

Special Use Permit Application Report

115 McClung Road, Athens, GA 30601

Tax Parcel(s): 154 038P (the "Subject Property")

±2.138 acres



Applicant & Property Owner

DRH Properties, LLC (the "Property Owner")

DRH Properties, LLC (the "Applicant")

6083 Shadburn Ferry Road

Buford, GA 30518

Proposed Rezoning Request

DRH Properties, LLC (collectively referred to as the “Applicant” and the “Property Owner”) is seeking approval to **Rezone** and obtain a **Special Use Permit** for the Subject Property, identified as Tax Parcel 154 038P, from C-G to E-O in support of its proposed use as a multi-story Climate Controlled Self Storage Facility. The Subject Property, located at 115 & 125 McClung Road, Athens, GA 30601, encompasses approximately ±2.138 acres and is bordered by various commercial establishments along McClung Road, including Wendy’s, O’Reilly’s Auto Parts, Bojangles, Popeyes, a veterinary clinic, and Starbucks. Directly across Highway 29, a Kroger-anchored shopping center offers additional restaurant and retail spaces. Within a one-mile radius of the Subject Property are numerous multi-family apartment complexes, senior housing, single-family residential communities, industrial office parks, Athens Technical College, fuel stations with convenience stores, a liquor store, businesses specializing in heavy equipment and mobile home sales, and other enterprises typical of a mixed-use commercial corridor.

The proposed facility will be thoughtfully designed to maximize the existing topography of the Subject Property and will feature architectural elements that meet or exceed the standards stipulated by the E-O zoning district. Due to the grade transition from McClung Road to the lower portion of the site, the Climate Controlled Self Storage Facility will be constructed as a multi-story building incorporating a basement level to accommodate the elevation change. In accordance with a permitted FAR of 0.75, the maximum allowable square footage for the development will be 107,418 SF (calculated as 0.75 x 143,225 SF), pursuant to E-O zoning requirements. Additionally, along with this Rezoning Application and Special Use Permit Application, the Applicant is submitting a Variance Application to request the FAR be increased from 0.75 to 1.0 permitting a maximum square footage of 93,131 SF for the proposed building.

The Applicant had a market study prepared by BMS GRP in January 2025, which concluded that *“The Athens area is a growing market with multiple colleges having campuses in the area that feed a growing business sector as well as full time students at entry level school before transferring to UGA. There are permeant residents that rent apartments on an annual basis instead of dorm living. This site will have excellent visibility and drive by traffic that will help with leasing up as more sites are off the main roads. The site is well positioned to serve the area.”*

Approval Criteria for Zoning/Special Use Permit Action

- A. Explain how the proposed zoning action is compatible with the Future Land Use map, the general plans for the physical development of Athens-Clarke County, and any master plan or portion thereof adopted by the Mayor and Commission.

The proposed use of the subject property is a multi-story climate-controlled self-storage facility to serve the immediate needs of this growing Highway 29 corridor with multiple approved and constructed multi-family apartments and senior housing developments. The Future Land Use map characterizes the subject property as General Business. The proposed use of a climate-controlled self-storage facility is a business type that complies with this land use designation.

- B. Is the proposed use in conformance with all standards within the zoning district in which the use is proposed to be located, and in conformance with relevant comprehensive plan policies implemented by Athens-Clarke County and with all state or federal laws?

We believe the proposed use as a climate-controlled self-storage facility meets the criteria set forth and conforms to the Comprehensive Plan with respect to the use of the subject property within the General Business district. Until December 2023, the proposed use was permitted as a “use by right” land use designation within the existing C-G zoning district. The recent text amendment is what is driving this request for a change in zoning to what we believe is the least obtrusive land use as E-O, given that there is E-O zoned land in the immediate vicinity located on Hull Road, Pittard Road, and Old Elberton Road, all of which is

within ±1 mile of the subject property. Based on our review, there are multiple self-storage facilities in Athens-Clarke County located within C-G zoning districts.

C. Is there adequate capacity of Athens-Clarke County facilities for water, sewer, paved access to and through the development, electricity, urban storm drainage, and adequate transportation that can and will be provided to and through the subject property?

The proposed use of a climate-controlled self-storage facility does not rely on any public services or the use of physical facilities and/or the need for county staff. The proposed use is to be located on McClung Road (a fully constructed and operational county road). It will connect to existing utilities that are already present and have capacity within the immediate and surrounding area. The use of the property will not have any heavy demand for public services and will not generate any new residents who would put a demand on existing or proposed County services. This proposed use is a self-sufficient land use that will only generate property and sales taxes for the County's tax base, thus making this a positive land use on the subject property.

D. Will the zoning proposal have an adverse impact on the surrounding area? When evaluating the effect of the proposed use on the surrounding area, the following factors shall be considered:

1. Similarity in scale, bulk, and coverage.

We believe the proposed land use is compatible with respect to the scale, bulk and coverage of the Subject Property given the intense commercial land uses already established along the Highway 29 corridor and specifically the Kroger anchored shopping center located directly across the street.

2. Character and volume of traffic and vehicular parking generated by the proposed use and the effects on surrounding streets. Increases in pedestrian, bicycle, and mass transit use are considered beneficial regardless of capacity of facilities.

