

**HALL COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION  
RECOMMENDATION REPORT**

**Applicant** ..... Gainesville Freezer, LP

**Request** ..... Rezone from Agricultural Residential-IV (AR-IV) to Light Industrial (I-I)

**Proposed Use** ..... Cold Storage Warehouse Facility

**Size** ..... 42.00± acres

**Zoning** ..... AR-IV

**Location** ..... On the west side of Athens Highway approximately 233 feet from its intersection with Baker Road; a.k.a. 2935, 2959, and 2971 Athens Highway; Tax Parcels 15023 000039(pt.), 15024 000040A, and 15023 000132.

**Commission District** ..... Three

**County Commission Date** ..... September 9, 2021

**Staff Recommendation** ..... **Approval, with conditions**

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

**Conditions**

√	1. <i>The development shall conform substantially with the proposed narrative, modified as necessary for compliance with current development standards at time of application.</i>
√	2. <i>All development shall be subject to all standards set forth by the Gateway Corridor Overlay District; no variances to these standards shall be approved.</i>
√	3. <i>All colors and materials for office portion of building shall be submitted and approved by the Planning Director prior to construction.</i>
√	4. <i>All conditions of zoning shall be made part of any plats of the property.</i>

√ **Applicant agrees with conditions.**

## **Applicant Proposal**

The applicant is seeking to rezone a combination of 42.00± acres from Agricultural-Residential-IV (AR-IV) to Light-Industrial (I-I) for development as cold storage warehouse facility. This will be an expansion of the existing Eskimo Cold Storage business, which borders the proposed development to the southeast. According to the submitted narrative, if approved, this would allow Eskimo to expand their capacity by approximately 50%, which would allow them to meet the needs of their customers. The business blast freeze and store frozen food products. The temperature inside the freezer buildings is typically held at 0°F.

The proposed building area will total 451,439± square feet in size. The proposed expansion would occur in two phases, with the immediate phase to include a third freezer being 185,536 square feet in area. A future expansion would increase the number of freezer buildings to four, and be approximately 265,903 square feet. The proposed development will be bordered by a 50 foot transitional buffer shown on the site plan along the northern and western property lines. Additionally, there are 68 proposed vehicular parking spaces, 46 loading bays along the southern side of the building, and 70 tractor trailer parking spaces. The development will connect to Athens Highway/US 129 via the existing driveway for Eskimo Cold Storage.

As part of this rezoning request, the applicant is also requesting certain variances from the requirements of the Gateway Corridors Overlay District standards, specifically; those variance requests are listed below:

- §17.420.050.H.1.a requires the principal building entrances to be oriented to public streets.
  - The applicant has requested the orientation on the site plan be approved due to the site topography.
- §17.420.050.H.2 requires that building façade be faced with brick, stone, block or stucco. The proposed cold storage warehouse's walls, however, are constructed of insulated panels that expand and contract with the heating/cooling of the structure. The expansion/contraction will not allow block, brick, stucco or other attached facing on the wall.
  - The applicant is proposing tilt-up concrete walls for the office.
- §17.420.050.H.3 requires materials for pitched roofs shall be limited to architectural grade composition shingles, natural slate, natural terra cotta, natural wood shake, or factory finished metal with standing seams.
  - The applicant is proposing to use a TPO membrane roof.

## **History and Existing Land Uses**

The subject properties total 42.00± acres, are zoned Agricultural-Residential-IV (AR-IV) and are undeveloped, wooded parcels.

The area surrounding the subject property is a mix of industrial uses and undeveloped land. To the southeast, the subject property is bordered by Eskimo Cold Storage, of which this development would be an expansion of, and zoned Light-Industrial. To the east, the subject property is bordered by smaller tract AR-IV zoned parcels with frontage on Dorsey Peek Road, a local road. To the north, the subject property borders larger AR-IV zoned parcels. To the west, the subject property is bordered by the right-of-way of Athens Highway/US 129.

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

### **Comprehensive Plan Land Use Designation**

The future land-use map shows the subject property as Rural Residential classification and within a Mixed-Use/Revitalization Corridor. The primary future land uses within this type of corridor are for retail, office, higher density residential (including multi-family), civic uses, and open/park spaces. Developments within this corridor should be low-impact industrial or higher-density residential only where the same is found on adjacent properties. The proposed use is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan as the adjacent parcel to the south is zoned Light-Industrial (I-1)

The primary land uses within the Mixed-Use/Revitalization Corridor are for industrial uses, business parks, and technology-based operations. For corridors with interstate or rail access that support industrial or more intensive commercial uses, the intent is to provide additional larger-scale employment generators.

### **Development Support and Constraints**

#### *Hall County Environmental Health*

In an email dated July 15, 2021, Emily McGahee, Environmental Health Inspector provided the following comment: "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 may be required after review of business plan."

#### *Hall County Fire Services*

The subject property is located approximately 2.5 miles from Hall County Fire Station #1, located at 2460 Athens Highway. There are multiple fire hydrants along Athens Highway, in front of the subject property, and on the adjacent parcel developed with Eskimo Cold Storage.

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

A memo dated July 20, 2021 from Srikanth Yamala, Director of Hall County Public Works and Utilities, provided the following comments:

##### Engineering

Flood in the Back Not Showing it on the Plans.

##### Traffic Engineering

No Traffic Comments.

##### Utilities

No Hall County Sanitary available nearby.

### Hall County Tax Assessors

No comments were provided.

### Gainesville Water Resources

According to the Hall County GIS map, public water is available to the property along Cornelia Hwy from the City of Gainesville's Department of Water Resources.

### Georgia Department of Transportation

In an email dated July 14, 2021, Jonathan Peevy, Assistant District Traffic Engineer, stated "GDOT coordination required."

## **Zoning Analysis**

- The proposed use is within the "Mixed-Use/Revitalization Corridor" land use designation.
  - The proposed use **is consistent** with the Hall County Comprehensive Plan.
- §17.160.010. of the Official Code of Hall County lists the permitted uses within the Light Industrial zoning district.
  - The proposed request **is consistent** within district.
- §17.250. Off-street Parking – Storage and Loading Requirements states that all off-street parking facilities shall be constructed of dust-free materials which will have a surface resistant to erosion, drained so as to prevent damage to abutting properties or public streets and periodically maintained by the owner, and such facilities shall be arranged for convenient access and safety to pedestrians and vehicles, as well as that no parking area shall be used for the sale, repair, dismantling or servicing of any vehicles, equipment, materials or supplies.
  - The proposed parking area material is not identified on the site plan.
- §17.260. Area and Setback Requirements state that the setbacks for I-I shall be as follows: 75 ft. from centerline of road or 50 ft. from property line, whichever is greater, 20 ft. from side property lines, and 20 ft. from rear property line.
  - The proposed development as shown on the site plan **is consistent** with the requirements of the Official Code of Hall County. The proposed building will be setback approximately 375 feet from the front property line, adjacent to Athens Highway.
- §17.420 Gateway Corridors Overlay District (GCOD) provides guidelines for non-residential property development. The guidelines apply to both permitted uses and development standards.
  - Within the GCOD, the following uses are prohibited: adult entertainment, junk yards, and billboard signs.
  - Uses subject to the approval of the Hall County Board of Commissioners include: self-storage warehouses, vehicle sales lots (new or used), automobile repair and maintenance, commercial outdoor recreation, car wash, and outdoor storage.
- §17.420.050.C describes the required transitional buffers for industrial developments. Where an industrial zoning district abuts property zoned for residential or agricultural use, the minimum width shall be 50 feet.
  - This standard **is met**.
- §17.420.050.E limits the maximum amount of off-street parking to 125% of the minimum proscribed by Chapter 17.250 of the Hall County Code. Hall County Code Table 17.250.020A requires that a warehouse use provide a minimum of 1 space for every 2 employees. The proposed development is anticipated to have ±88 employees, which equates to a minimum of 88 parking spaces and a maximum of 110 spaces.

- On the submitted site plan, there are 68 proposed vehicular parking spaces, 46 loading bays along the southern side of the building, and 70 tractor trailer parking spaces.
- The total number of employees is based off shift work and at no time will all employees be on site at the same time.
- §17.420.050.F lists the outdoor lighting requirements for developments within the GCOD. The applicant has not yet made a detailed lighting plan for the proposed parking area, but anticipates it being similar to what they have at their existing facility next door, which is provided by Jackson EMC.
- §17.420.050.H.1.b limits building heights to three stories. The proposed building will be one story, however it will be ±65 feet in height, at its tallest point, with an average height of ±56 feet. The height is driven by the nature of the warehousing operation and a reduction in height would prohibit the Proposed Development.
  - The application and site plan do not list the proposed building height.
- As part of this rezoning request, the applicant is also requesting certain variances from the requirements of the Gateway Corridors Overlay District standards, specifically, those variance requests are listed below:
  - §17.420.050.H.1.a requires the principal building entrances to be oriented to public streets.
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    - The applicant is proposing to use a TPO membrane roof.
- §17.420.060 governs sign standards for non-residential development within the Gateway Corridors Overlay District (GCOD). Specifically, one wall sign or marquee sign shall be permitted for each building or for each tenant in a multi-tenant building. The maximum sign area shall be 64 square feet per building, or one square foot per linear foot of storefront, whichever is greater. Wall signs and marquee signs are only permitted on the side of a building that includes the primary public entrance.
  - The applicant's narrative states that no additional road signage is proposed, but in the future, they may request a wall sign.

### **Staff Recommendation**

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

1. The development shall conform substantially with the proposed narrative, modified as necessary for compliance with current development standards at time of application.
2. All development shall be subject to all standards set forth by the Gateway Corridor Overlay District; no variances to these standards shall be approved.
3. All conditions of zoning shall be made part of any plats of the property.

**Excerpts from the minutes of the meeting of August 2, 2021**

**Applicant's Presentation:**

**Sarah McQuade, Planning Director**, presented a summary of the request.

**Jeff Reedy, 820 Candler Street, Gainesville**, presented the request. Mr. Reedy stated that he was there representing the other three partners with the business, as well as all employees and customers. He stated that since they opened their business, they have paid \$2.6 million in property taxes for Hall County. He stated that he was producing the best quality product for an affordable price. Mr. Reedy passed out a rendering of what the building would look like for the Planning Commissioners to review. He stated that this property falls within the Gateway Corridor and sits far off the driveway. Mr. Reedy stated that the front of the property will remain wooded and will not be able to be seen from the highway and he believed it would not need the required building materials. He stated that the competing freezer company were granted similar variances and he believed he should be granted the same variances. Mr. Braswell stated that the only change in the requested variances that he would like to make would be that the office portion of the building have a brick or stone exterior. Mr. Reedy stated that the he would be willing to do that.

**Public Forum:**

No one spoke in favor or opposition of the request.

**Motion:        *Mr. Bell made a motion to recommend approval, with conditions for the request, with a second from Mr. Hunt and the motion passed by a 5-0 vote.***

*Conditions:*

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