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received zoning approval under a special use permit in 1997. At that time, the Unified Land Development Code (ULDC) had a provision whereby any uses not already designated in the code could be approved through the means of a special use permit. This provision no longer exists.

Recently, the applicant submitted a building permit application at which time Growth Management staff discovered that conditions of the existing special use permit were in violation. Updates to the ULDC since 1997 no longer contained definitions or specific regulations for operations as they now exist at the site. The applicant sought a text amendment to the ULDC which would allow for “wood processing facilities” through a special exception in agricultural districts, which was approved by the BoCC on May 13, 2014. This special exception application is the follow up to that text amendment.



Aerial View of Subject Property

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Wood Processing Facilities, per the ULDC

A “wood processing facility” is a newly defined use in the ULDC. Sec. 404.16 defines it as

“A facility that processes and sells non-treaded wood products or byproducts. Products produced from a wood processing facility may include products such as compost, wood chips, lumber, fuel or soil amendment or any combination of such materials.”

The full text of Sec. 404.16 for wood processing facilities is attached to this staff report.

Description of Site and Surrounding Properties

The parcel is located on North State Road 121 and has a Rural/Agriculture land use designation as well as an Agricultural (A) zoning district. To the east of the site is an 11.87 acre parcel owned by Plum Creek Timberlands on unincorporated land with a Rural/Agriculture land use designation and Agricultural zoning. Also to the east is a transfer station on County owned property. To the north, west, and south of the site is a 162-acre parcel with a Planned Use Development future land use designation within the city of Gainesville, owned by Plum Creek. This parcel has, however, the County’s Agricultural zoning and is currently vacant and being used for silviculture. Plum Creek has indicated that it is in the process of rezoning and amending the future land use designation of this 162-acre parcel.

Site Photos



Figure 1: View of access road looking west

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Figure 2: Access road looking east

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Comprehensive Plan and ULDC Consistency

Following is staff analysis of the consistency of this application with Alachua County Comprehensive Plan and the Unified Land Development Code. The underlying land use for this parcel is Rural/agriculture with an implementing zoning district of Agriculture.

Levels of Service

The Alachua County Comprehensive Plan Capital Improvement Element requires that the public facilities and services needed to support development be available concurrent with the impacts of development and that issuance of a Certificate of Level of Service Compliance (CLSC) be a condition of all final development orders. 'Concurrent' shall mean that all adopted levels of service (LOS) standards shall be maintained or achieved within a reasonable timeframe.

Traffic

The traffic level of service will not be diminished by this development, as no changes in use or area have been proposed.

Water and Sewer

Policy 1.2.4 (e) describes the minimum Level of Service standards for potable water and sewer. These are summarized in the following table:

	Peak Residential & Non Residential	Pressure	Storage Capacity
Potable Water	200 gallons/day/du	40 p.s.i.	½ peak day volume
Sanitary Sewer	106 gallons/day/du	Na	Na

There will be no impacts to water and sewer levels of service resulting from this request. The site will be served by on-site well water and septic systems.

Drainage

Policy 1.2.4 (d) states that the minimum drainage LOS standard for non-residential development requires a floor elevation of one (1) foot above the 100-year/critical duration storm elevation or flood resistant construction. All development will be required to meet this standard.

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Emergency Services

The LOS standard for emergency services will not be exceeded by this request. The request for approval of the special exception will not result in the LOS for emergency services at this site being exceeded.

Solid Waste

Policy 1.2.4 (c) states that the minimum level of service standard for solid waste disposal used for determining the availability of disposal capacity to accommodate demand generated by existing and new development, at a minimum, shall be 0.73 tons per person per year. LOS standards for solid waste will not be exceeded by this request.

Schools

The proposed request will not have an impact on public school enrollment in Alachua County. The requested special exception will not generate permanent residential capacity and thus will not create additional school demand.

Comprehensive Plan

The Gaston wood processing facility site lies in an area with a Rural/Agricultural land use designation. Wood processing facilities are a type of agricultural processing facility as identified in Policy 6.1.8 of the Comprehensive Plan. Wood processing facilities are allowed in Agricultural zoning districts through the special exception process.

Objective 6.2 of the Comprehensive Plan states *“Areas identified for Rural/Agriculture on the Future Land Use Map are for agricultural activities including forestry and other agricultural uses, such as cattle grazing, cultivation of field crops, vegetable crops, dairies and those commercial or other uses on a limited scale serving or ancillary to agricultural activities, such as farm equipment and supplies, sales or service, farmers’ markets, agritourism activities, composting, **limited agricultural processing as provided in Policy 6.1.8 above...**”* (emphasis added).

