



STAFF REPORT

MORGAN COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

PETITION FOR: CONDITIONAL USE

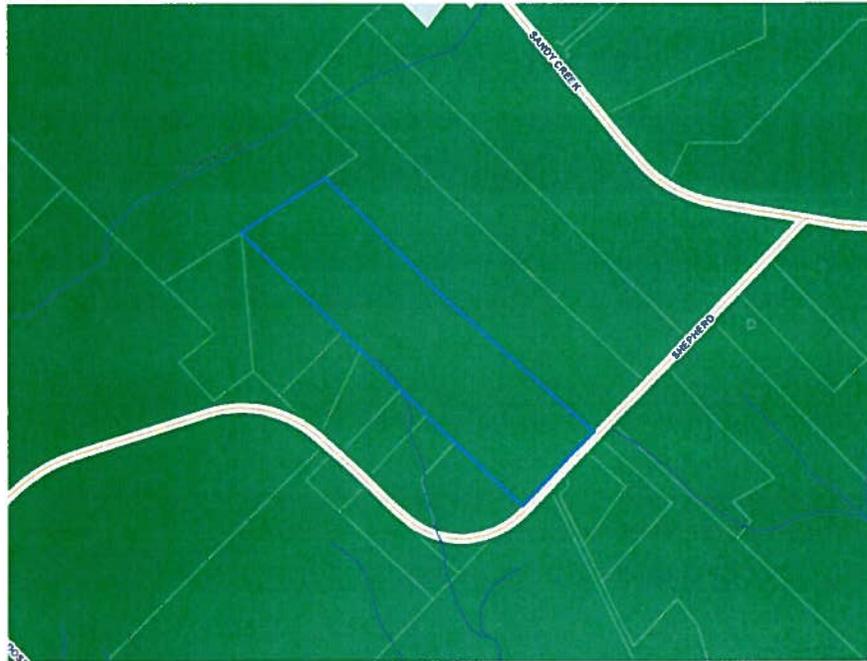
Property location: 1370 Shepherd Road
Property tax parcel: 018-022B
Acreage: 58 acres
Applicant: Donald & Julie Parsons, 1091 Sweetbriar Trace, Madison
Applicant's Agent: N/A
Property Owner: Thrasher Mary Moon Estate, 1520 Shepherd Road, Madison
Existing Use: Residential and agricultural land
Proposed Use: Event Facility and Farm

Summary

Donald and Julie Parsons are requesting Conditional Use approval to operate an Event Facility on 58 acres located at 1370 Shepherd Road, off of Sandy Creek Road. The property is currently used as a farm, with one residential structure and an accessory building.



The property is located off of the eastern portion of Sandy Creek Road. The majority of the adjacent properties are used as farm or large residential lots.



The Zoning Map shows the property is Agricultural (AG) and is surrounded by the same zoning district classification.



The Future Land Use Map shows the property as Agricultural/Forestry/Estate Residential and is surrounded by the same classification. The Comprehensive Plan supports agri-tourism.

Criteria for Consideration

Section 21.3.1 Required Findings from Conditional Use Approval from the Morgan County Zoning Ordinance:

1. Adequate provision is made by the applicant to reduce any adverse environmental impacts of the proposed use to an acceptable level;
2. Vehicular traffic and pedestrian movement on adjacent streets will not be substantially hindered or endangered;
3. Off-street parking and loading, and the entrance to and exit from such parking and loading, will be adequate in terms of location, amount and design to service the use;
4. Public facilities and utilities are capable of adequately serving the proposed use;
5. Granting the request would not be an illogical extension of a use which would introduce damaging volumes of (1) agricultural, (2) commercial, (3) industrial, or (4) high density apartment use into a stable neighborhood of well-maintained single family homes, and likely lead to decreasing surrounding property values, neighborhood deterioration, spreading of blight, and additional requests of a similar nature which would expand the problem;
6. Granting the request would not lead to congestion, noise and traffic hazards or overload public facilities, current or planned;
7. Granting the request would conform to the general expectation for the area population growth and distribution according to the Comprehensive Land Use Plan;
8. Granting the request would not lead to a major negative change in existing (1) levels of public service, (2) government employees or (3) fiscal stability;
9. Granting the request would not have a "domino effect," in that it becomes the opening wedge for further rapid growth, urbanization or other land-use change beyond what is indicated in the Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

Staff Comments

The applicants submitted a very thorough application which meets the requirements of the Event Facility ordinance, as well as the criteria for consideration. One Event Facility is currently located on Sandy Creek Road (Phelps, approved 2012), but it is near Highway 441, whereas this application is for the eastern side of Highway 83.

The applicants are Morgan County residents and do not propose to construct a residence at the subject property. The Event Facility Ordinance does not require that the facility operators live on the property, even though the majority of the past applicants have done so. Staff also offers a clarification regarding the CUVA (conservation use tax abatement program) statements in the applicant's letter: The Georgia legislature, in an effort to support agri-tourism, approved the use of farm weddings on properties enrolled in CUVA without penalty. The applicants are aware that, while the property is in CUVA, the use would be limited to weddings only, per state law.

