

LOWNDES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM

SUBJECT: REZ-2021-12 US 84/I-75 Industrial Park ~542 ac., County Utilities, I-S, M-1, M-2 and P-D (Amended)

DATE OF MEETING: August 10, 2021

Work Session/Regular Session

BUDGET IMPACT: N/A

FUNDING SOURCE:

- Annual
- Capital
- N/A
- SPLOST
- TSPLOST

COUNTY ACTION REQUESTED ON: REZ-2021-12 US 84/I-75 Industrial Park ~542 ac., County Utilities, I-S, M-1, M-2, and P-D (Amended)

HISTORY, FACTS AND ISSUES:

This case represents a request by the applicant to amend the P-D portion of an approved site plan from 2010 to allow the use of solar arrays. The ~542-acre subject property is bounded by landfills to the west and two residential subdivisions to the east (Westwood Estates ~85 Residences and Loch-Winn Farms ~120 Residences). The northern property is largely agricultural/forestry with the exception of one residence adjacent to the northwestern corner of the subject property. The southern property is a mixture of highway commercial/light industrial uses. From a planning standpoint, a transition from the intensive uses to the west to the non-intensive uses to the east was the vision for this property. That transition is currently supported to the level of Highway and General Commercial on the Future Development Map. Solar arrays have been added to the M-2 zoned portion, currently owned by the City of Valdosta as a wastewater treatment plant.

Staff reviewed the request and concluded that a solar panel array such as this is not allowed in a P-D zoning district. A P-D is intended for projects that include interrelated residential, commercial, and office uses, unified by a development plan. A solar panel array is not consistent with this intent.

Intensive Service (I-S) zoning specifically allows for "... private facilities for... energy generation...which may require environmental permits."

The current site plan approved in 2010 is binding on all future use and development. A P-D Amendment requires a new, fully compliant site plan. Staff has not been presented with a new, fully compliant P-D site plan.

In addition, a solar panel array does not fit within the M-1 or M-2 zonings, as M-1 districts are intended for "warehousing, assembly, storage, and commercial services," while M-2 districts are for "manufacturing, assembling, storage, distribution, and sales activities that are generally high intensity."

Staff is supportive of a solar panel array on the property. The question is how to achieve this use consistent with the current ULDC standards. If the application was withdrawn and resubmitted to rezone the property to I-S, Staff will support the request subject to the conditions that (a) the only allowed use will be a solar panel array and (b) existing buffers are maintained.

1. Staff recommends (a) the pending application be withdrawn and (b) a new application submitted to rezone the applicable portion of the property I-S.

2. If this is done, Staff will support the request subject to conditions that (a) the only allowed use will be a solar panel array and (b) existing buffers are maintained.

Currently, there are approved solar sites within the County on E-A, R-A, R-1, M-2, and MAZ zoned parcels. The GLPC heard the request at their July meeting and interpreted solar panel arrays to be considered as essential public services, and therefore, solar panel arrays should be allowed in multiple zoning districts, including M-1, M-2, and P-D as presented on the subject property. Based upon their interpretation, they voted to recommend approval of the request by a unanimous vote of (9-0).

- OPTIONS:
1. Board's Pleasure
 2. Approve
 3. Approve with Conditions
 4. Deny

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Board's Pleasure

DEPARTMENT: Planning/Zoning

DEPARTMENT HEAD: JD Dillard

ADMINISTRATIVE COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: