



STAFF REPORT

MORGAN COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

PETITION FOR: ZONING MAP AMENDMENT

Property location: Seven Islands Road and Bonner Lane
Property tax parcel: 052-043 (and 052-030F, see explanation)
Acreage: 10.19 acres
Applicant: GTLZS, LLC
Applicant's Agent: John Strauss
Property Owner: GTLZS, LLC, 7187 J-1 Washington Street, Covington
Existing Zoning: C2 (General Commercial)
Proposed Zoning: C3 (Heavy Commercial)

Summary



GTLZS, LLC is requesting Zoning Map Amendments for 2 parcels, with total combined acreage of 10.19 acres, located at the corner of Seven Islands Road and Bonner Lane. Part of this property was before the Planning Commission in December of 2019 to rezone 1.19 acres from AG to C2. The applicants at the time said they intended to combine that parcel, 052-030F,

with the 9 acres behind it, Tax Parcel 054-043. Those parcels were combined in February 2020. The entire 10.19 acres are now shown as Tax Parcel 052-043. Advertisements and signs were placed for both Parcel numbers, per the Applicant's submittal. See included plat for Hutcherson.



The above zoning map still shows a line where the properties were divided. The gas station in front of the subject parcel is zoned C2, as are two properties across Seven Islands Road. The nearest C3 zoning in the county is on the Highway 441 by-pass at the formerly Watson property that was rezoned in 2018.

In the Applicant’s letter, dated September 28, 2020, the proposed uses are listed as “general mini-storage, covered and enclosed RV storage, and covered and enclosed boat storage, plus any other uses permitted in C3.” Staff asked the Applicant about the “other uses” and was told the only intended uses were mini-storage, RV storage and boat storage.

The closest boat storage is on Parks Mill Road at Boats Works. The next closest is at Blue Springs Marina. The Marina also allows open RV storage. The closest mini-storage in the county is in Madison.



The Morgan County Comprehensive Plan's Character Area Map shows the area as Industrial, as indicated by the purple color. This designation was based on the presence of the quarry across Seven Islands Road. According to the description of the Industrial designation, commercial uses are allowed, although the primary targeted uses are listed regional employers engaged in manufacturing, trucking or production.

Criteria for Consideration

(Please note that the criteria below are bulleted in the Morgan County Zoning Ordinance, Section 19.3.1. They are numbered here for ease of use.

1. **Compatibility with Adjacent Uses and Districts:** Existing uses and use districts of surrounding and nearby properties, whether the proposed use district is suitable in light of such existing uses and use districts of surrounding and nearby properties, and whether the proposal will adversely affect the existing use or usability of adjacent or nearby properties.
2. **Property Value:** The existing value of the property contained in the petition under the existing use district classification, the extent to which the property value of the subject property is diminished by the existing use district classification, and whether the subject property has a reasonable economic use under the current use district.
3. **Suitability:** The suitability of the subject property under the existing use district classification, and the suitability of the subject property under the proposed use district classification.
4. **Vacancy and Marketing:** The length of time the property has been vacant or unused as currently used under the current use district classification; and any efforts taken by the property owner(s) to use the property or sell the property under the existing use district classification.
5. **Evidence of Need:** The amount of undeveloped land in the general area affected which has the same use district classification as the map change requested. It shall be the duty of the applicant to carry the burden of proof that the proposed application promotes public health, safety, morality or general welfare.

6. **Public Facilities Impacts:** Whether the proposal will result in a use, which will or could cause an excessive or burdensome use of existing streets, transportation facilities, utilities, schools, parks or other public facilities and services.
7. **Consistency with Comprehensive Plan:** Whether the proposal is in conformity with the policy and intent of the locally adopted comprehensive plan.
8. **Other Conditions:** Whether there are any other existing or changing conditions affecting the use and development of the property that give supporting grounds for either approval or disapproval of the proposal.

Staff Comments

The applicant points out in his letter that the location of the property seems to be compatible with the description for C3 zoning in the Morgan County Zoning Ordinance. The quoted Chapter is provided below.

Chapter 4.9 Heavy Commercial District (C3)

The Heavy Commercial District is intended to provide areas for auto oriented businesses and commercial uses, which benefit from direct access to the county's major transportation routes, including Interstate 20. C3 uses are generally not appropriate for single lot development, and the development of planned commercial nodes, when possible, is encouraged.

Due to the intensity of use and off site impacts, Heavy Commercial Districts are not appropriate for locations abutting single-family residential districts. These districts should be located in appropriate areas designated as commercial on the Future Land Use Map of the Comprehensive Plan.