Policy 7.1.2 of the Future Land Use Element states that proposed changes to the zoning map shall be considered in light of: consistency with the goals, objectives, policies and adopted maps of the Plan; the availability and capacity of public facilities required to serve development, as well as the relationship of the proposed development to existing development in the vicinity. As mentioned, the proposed special exception is consistent with the goals, objectives and policies of Chapter 6 of the Future Land Use Element (Rural and Agricultural Policies). The special exception for a wood processing facility is on an agricultural site, as required by the ULDC. Adequate public facilities exist to serve the development.

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Unified Land Development Code (ULDC)

Section 402.113 of the ULDC states that *“the Board of County Commissioners shall, as part of a decision to approve an application for a special exception, make a finding that the application complies with both the general criteria and the review factors”* as follows:

(a) *The proposed use is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and ULDC;*

The proposed use of a wood processing facility is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and ULDC. “Wood processing facilities” were recently defined in the ULDC and allowed in the Agricultural zoning district by means of a special exception.

(b) *The proposed use is compatible with the existing land use pattern and future uses designated by the Comprehensive Plan;*

The site is surrounded by undeveloped, agriculturally zoned parcels. Plum Creek owns a 162-acre undeveloped parcel to the north, west, and east sides of the site which has a City of Gainesville future land use designation of Planned Use Development, although it is currently vacant and being used for silviculture. The Plum Creek PUD was approved after the existence of the current facility owned by the applicant. The nearest residential structure is over a ¼ mile from the site. Wood processing facilities are a type of agricultural processing as mentioned in Objective 6.2 of the Comprehensive Plan.

(c) *The proposed use shall not adversely affect the health, safety, and welfare of the public.*

As required, an operations plan has been submitted along with this special exception application. The operations plan outlines procedures to be taken by the applicant in order to ensure that the health, safety and welfare of the public are not jeopardized. In particular, the facility must abide by the Florida Fire Prevention Code and take measures to prevent fugitive dust and odors from escaping the facility.

(d) *Satisfactory provisions and arrangements have been made concerning the following matter, where applicable:*

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1. *ingress and egress to the property and proposed structures thereon with particular reference to automotive, bicycle, and pedestrian safety and convenience, traffic flow and control and access in case of fire or catastrophe;*

Ingress and egress to the site is via a paved road. Alachua County Fire Rescue is requiring the internal driveway/fire department access road meet code requirements FFPC: NFPA 1: 31.3.6.2.1(4) and 31.3.6.2.2(1). In summary, they state that storage site shall be reasonably level solid ground and that the fire department access roads to the piles shall be provided. The approval of this access road/driveway will be determined at DRC. These requirements have been included in the Operations Plan.

2. *off-street parking and loading areas where required, with particular attention to item 1 above;*

A stabilized parking area has been provided in the southeast portion of the site, as depicted on the master plan, which is of an adequate size for the needs of customers and members of the public to use.

3. *the noise, glare or odor effects of the special exception on surrounding properties;*

The special exception has been conditioned to mitigate noise through Condition 3. Condition 7 restricts outdoor lighting pursuant to Chapter 407, Article 14 of the ULDC.

4. *refuse and service areas, with particular reference to location, screening and items 1 and 2;*

A maintenance building is located adjacent to the stabilized parking area, as shown on the zoning master plan.

5. *utilities, with reference to location and availability;*

The site currently has well and septic on-site. An overhead electrical utility line runs from the entrance of the facility on-site inward toward the truck scale, as shown on the attached survey.

6. *screening and buffering with reference to type, dimensions and character;*

No screening or buffering has been proposed by staff for this special exception as the site is surrounded by similar Agricultural zoning. The

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property owner of the northern, western, and eastern sides of the site, Plum Creek, has also submitted a letter to staff stating it does not believe that buffers are necessary.

- 7. signs, if any, and proposed exterior lighting with reference to glare, traffic safety and compatibility with surrounding properties;*

The applicant has one unilluminated sign. Condition 7 of the special exception addresses outdoor lighting.

- 8. required yards and other open space;*

Staff has proposed a 20' wide fire break/cleared area and fire department access setback along the northern, western, and southern site boundaries in accordance with FAC 62-709.320(2)(a)3. This setback is intended as a fire break and to provide access for fire suppression vehicles in the event a fire begins to extend beyond the site boundaries. Additional setbacks include a 40' wood stockpile setback and 50' building setback for all sides of the site. Open space consists of a 3-acre stormwater basin located on the northeast portion of the site.

- 9. general compatibility with surrounding properties; and*

The site is surrounded by undeveloped, agriculturally zoned properties.

- 10. any special requirements set forth in this ULDC for the particular use involved.*

The special exception for this wood processing facility has an accompanying operations plan and fire emergency contingency plan to address the particular nature of this development.