**The Barn at Shepherd Moon Farm
1370 Shepherd Rd.
Madison, GA 30650**



April 7, 2016

Morgan County Planning and Development

Morgan County Planning Commission

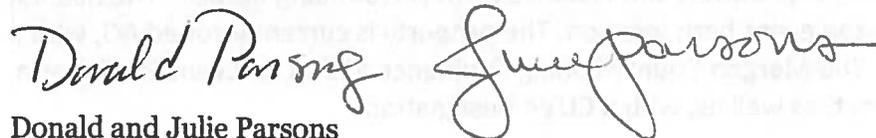
RE: The Barn at Shepherd Moon Farm

Donald and Julie Parsons are planning to build an upscale, rustic event barn at 1370 Shepherd Rd. Madison, GA. The property is 58 acres in size, has a well-established tree buffer surrounding approximately 95% of the property and is ideally located outside downtown Madison, GA. We would keep the current CUVA in place and would continue to utilize the front 7 acres for farming. We will build the event barn approximately 1,800 ft. back from Shepherd Rd. and approximately 1,200 ft. from the nearest residence, in a secluded stand of trees. The Barn at Shepherd Moon Farm would target upscale, farm weddings in the Madison market.

Our vision is to create a rustic, country-chic, upscale event barn, catering to small – medium size weddings (up to 200 people). We would utilize the Madison and Morgan County wedding and tourism infrastructure to bring additional weddings and business to the area.

We are asking for approval of a conditional use permit for the property, so that The Barn at Shepherd Moon Farm may be operated as an Event Facility. We believe the property is ideal for a wedding facility, will create additional tax revenue for the community, and will have a very low impact on the neighborhood. Our plans adhere to Morgan County's set standards for these uses.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.



Donald and Julie Parsons

1091 Sweetbriar Trace

Madison, GA 30650

832-451-4681

donald.parsons@gapac.com

Outline of Proposed PARSONS Project

The Barn at Shepherd Moon Farm Event Facility



Project Outline:

Donald and Julie Parsons, on behalf of Yvonne Star Huff, are requesting an Event Facility conditional use permit to operate a farm wedding event facility (The Barn at Shepherd Moon Farm) on the 58 acre property located at 1370 Shepherd Rd. Madison, GA 30650. The applicant intends for the property to act and function as an event barn, hosting farm weddings. The property has one structure currently, ~1,200 sq. ft. cabin that was built circa 1920 that would be removed or renovated. There is also a small metal utility barn that will be either renovated or removed. The property has its driveway on Shepherd Rd.

Our plan is to build on the 58 acres a 4,200 sq. ft. event barn, set in and surrounded by a thick stand of hardwood and pine trees with an estimated 1,800 ft. set-back from Shepherd Rd., remodel the existing cabin, build a small storage barn, and develop the property to create an upscale, rustic event facility. Property upgrades would include an upscale event barn, updating the cabin, extensive property clean-up and upgrades, driveway, extensive landscaping, gardens, sprinkler system, intimate lighting, 4-board horse fencing consistent with adjoining neighbors' fencing, walkways/trails through the surrounding woods, and an outdoor patio area with fire pits on the north side of the barn. Our plan is to keep the 58 acres in the existing CUVA and continue to farm the front ~7 acres of the property. We believe this farming aspect will add to the property's charm and appeal. We will utilize all of the existing tree buffers to help create the rustic, country setting, also utilizing the trees as our buffer against light and noise for and from the neighbors.

The property is 58 acres in size with a substantial buffer of hardwood and pine trees around ~ 95% of the property's boundary. The 5% of open property line (no trees) faces the adjoining property, currently used for farming with no residence. The reason we selected this piece of property, out of many reviewed in Morgan County, was due to several key reasons: 1) the event barn will be 100% surrounded by trees providing a natural light and sound buffer, 2) barn will be set back from Shepherd Rd. ~ 1,800 ft. with no visible line of sight from the road, 3) parking area will also be hidden from the road and local residences, and 4) very low neighbor impact due to size of property, tree buffer, and distance from surrounding homes. The nearest home is approximately 1,200 ft. from the event barn location. The property is currently zoned AG, with a CUVA in place that expires 12/2024. The Morgan County Zoning Ordinance allows an Event Facility as a Conditional Use in the AG zoning district, as well as, with a CUVA designation.

Property will include the following elements:

- Cabin
- Event barn
- Gardens, trails, and walkways
- Outdoor reception and patio area on the north side of the event barn
- Outdoor string lights and downward pointing, traditional barn lights, around event barn and outdoor area
- Open field parking area for up to 100 cars (~1.5 acres)

- Small barn for storage use (supplies, equipment, chairs, tables, and decorations)
- Septic, well, and utilities will be added
- Extensive landscaping upgrades throughout the property, focusing on the Shepherd Rd. entrance area, around the cabin, land leading up to the event barn, and land surrounding the event barn (4-board fencing, land improvements, clearing underbrush, gardens, sprinkler system, and tree maintenance)

Three major areas to consider for the neighbors on Shepherd Rd.:

1. **Increased traffic:** Average U.S. wedding attendance size in 2015 was 140 guests. Maximum guest at our barn would be 200 people. A wedding of this size will generate an increase in traffic of approximately 60-80 cars per event. We believe this additional car count on Shepherd Rd. for each event will have a minimal impact on current infrastructure and neighbors.
2. **Sound:** Since our barn will have heating and A/C, events will be conducted inside the facility, with some guests in the outside patio area. Most sound from the event will be contained within the barn structure. The distance and tree buffer to the closest residence (~1,200 ft.) will also provide additional sound protection for neighbors.
3. **Light:** Lighting for the barn will be traditional barn lights and outside string lights. Both of these are downward facing and dim in nature. The distance and tree buffer to the closest residence (~1,200 ft.) will also provide additional light protection for neighbors.