Although C2 zoning is located adjacent to and across Seven Islands Road, there is no C3 zoning in the area. Consideration should be given to the potential spot-zoning nature of the request, as well as the compatibility of the request with the zoning designation description. Also consideration should be given to the Watson property on the Highway 441 by-pass, which was rezoned to C3 with no adjacent heavy commercial zoning (August 2018), as well as the 2 parcels on Highway 278 owned by Perco which we rezoned from C2 to C3 with only Industrial zoning nearby (August 2019).

Please also refer to the Applicant's letter, as well as the included page describing the Comprehensive Plan's Industrial Character Area designation.

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September 28, 2020

Sent Via First-Class Mail

Morgan County Planning Commission
150 East Washington Street, Suite 200
Madison, Georgia 30650

Re: GTLZS, LLC Application for Zoning Action

Dear Members of the Planning Commission,

This letter is written in reference to an application for zoning action for the parcel of property located on Seven Islands Road in unincorporated Morgan County with Tax Parcel number 052 043 and 052 030 F. The subject property is ideally located at the intersection of Exit 121 – Interstate 20, Seven Islands road, and Bonner Lane in unincorporated Morgan County. The current zoning classification for the subject property is C2 or General Commercial District. We are respectfully requesting that this property be re-zoned and classified as C3 or Heavy Commercial District.

The use that we propose for the property is general mini-storage, covered and enclosed RV storage, and covered and enclosed boat storage, plus any other uses permitted in C3. The closest storage facility of any kind is more than nine miles from the subject property. The residents and this area are in need of a service of this kind and the environmentally friendly use for which it will be utilized.

The subject property is an excellent candidate to be re-zoned from C2 to C3 because it is compatible with adjacent uses and districts that currently exist in the area. The proposed use will not adversely affect any adjacent properties or uses. The subject property is the exact type that is described as C3 in Chapter 4.9 of the Morgan County Zoning Ordinance. The Language in chapter 4.9 of the Morgan County Zoning Ordinance anticipates those uses which “benefit from direct access to the County’s major transportation routes, including Interstate 20.” This property is located directly off of Exit 121 at Interstate 20 across from the Martin Marietta – Morgan Quarry, where there are very few if any single-family homes.

The subject property has sat unused and vacant for many years. The property sits at an ideal location, and this normally is an indication that the suitability of the property under the current classification is far below what it could be. The suitability of the property would be enhanced exponentially if this application were granted because it would allow for this proposed use to move forward thus fulfilling a community need, creating economic development, and giving life to an otherwise lifeless piece of property. Further, the proposed use would place very little strain if any at all on public utilities or services.

The subject property is situated in the heart of Georgia's lake country. Many families in this area either own an RV or they flock to the area in their RVs to vacation on Lake Oconee. RV camping has increased dramatically as a result of Covid-19, and that recreational propensity is not expected to change anytime soon. The enclosed and covered RV storage would provide owners an ideal and secure location to store their RVs. For obvious reasons, the boat storage component of this proposed use goes hand in hand with the needs of residents and tourists in this area. Boat owners will be provided a clean and secure area in which to store their boats. The mini-storage component will allow residents of Morgan County a place at which they can safely and securely store their personal items which might otherwise become unsightly junk due to the scarcity of storage facilities in the area. The closest facility is nine miles away.

Taking the foregoing into consideration, GTLZS respectfully requests that this Board endorse the proposed use by granting our Application for Zoning Action and amend the zoning map to reflect a change in the property's classification from C2 to C3.

Respectfully submitted,



John L. Strauss
Attorney for and Member of GTLZS LLC.

Industrial



Intensive employment such as industrial park or warehouse/distribution center that is characterized by the presence of large, regional employers engaged in manufacturing, trucking, or production. A goal of this character area is to expand local industry and attract new businesses and jobs.

Character Area Location

Unincorporated Morgan County – Includes areas at county's western edge south of I-20, north and northeast of Madison at Highway 278 and Athens Highway; south of Madison between U.S. 441 and Highway 83; and south of I-20 at Seven Island Road exit

Development Patterns

- Employment centers with large, regional employers
- Consider grading, access to major transportation routes, and access to public infrastructure in locating industrial employment centers and large industrial sites
- Encourage location of nearby services for the daytime needs of employees

Primary Land Uses

- Industrial
- Commercial
- Business park

Implementation Strategies

- Continued protection of surrounding residential uses from noise, smoke, lights, and visual impacts of industrial uses
- Continued use of regulations for high-intensity uses, such as aesthetic standards, truck route designation, and required traffic studies for developments over 200,000 square feet