather than 22 feet to give an extra 10 foot front buffer. The applicant stated they would like gravel area in the back for an open RV and boat storage. The applicant stated that the gravel area will not be visible from the road.

Jay Wilhoite, 1044 Poem House Road, Gainesville, presented the request.

Danny Crane, 207 East Fork Lane, Pendergrass, presented the request.

Public Forum:

There were no comments in support or opposition.

Planning Commission Comments:

Mr. Bell questioned if the property was visible to the school in the back. Mr. Hunt stated that the property line next to the school is fairly vegetated. Mr. Irvin stated that they have planted various trees for that purpose. Mr. Bell stated that it would be best to let the buildings meet Gateway standards and let them have the 30 foot setback with quality buildings. Mr. Braswell stated that he agreed and would like to see a quality development. Mr. Wilhoite stated that they would prefer metal panels because they are easier to replace if there is damage over time and if a vehicle hits brick masonry it will be more damage to customer vehicles. Mr. Hunt stated that there was no problem with the gravel parking in the back due to the vegetation buffer already in place from the neighboring back property. Mr. Crane wanted to make a comment that beyond the power line easement there is

very low visibility. Mr. Wilhoite presented the proposed sign for the facility. Mr. Wilhoite stated that the sign would be 10 to 11 feet wide and under 8 feet high and the surface area will be 48 square feet. Mr. Braswell stated that would be allowed under Gateway standards.

Motion: A motion to approve, with conditions was made by Mr. Hunt and seconded by Mr. Varner. Vote: 5-0

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