Julie and I have visited several wedding barns in the area, during evening wedding events, to research the sound and light impact. We were both very surprised and pleased at the low level of noise coming from events held at 9 Oaks Farm and The Barn at Crooked Pines. Since our barn is ~1,200 feet from the closest residence, and totally surrounded by an approximately 1,100 foot thick tree buffer, we believe there will be **NO** light impact and a **non-noticeable** sound impact on neighbors from events held at The Barn at Shepherd Moon Farm.

Other Considerations:

We will direct traffic from Madison (using Madison lodging and restaurants) to go north out of town on Hwy. 83, turning left on to Sandy Creek Rd. and left on the Shepherd Rd. to the barn. This route will minimize traffic in front of a majority of the residences on Shepherd Rd. Guests coming from Atlanta will be directed to exit 105 off I-20, travel north on Fairplay Rd., turning right onto Sandy Creek Rd. and right onto Shepherd Rd. Again, this route will minimize traffic in front of a majority of residences on Shepherd Rd. and is the most scenic route from Atlanta.

Parking will be set up in an open field, surrounded by trees in front of the event barn. For all wedding events we will direct and park cars with their headlights pointing north, away from homes on the adjoining properties to the south. This parking strategy will further lessen the potential impact of lights on surrounding homes.

The cabin at 1370 Shepherd Rd Madison, GA has a well for water, and is on a septic tank. We believe both will need to be replaced. We will drill a separate well for the event barn and place two 2,000 gallon septic tanks in use for the event barn.

The adjoining property to the north (~50 acres) is owned by a member of the Yvonne Star Huff family who is selling the 1370 Shepherd Rd. property to us. This property is farm land with no existing home. The adjoining property to the west is owned by Plum Creek Timber Company. On the east/south side of the 1370 Shepherd Rd. property, there are six (6) adjoining properties, ranging from 5-12 acres; two of these properties having homes on site. See attachment for details on nearby homes and their distances from our event barn.

Julie and I have read and understand all of the conditions called out and required in the Morgan County Planning & Development Code Chapter 12.17 Event Facilities. We have attached our response and plans for each area highlighted in the code for the commission's review.

Our Request:

- Allow the conditional use for the event barn at 1370 Shepherd Rd. Madison, GA 30650.

Julie and I are very excited about bringing our dream to life and excited about the piece of property we have selected. We are committed to work with the City of Madison, Morgan County, and the surrounding neighbors to create a wedding event facility that everyone can and will be proud of. We will create a local, family operated business that will generate incremental revenue for the city and county and one that will be very conscientious of the neighborhood and families surrounding our business.

Chapter 7.32 Event Facilities

Section 7.32.1 Restrictions

Event Facilities shall not be used for motorized vehicle events, other than car shows. No Event Facility shall be used for racing events or timed sport competitions, other than those events regularly hosted at rodeos (such as barrel racing). Event Facilities shall not be used as permanent worship facilities or as athletic fields. Restrictions may be imposed by the Morgan County Planning Commission or the Morgan County Board of Commissioners. Not all sites within each zoning classification may be appropriate for an Event Facility, or for all events proposed. When considering a Conditional Use permit for an Event Facility, particular emphasis will be given to the size of the facility, the character of the property involved, and its proximity to residential areas. Potential adverse impacts on adjacent or nearby residential areas will be considered.

The Barn at Shepherd Moon Farm will abide by the above restrictions and will host weddings, family, and corporate type events. Our event barn will be ~4,200 sq. ft in size and will host up to 200 people. The character of the property, building structures, upgrades, and overall landscaping will reflect an upscale, high-end, country chic environment. Design elements for the facility and landscaping concepts are highlighted in the key design elements attachment. We will position the barn on a site in an area surrounded by trees and ~ 1,200 ft from the closest residences. We will also position the outdoor patio area on the north side of the barn, facing away from the two residences to the south. The entire 1,200 ft distance from the barn to the nearest residence is a thick wooded area, thus providing a comprehensive sound and light buffer zone. Based on our research, we believe that the adjacent residences will not see any light from the buildings or cars due to distance and tree buffer. We also believe that due to the distance and tree buffer the residences will not hear noise from the event barn. These are key reasons we selected this property out of many we reviewed.

Section 7.32.2 Exceptions

Church events or events hosted by non-profit organizations held in exchange for a donation are not included. Permanent facilities serving only 50 people or less may be excluded from these regulations, except use restrictions, provided adequate parking is provided and conforms to all Federal, State and Local ordinances.

We will abide by all of the above requirements.

Section 7.32.3 Site Requirements

The minimum lot size for Event Facilities shall be five (5) acres. All structures, whether permanent or temporary (e.g. grandstands or tents) must meet the setbacks required by the zoning classification where the facility is located. When located adjacent to a residentially zoned district classification, the minimum setback shall be the required setback or twenty-five (25) feet, whichever is greater. Certificates of Occupancy must be issued for all permanent structures. All other structures erected as part of an event must be removed within 48 hours after the end of an event. Set-up for any event shall not begin more than 48 hours prior to an event without approval from the Director of Planning and Development. Set-up and tear-down activities must occur between the hours of 7am and 9pm.

The Barn at Shepherd Moon Farm is located on 58 total acres and all structures will exceed setback requirements even though the property is adjacent only to AG zoned properties, not

residentially zoned properties. Attached is a site map which highlights event barn location and distances from each nearby residence. We will abide by all of the above requirements.