Staff Recommendation

Staff finds the proposed special exception request consistent with the Alachua County Unified Land Development Code and the Comprehensive Plan as a whole. Staff recommends that ZOX-02-14 be approved with the following conditions and bases.

Conditions

1. The current special use permit on the site (ZOS-22-97) shall be terminated upon approval of ZOX-02-14.

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2. A Revised Final Development Plan shall be submitted within 30 days of the approval of the Special Exception by the Board of County Commissioners. In addition to general development plan requirements, the development plan shall include a topographic survey no older than 2 years, equipment operation and stockpiling layout, stormwater management plan, areas for storage and processing of the various vegetative materials, and sedimentation/erosion control plan.
3. Facility operations shall be conducted in conformance with the attached Operations Plan. Noise caused by the operation of the facility, including, but not limited to, the chipper, tub grinder, or portable sawmill, shall not exceed levels as set in Sec. 110.04, Table I, of the ULDC at any off-site location. Any operation of equipment, including, but not limited to, a chipper, tub grinder, or portable sawmill, which creates noise audible off-site, shall be limited to daylight hours, as defined in Sec. 110.01(d) of the ULDC.
4. A 20' wide cleared area/ fire break, fire department access shall be maintained along the northern, western, and southern boundaries of the 15-acre site in accordance with FAC 62-709.320(2) (a) 3. This setback is intended as a fire break and to provide access for fire suppression vehicles. The setback shall be maintained and cleared of vegetation that would hinder the passage of fire suppression vehicles. Buildings, parking, or storage of any wood or wood products (processed or unprocessed vegetative matter), equipment or material shall not be permitted within the setback area.
5. Parking and storage area for vehicles and any new buildings shall be located a minimum of 50' from any boundary of the 15-acre site.
6. Stockpiles shall be setback 40' from the eastern and western boundary lines and 20' from the northern and southern boundary lines.
7. Any outdoor lighting on site shall comply with Chapter 407, Article 14 of the ULDC.
8. Retail sales of mulch and compost to the public shall be permitted at the site.
9. The applicant shall follow the recommended practices for establishing and maintaining the stored materials (both processed and unprocessed vegetation) contained in The Florida Fire Prevention Code (FFPC), NFPA 1, Fire Code (Florida Edition), Chapter 31.3.6 (Outside Storage of Wood Chips and Hogged Material) and Chapter 31.3.7 (Storage and Processing of Wood Chips, Hogged Material, Fines, Compost, and Raw Products of Yard Waste Recycling Facilities). The current operation is required to be registered according to FAC 62-709 and as such the applicant shall also abide by the requirements of Florida Administrative Code 62-709 (Criteria for Organics Processing and Recycling Facilities).
10. There shall be no chemical treatment of wood or wood products associated with this

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facility.

11. Site boundaries shall be clearly marked.

12. Natural grade shall be clearly marked on site in order to measure pile heights. Pile heights shall be 25' or less from natural grade in accordance with the FFPC: NFPA 1:31.3.7.2.

13. Internal driveways/fire department access roads (reasonably level, solid ground, or paved blacktop, concrete, or other hard-surface material) throughout the "composting, stockpiling, and recycling" area, as shown on the master plan, shall be provided between the piles in accordance with FFPC: NFPA 1:31.3.6.2.1(4) and 31.3.6.2.2(1) within 60 days of final development plan approval. The current material above natural grade poses a fire hazard that endangers responding fire department personnel. The reasonably level, solid ground shall be as close as practicable to natural grade as possible to alleviate the hazard.

14. A 10,000 gallon fire suppression tank shall be installed in a location near the existing well suitable to extinguish fires affecting structures on site and shown on the development plan, within 60 days of final development plan approval. The tank must be NFPA 22 compliant and capable of being inspected according to NFPA 25.

15. The applicant shall comply with all federal, state, and local laws, rules, regulations, and ordinances, now and hereafter in force, which may be applicable to the use of the site. The applicant shall obtain all necessary permits required by other local, state, or federal agencies for the operation of this facility.

16. Violation of any of the terms and conditions of the Special Exception shall be grounds for suspension or revocation by the Board of County Commissioners.

Bases

1. The Gaston wood processing facility site lies in an area with a Rural/Agricultural land use designation. Wood processing facilities are a type of agricultural processing facility as identified in **Policy 6.1.8** and referenced in **Objective 6.2** of the Comprehensive Plan. Wood processing facilities are allowed in Agricultural zoning districts through the special exception process.

2. **Policy 7.1.2** of the Future Land Use Element states that proposed changes to the zoning map shall be considered in light of: consistency with the goals, objectives, policies and adopted maps of the Plan; the availability and capacity of public facilities

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required to serve development, as well as the relationship of the proposed development to existing development in the vicinity.