This type of land use does not generate traffic and will not encourage many pedestrians utilizing the public sidewalks, bicycle paths and mass transit opportunities to frequent the facility. Given the business type of providing both short term and long term storage of personal property, this facility will mainly be used by customers arriving and departing in their own vehicles or being provided rides by acquaintances who have their own vehicles.

3. Architectural compatibility with the surrounding area.

Architecturally, the proposed building will comply with the current rules and regulations for E-O zoned storage facilities at the time of development permitting.

4. The possible impact on the environment, including, but not limited to, drainage, soil erosion and sedimentation, flooding, air quality and water quality, including the generation of smoke, dust, odors, or environmental pollutants.

As is typical with all new developments in Athens-Clarke County, this development must fully comply with the terms and conditions of the E-O zoning ordinance and the development regulations as established by the Unified Government. That would mean detention and water quality will be located within stormwater measures on the subject property. After construction, there should not be any impacts on the environment, air quality, water quality, to include no smoke, dust, odors, or environmental pollutants shall be generated by approving this development as a climate-controlled self-storage facility.

5. Generation of noise, light, and glare.

The proposed land use will fully comply with the current Athens-Clarke County ordinances related to sound and light. We do not believe there will be any outstanding issues regarding this topic with regards to noise or light pollution for the adjacent and nearby properties.

6. The development of adjacent properties compatible with the future development map and the zoning district.

The proposed use as a climate-controlled self-storage facility is a complimentary and much-needed use for this portion of the Highway 29 corridor, stretching from the bypass to the Madison County line. This proposed use should not create any compatibility issues with the future development map and the adjacent zoning districts. With the rapid resident growth patterns and the commercial businesses continuing to open in this development corridor, the missing link is a quality climate-controlled self-storage facility. Typical land use planning creates nodes and allows a mixture of businesses to locate and operate within those nodes. This proposed land use is the perfect complement to the immediate area. It is an excellent use for the subject property as it is located in a hole below McClung Road and sits second tier behind the multiple drive-thru restaurant out parcels fronting Highway 29. McClung Road is a fully operational county road connecting Highway 29 and Nease Drive. Nease Drive is located at a 4-way traffic signal leading into the Kroger shopping center and its mixture of connected inter-parcel access commercial and residential properties.

7. Impact on future transportation corridors.

We do not believe this proposed land use will have any impact on the existing or future transportation corridors in the immediate or surrounding areas.

8. Impact on the character of the neighborhood by the establishment or expansion of the proposed use in conjunction with similar uses.

There should not be any impacts on the character of the neighborhood by the approval of the proposed land use. The “neighborhood” is largely commercial in overall nature dotted with residential pockets. This proposed land use is compatible with any growing area and all types of land uses need the opportunity for storage of items that simply do not fit into their current environments or are only needed “seasonally”.

9. Other factors found relevant by the hearing authority for review of the proposed use.

We do not believe the proposed use of a climate-controlled self-storage facility will adversely affect the balance of land use in Athens-Clarke County. Recently, we had a “boots on the ground” market study prepared for the proposed use on the subject property. This market study considered all the existing built and operational self-storage facilities in Athens-Clarke County, and the market study supports this proposed use on the subject property due to the proximity of the existing and proposed multi-family apartment units and senior living developments with a ±1 mile radius of the subject property. We believe a climate-controlled self-storage facility is a complimentary and compatible land use for the multi-family housing land uses previously approved by Athens Clarke-County and should be viewed as an asset to the communities they serve. The proposed climate-controlled self-storage facility will be similar in building size to the surrounding multi-family projects and the senior housing project. Additionally, its located across Highway 29 from a Kroger anchored shopping center that is similar in overall square footage.

As currently zoned C-G and located directly behind multiple drive-thru fast-food restaurants, there are not many, if any, commercial uses that can operate as a second-tier level business on a property that sits approximately ±16' below the grade of McClung Road. This property will require a high level of site development, walls, and importing of dirt to get within ±4-5 feet of the existing grade of McClung Road. *As an example, day care facilities and professional office buildings typically cannot operate on sites with higher development costs. Furthermore, the chances of any quality and/or successful commercial or retail uses being successful in this location are very remote due to the shape and topography of the subject property, as well as being located directly behind drive-thru restaurants.* This property's highest and best use is a building that can incorporate a basement level to help take up the grade. Additionally, the use of the property must be a business that relies on the immediate and surrounding area dynamics. Based on these criteria, the multi-story climate-controlled self-storage use of the subject property is the best land use due to the business model being able to afford higher site development-related costs and to take advantage of the presence of multi-family apartments and senior housing development meets located within a ±1 mile radius of the subject property.

The Subject Property is a remnant parcel left over from the commercial outparcel developments along the McClung Road and Highway 29 corridor. The subject property is approximately ±16 feet lower than McClung Road. It will require a particular use of the land that can afford the site development cost and incorporate a basement level into its design. Furthermore, Lawrenceville Land Holdings, LLC, a sister company of DRH Properties, LLC, is the owner of the recently zoned RM-2 multi-family property located adjacent to the subject property, permitting a "use by right" of at least 24 bedrooms per gross acre equating to 800 plus bedrooms. Lastly, the zoning requires Lawrenceville Land Holdings, LLC to incorporate a public road connecting McClung Road/Nease Drive to the back of the recently RM-2 zoned property. The proposed climate-controlled self-storage facility will have a curb cut directly on this new road and is located across from the proposed Dollar Tree development entrance.