Section 7.32.4 General Requirements

All Event Facilities must have a valid Occupational Tax Certificate. No single event shall last longer than three (3) consecutive days unless pre-approved by the Director of Planning and Development. Adequate toilet facilities must be provided. Toilet facilities may include flush-type toilet facilities or non-sewered toilet facilities. Non-sewered toilets that are treated with chemicals must conform to the provisions of the International Plumbing Code, and all applicable regulations that apply to the disposal of sewerage. Ample trash cans must be provided. All lighting shall be directed away and shielded from adjacent residential areas. Any event that takes place after dark or plans to allow persons who attend the event to remain on the premises after dark, shall provide electrical illumination to insure that those areas which are occupied are lighted at all times. See Article 22 of the Morgan County Zoning Ordinance. The Event Facility owner or manager must coordinate all parking. Parking spaces must be provided for the maximum number of people to be assembled at a rate of at least one parking space for every four persons. Provisions must be provided for overflow parking. Adequate cell phone service must be available or a telephone must be provided at the facility for public use.

We will abide by all of the above requirements. The barn will have restroom facilities for men and women and each restroom will have a separate 2,000 gallon septic tank. Ample trash cans will be provided. Lighting for the barn will be traditional barn lights. These lights will all be downward facing and shielded from adjacent residential areas. We will also utilize outdoor string lighting; this type of outdoor light is very dim in nature and will not be seen by adjacent residences. The distance from the barn to the closest residence (~1,200 ft), along with the thick buffer of trees will also impede any light from reaching the adjacent residences from the barn lighting, inn lights, or cars. We will have ample parking to support the event facility and we will be on site to coordinate all parking activity for each event. We will employ a parking strategy that directs all headlights from vehicles away from the two residences to the south. Distance of parking area from residences (~800 ft) and tree buffer will block all headlights from residences.

The Excessive Noise Ordinance (Chapter 46, Article II of the Morgan County Code of Ordinances) will be enforced.

We will abide by the noise ordinance.

Section 7.32.5 Safety and Security

The Morgan County Sheriff's Office must be notified of pending events a minimum of 14 days prior to the event, and must be provided with the date, length of time and expected number of people. Information will be shared with other emergency services. The manager or owner of the Event Facility may be contacted if the Sheriff's Office or other EMS office has questions regarding the event. Road closures must be coordinated with the Morgan County Sheriff's Office and approved by the Morgan County Board of Commissioners 45 days prior to the event. Traffic lanes and other adequate access to event structures shall be designated and left open for access and travel for ambulances, fire trucks and other emergency vehicles. Emergency medical staff must be provided if over 500 people are expected to attend.

The Event Facility owner or manager is solely responsible for accessing security needs and providing adequate staff. Extinguishing devices must be provided, sufficient to meet all State and Local standards and sufficient (knowledgeable) personnel must be present to operate such devices. All equipment, regardless of power source, must comply with all Federal, State and Local safety codes. All vending areas and tents are subject to inspection by the Morgan County Building Inspectors.

We will abide by all of the above requirements.

Section 7.32.6 Food and Alcohol

The Event Facility owner or manager is solely responsible for ensuring that all food concessionaries are properly licensed. Events selling alcoholic beverages must comply with Chapter 6 of the Morgan County Code of Ordinances.

We will abide by all of the above requirements.

Sections 7.32.7 Signs

Permanent business signs must comply with this Ordinance. Temporary signs must comply with the following regulations for the purpose of advertising a pending event:

- Two signs of not more than four square feet each may be displayed on the property where the event facility is located (no sign permit required);
- Two signs of not more than two square feet each for the purpose of giving direction to the location of the event (no sign permit required);
- Banner signs may be displayed up to 14 days prior to an event with a sign permit;
- Placement of temporary signs: The signs advertising the event as authorized by this Chapter shall:
 - Not be erected on public property or on public facilities;
 - Have permission to erect such signs from the owners of the property upon which such signs are to be placed;
 - Erection of temporary signs: No sign or other form of advertisement shall be exhibited for more than three days prior to the date of an event, unless a sign permit is obtained or is approved by the Director of Planning and Development;
 - Removal of temporary signs: Signs advertising or giving directions to an event must be removed within 24 hours of the end of the event.

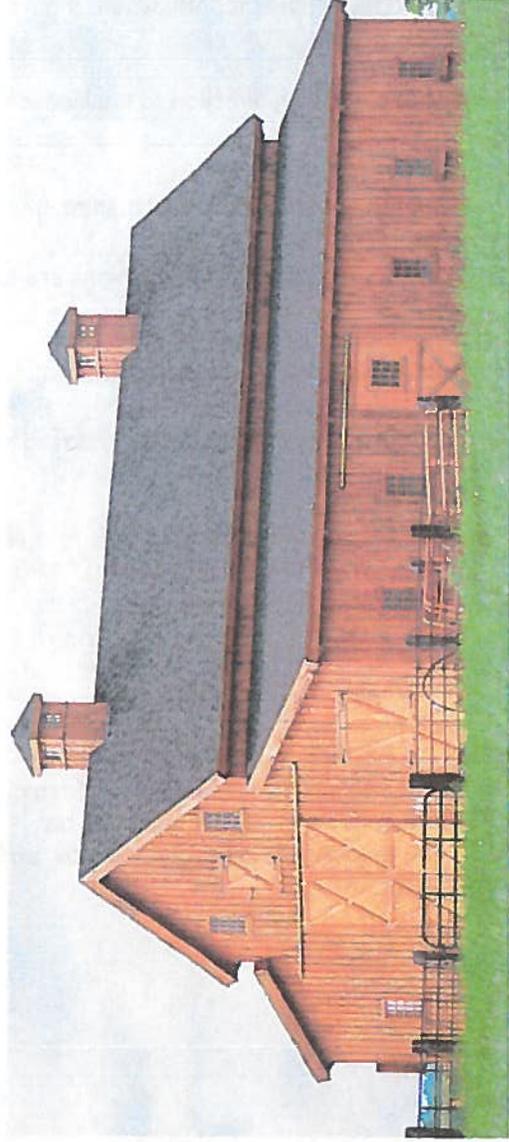
We will place a 4' x4' sign in front of the cabin located on the property with Shepherd Rd. frontage communicating The Barn at Shepherd Moon Farm. The sign will be tastefully designed and hand crafted to reflect the overall feel of the event barn and facility. We will abide by all of the requirements above.