The proposed special exception is consistent with the goals, objectives, and policies of the Rural/Agricultural chapter of the Future Land Use Element and adopted maps of the Comprehensive Plan. Adequate public facilities exist to serve the development. Few existing developments exist in the vicinity of the proposed development, with undeveloped agricultural land surrounding the site.

3. Section 402.113 of the ULDC states that *“the Board of County Commissioners shall, as part of a decision to approve an application for a special exception, make a finding that the application complies with both the general criteria and the review factors”* as follows:

(a) The proposed use is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and ULDC;

The proposed use is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and ULDC. Specifically, Comprehensive Plan Policy 6.1.8 and Objective 6.2 speak to off-site agricultural processing facilities. The ULDC has been recently amended to include Sec. 404.16, which allows wood processing facilities within Agricultural zoning districts through special exception.

(b) The proposed use is compatible with the existing land use pattern and future uses designated by the Comprehensive Plan;

The site is surrounded by undeveloped, agriculturally zoned parcels. A residential/conservation Planned Use Development for Plum Creek has been approved on the 162-acre parcel which bounds the north, west, and east sides of the site, although no residential development has been proposed adjacent. The Plum Creek PUD was approved after the existence of the current facility owned by the applicant.

(c) The proposed use shall not adversely affect the health, safety, and welfare of the public.

As conditioned, the special exception will not adversely affect the health, safety, and welfare of the public. Staff has proposed conditions which mitigate the impacts of the operation including noise, windborne dust, lighting, and fire prevention. The applicant has also submitted an operations plan which provides further safety precautions.

4. Section 402.113(d) states that special exceptions shall address the following specific

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issues:

(a) *The proposed use is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and ULDC;*
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(b) *The proposed use is compatible with the existing land use pattern and future uses designated by the Comprehensive Plan;*

The site is surrounded by undeveloped, agriculturally zoned parcels. Plum Creek owns a 162-acre undeveloped parcel to the north, west, and east sides of the site which has a City of Gainesville future land use designation of Planned Use Development, although it is currently vacant and being used for silviculture. The Plum Creek PUD was approved after the existence of the current facility owned by the applicant. The nearest residential structure is over a ¼ mile from the site. Wood processing facilities are a type of agricultural processing as mentioned in Objective 6.2 of the Comprehensive Plan.

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(d) *Satisfactory provisions and arrangements have been made concerning the following matter, where applicable:*

- 1. ingress and egress to the property and proposed structures thereon with particular reference to automotive, bicycle, and pedestrian safety and convenience, traffic flow and control and access in case of fire or catastrophe;*

Ingress and egress to the site is via a paved road. Alachua County Fire Rescue is requiring the internal driveway/fire department access road meet code requirements FFPC: NFPA 1:31.3.6.2.1(4) and 31.3.6.2.2. (1). in summary, they state that the storage site shall be reasonably level solid ground and that the fire department access roads to the piles shall be provided. The approval of this access road/driveway will be determined at DRC. These requirements have been included in the Operations Plan.

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- 2. off-street parking and loading areas where required, with particular attention to item 1 above;*

A stabilized parking area has been provided in the southeast portion of the site, as depicted on the zoning master plan, which is of an adequate size for the needs of customers and members of the public to use.

- 3. the noise, glare or odor effects of the special exception on surrounding properties;*

The special exception has been conditioned to mitigate noise through Condition 3. Condition 7 restricts outdoor lighting pursuant to Chapter 407, Article 14 of the ULDC.

- 4. refuse and service areas, with particular reference to location, screening and items 1 and 2;*

A maintenance building is located adjacent to the stabilized parking area, as shown on the zoning master plan.

- 5. utilities, with reference to location and availability;*

The site currently has well and septic on-site. An overhead electrical utility line runs from the entrance of the facility on-site inward toward the truck scale, as shown on the attached survey.

- 6. screening and buffering with reference to type, dimensions and character;*

No screening or buffering has been proposed by staff for this special exception as the site is surrounded by similar Agricultural zoning. The property owner of the northern, western, and eastern sides of the site, Plum Creek, has also submitted a letter to staff stating it does not believe that buffers are necessary.

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The applicant has one unilluminated sign. Condition 7 of the special exception addresses outdoor lighting.

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The site is surrounded by undeveloped, agriculturally zoned properties.

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The special exception for this wood processing facility has an accompanying operations plan and fire emergency contingency plan to address the particular nature of this development.

Staff and Agency Comments

Department of Environmental Protection: No Comments

Department of Public Works: There are no FEMA designated 100 year flood plain on the property. The access road leading to this property from SR 121 is through Parcel 5946-005-000 and Parcel 7781-003-000 and are on FEMA 100 year flood plain. The access road does have culverts to convey the stormwater runoff.

Transportation/Concurrency: No Comments