

# Application Report

115 & 125 McClung Road, Athens, GA 30601

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

±3.288 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 the Subject Property, identified as Tax Parcels 154 038P & 154 038Q, from C-G to E-O in support of its proposed use as a Climate Controlled Self Storage Facility. The Subject Property, located at 115 & 125 McClung Road, Athens, GA 30601, encompasses approximately ±3.288 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.

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 Action**

1. 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.**

2. The proposed use meets all objective criteria set forth for that use provided in the zoning ordinance and conforms to the purpose and intent of the Comprehensive Plan and all its elements.

**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.**

3. The proposal will not adversely affect the balance of land uses in Athens-Clarke County.

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  $\pm 1$  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.

4. Public services, which include physical facilities and staff capacity, exist sufficient to service the proposal.

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.

5. The existing land use pattern surrounding the property in issue.

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. 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.

6. The possible creation of an isolated district unrelated to adjacent and nearby districts.

Yes, the proposed zoning district of E-O would be an isolated zoning district, as it's not adjacent to any other E-O-zoned property. However, the proposed use as a climate-controlled self-storage facility is a *general business* use permitted in C-G until the Commission approved the recent text amendment in December 2023. It is our opinion that the change to remove self-storage from C-G was not purely intended for this subject property, and given the recent approvals by the Commission to permit multi-family apartments and senior housing in the immediate vicinity of the subject property is the best reason to allow this proposed development and zoning change on the subject property. The proposed use is bordered by two (2) apartment developments and four (4) drive-through restaurant parcels (Starbucks, Popeyes, Bojangles, and Wendy's). This proposed use in an isolated district does not harm Athens Clarke County and will positively impact the commercial tax base.

7. The population density pattern and possible increase or over-taxing of the load on public facilities including, but not limited to schools, utilities, and streets.

The proposed use as a climate-controlled self-storage facility will have zero impacts on the schools, utilize very little water and sanitary sewer, can rely on readily available gas and power, and will not cause an excessive or burdensome use of the streets as the customers typically do not frequent these developments routinely once they place their belongings in storage.

8. The cost of the Unified government and other governmental entities in providing, improving, increasing or maintaining public utilities, schools, streets, and other public safety measures.

As previously mentioned in this Application Report, the proposed use as a climate-controlled self-storage facility should have zero, to little impact, on Athens Clarke County with respect to maintaining public utilities, schools, streets, and other public safety measures. These types of development are intended for the residents within a three (3) mile radius of the subject property to store personal belongings in a safe climate-controlled facility where once they store their items, they typically frequent the facility seasonally to retrieve and place them in storage items that simply cannot be stored at their residences.

9. The possible impact on the environment, including but not limited to, drainage, soil erosion and sedimentation, flooding, air quality and water quality.

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, or water quality by approving this development as a climate-controlled self-storage facility.

10. Whether the proposed zoning action will be a deterrent to the value or improvement of development of adjacent property in accordance with existing regulations.

No, the proposed zoning action shall not deter the adjacent properties concerning value or their improvements. Quite the contrary, the proposed land use shall complement the adjacent multi-family zoned apartment developments and the additional multi-family apartment developments and senior housing development located within  $\pm 1$  mile of the subject property. The proposed use will be a significant generator of property and sales taxes and add to the commercial tax bases already established along the Highway 29 corridor.

11. Whether there are substantial reasons why the property cannot be used in accordance with existing zoning; provided, however, evidence that the economic value of the property, as currently zoned, is less than its economic value if zoned as requested will not alone constitute a significant detriment.

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  $\pm 16'$  below the grade of McClung Road. This property will require a high level of site development, walls, and importing of dirt to get within  $\pm 4-5$  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  $\pm 1$  mile radius of the subject property.

12. The aesthetic effect of existing and future use of the property as it relates to the surrounding area.

**No pun intended, but the beauty of these buildings is that the architecture can be created to best blend into the surrounding area and environment. We have not settled on any specific architectural style at the time of this Application Report but fully intend to comply with the policies and intent of the Athens Clarke County zoning regulations for similar E-O developments.**

13. Whether there are other existing or changing conditions affecting the use and development of the property that give supporting grounds for either approval or disapproval of the zoning proposal.

**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  $\pm 16$  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.**