Section 7.32.8 County Not Liable

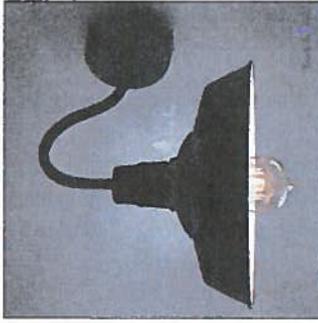
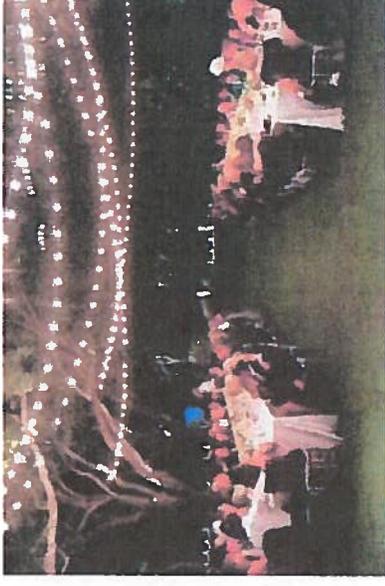
The Event Facility must sign an agreement to save and keep Morgan County free and harmless from any and all loss or damages, or claims for damages, including attorney's fees and litigation costs, arising from or out of any event. Prior to the issuance of an Occupational Tax Certificate each year, an affidavit must be signed by the owner or manager of the Event Facility acknowledging responsibility for all security needs, and adherence to all Federal, State and Local safety codes via self-inspections.

We will abide by all of the above requirements.

The Barn at Shepherd Moon Farm Key Design Elements

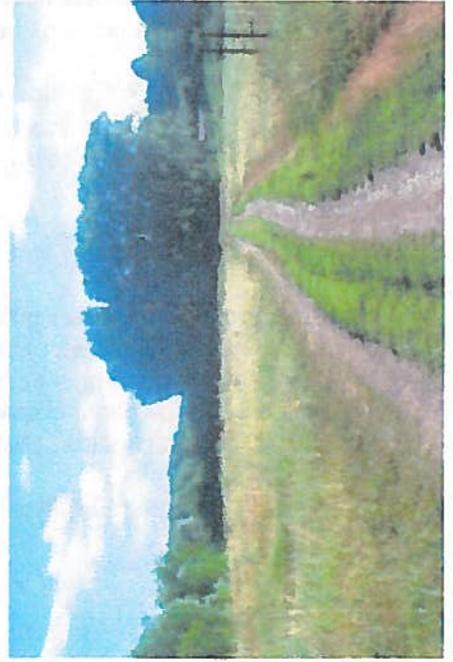


Great Plains Western barn design

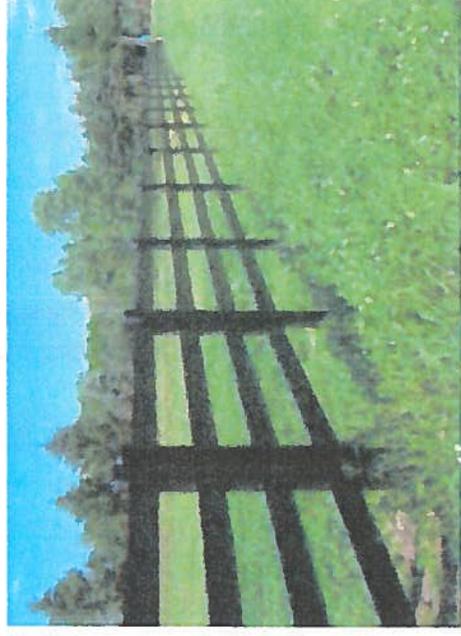


Downward pointing traditional barn lighting

Outdoor string lighting

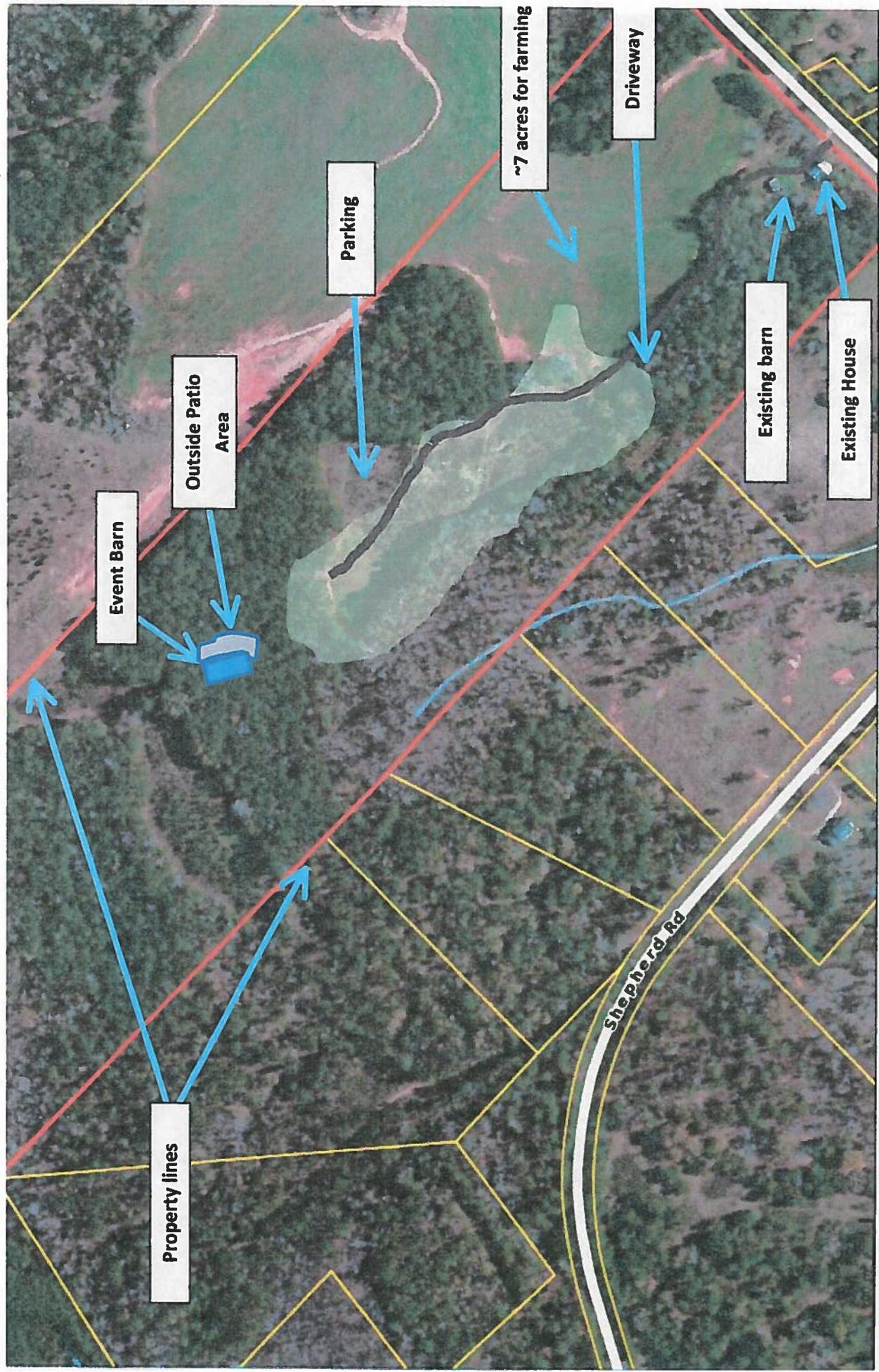
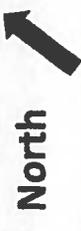


Dirt drive way



Black 4-board horse fence

reliminary Building Location and Site Plans: The Barn at Shepherd Moon Farm

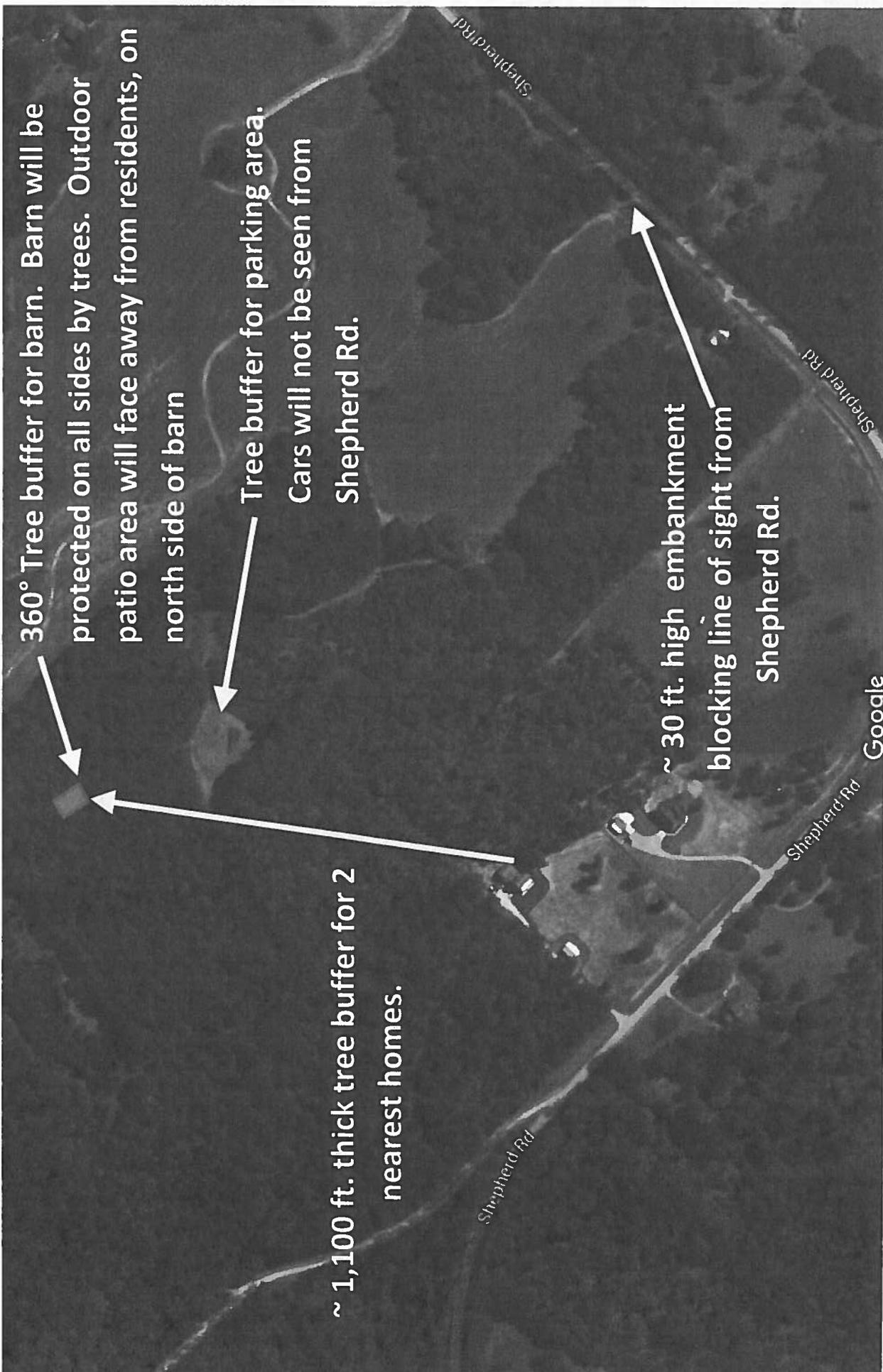


Project Name: The Barn at Shepherd Moon Farm
Project Owners: Donald & Julie Parsons
Date: April 2016
External dimensions of barn: 64' x 72'
Jumpster: None on site
Barn height: 34'
Total Project acres: 58 acres

Additions to Property: Event barn, update storage barn, extensive landscaping, driveway, open field park
Street Additions: No proposed streets
Proposed new structure: Event barn
Lightings: External traditional barn lights and string lights for ambience purposes (underground power lines)
External Dimensions of Property: 1.503 miles

Tree Buffer for The Barn at Shepherd Moon Farm

North



360° Tree buffer for barn. Barn will be protected on all sides by trees. Outdoor patio area will face away from residents, on north side of barn

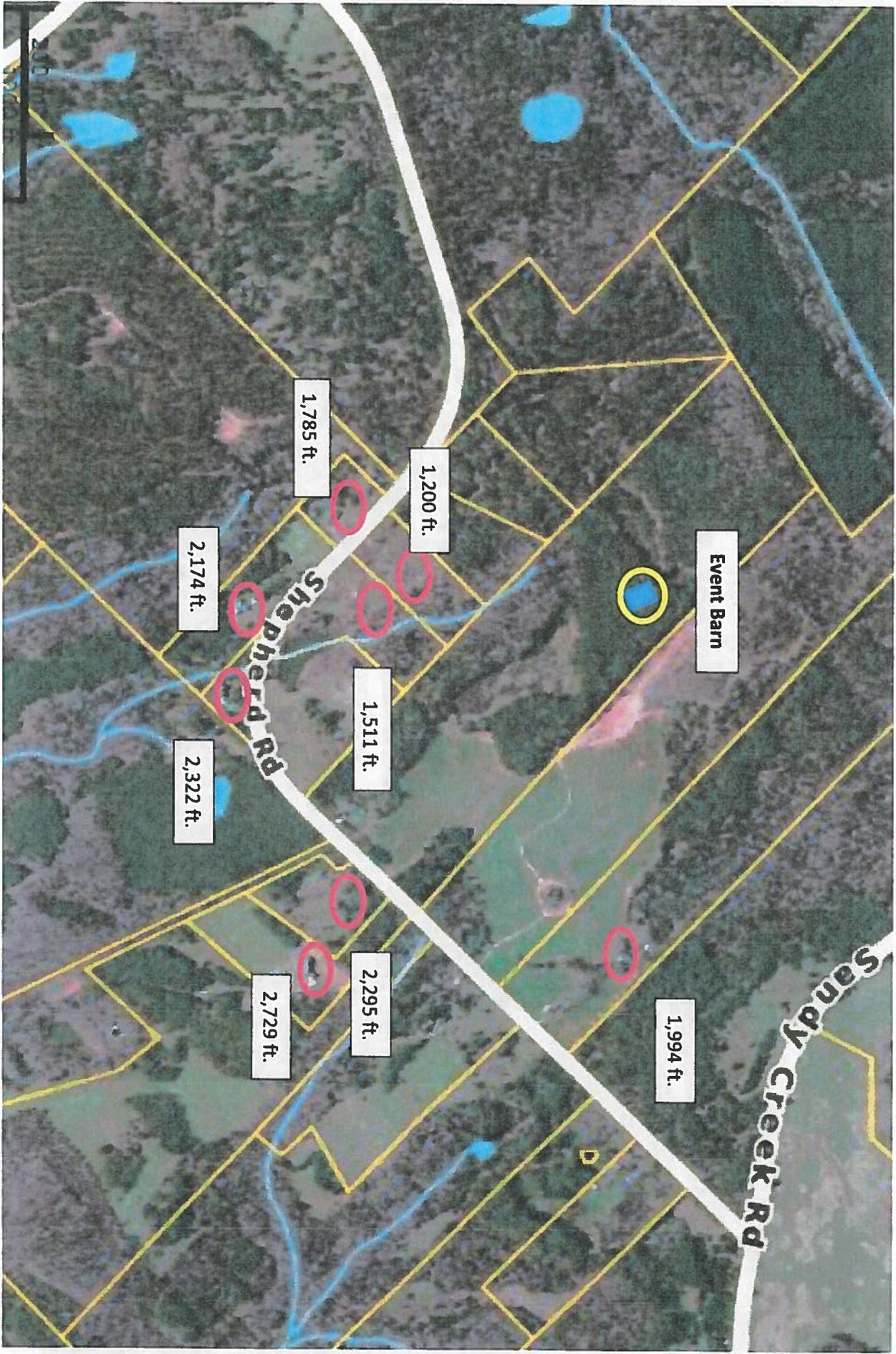
Tree buffer for parking area.
Cars will not be seen from Shepherd Rd.

~ 1,100 ft. thick tree buffer for 2 nearest homes.

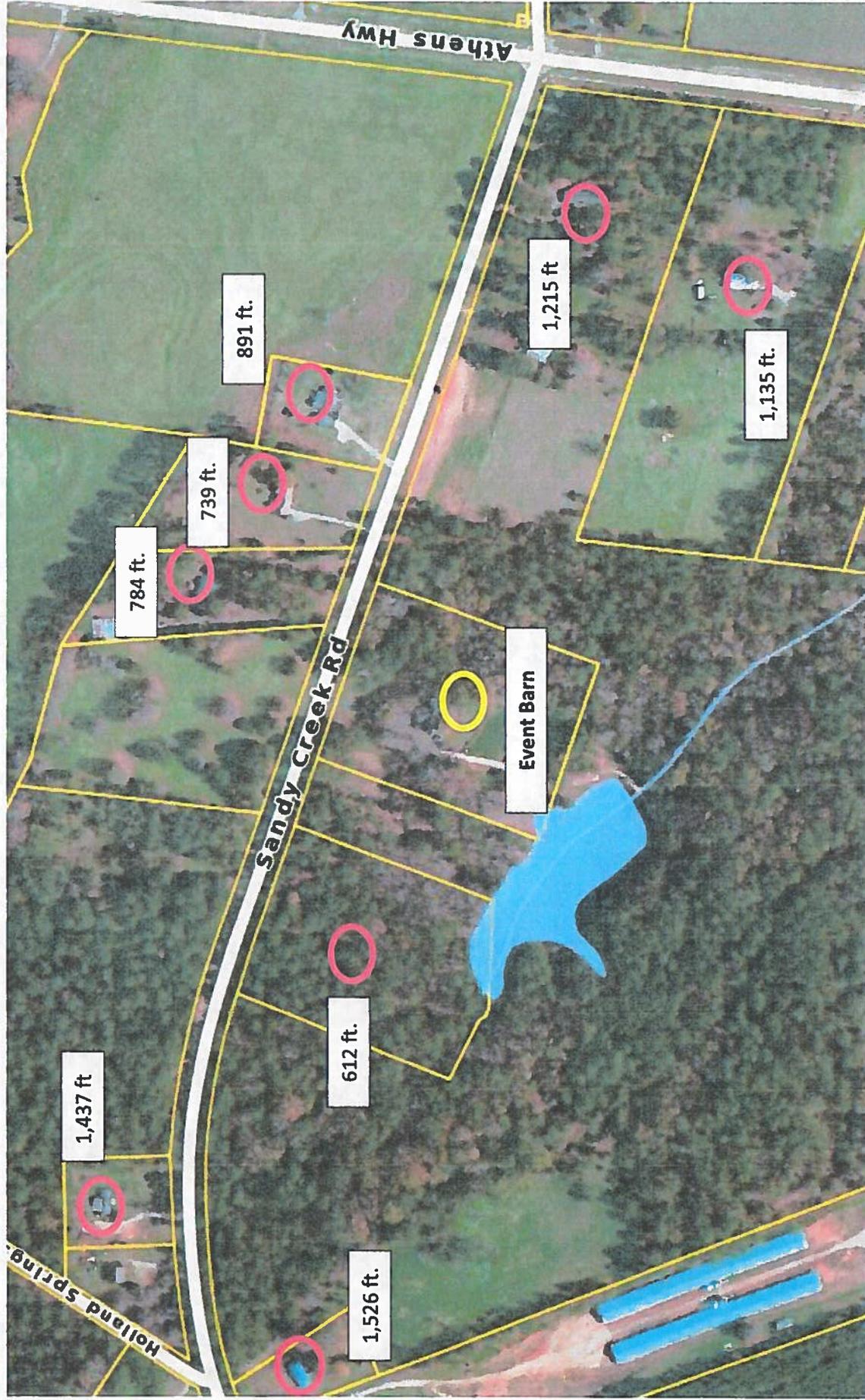
~ 30 ft. high embankment blocking line of sight from Shepherd Rd.

Google

Nearest Homes and Approximate Distance to The Barn at Shepherd Moon Farm



Nearest Homes and Approximate Distance to The Barn at Oakleaf Farm Sandy Creek Rd. Madison, GA



Nearest Homes and Approximate Distance to The Farm House Inn 1051 Meadow Lane Madison, GA 30650



