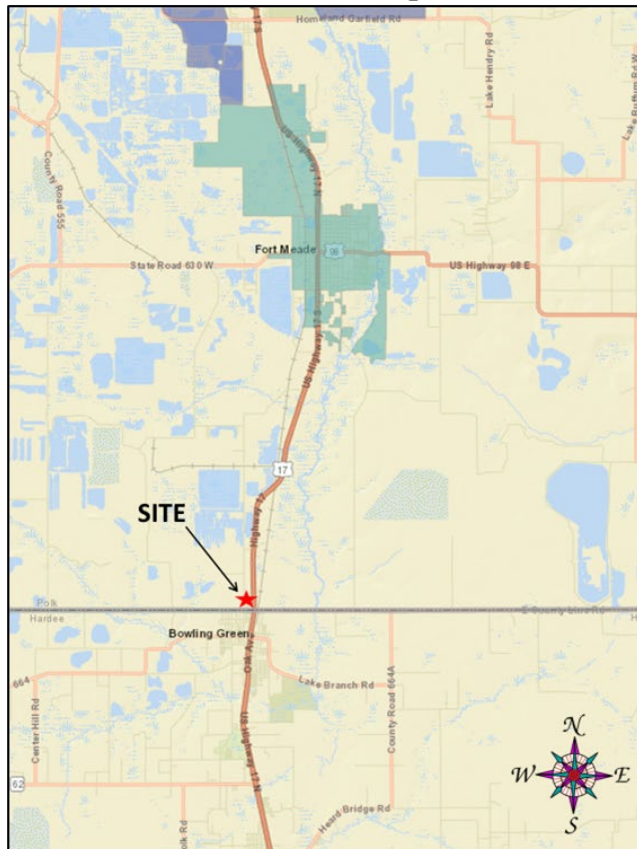


# POLK COUNTY DEVELOPMENT REVIEW COMMITTEE STAFF REPORT

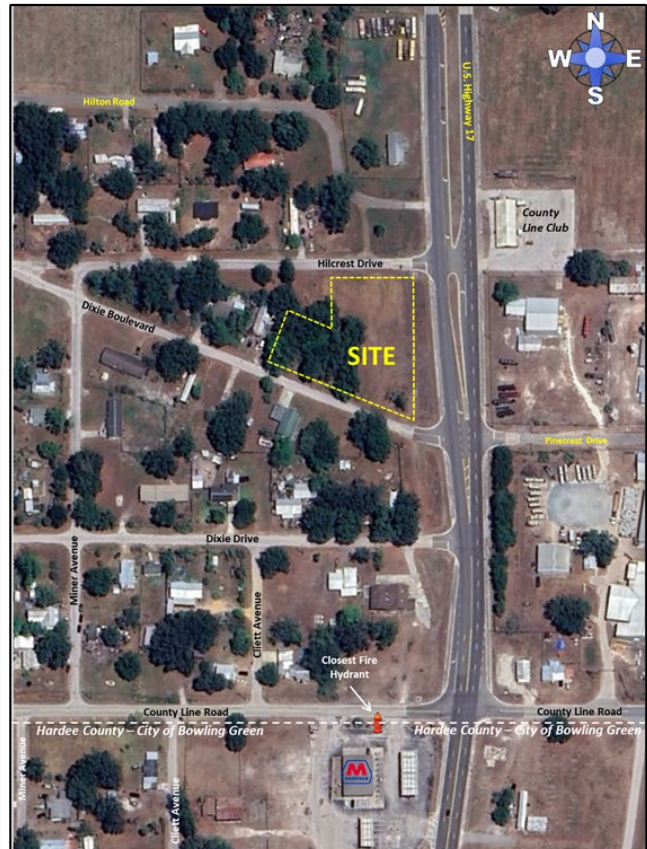
<b>DRC Date:</b> July 17, 2025	<b>Level of Review:</b> Level 4 Review
<b>PC Date:</b> September 10, 2025	<b>Type:</b> Small-scale Comprehensive Plan Amendment
<b>BoCC Date:</b> October 7, 2025	<b>Case Numbers:</b> <b>LDCCD-2025-5</b>
<b>Applicant:</b> Nicolas Colorado	<b>Case Name:</b> Bowling Green District Change
	<b>Case Planner:</b> Erik Peterson, AICP

<b>Request:</b>	Land Development Code Subdistrict Map change from Rural Cluster Center-Residential (RCC-R) to Rural Cluster Center-Commercial (RCC) on ±1.02 acres.
<b>Location:</b>	West of U.S. Highway 17, north of Dixie Boulevard, south of Hillcrest Drive, east of Miner Avenue, north of the city of Bowling Green and Hardee County line in Section 33, Township 32, Range 25.
<b>Property Owners:</b>	Nicolas Colorado and Lucia Cedeno
<b>Parcel Size (Number):</b>	±1.02 acres (253233-488000-003010)
<b>Future Land Use:</b>	Rural Cluster Center-Residential (RCC-R)
<b>Development Area:</b>	Rural Development Area (RDA)
<b>Nearest Municipality:</b>	City of Bowling Green and Hardee County (600 feet)
<b>DRC Recommendation:</b>	Approval
<b>Planning Commission Vote:</b>	Approval Vote 7-0

**Location Map**



**2023 Aerial Photo**



## Summary:

The applicant purchased this property in 2019 with hopes of developing a retail/office plaza (See Exhibit 6). This request will change the possible uses on the property from residential uses to commercial ones. The uses permitted, administratively approved, and ones that require public hearing approval are listed in Exhibit 5. There are RCC districts on the opposite side of U.S. Highway 17. There is an RCC district to the south and north on the west side of the highway.

The city of Bowling Green is only incorporated within Hardee County. The city has water and wastewater services. However, they have yet to provide either service to any residence or business across the County line. According to recent communication with the applicant, this policy has not changed.

Staff recommends approval because it is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan POLICY 2.110-B4 which directs commercial activities within the Future Land Use Map district to be “concentrated at the center of the cluster” and developed commercially if only “at an intensity and scale necessary to provide the immediate rural population with retail and personal services” given the LDC regulations for commercial abutting residential districts and uses. Additionally, it has “direct access to a collector or arterial intersection” as required.

## Findings of Fact

- *The request is for an amendment to the Land Development Code (LDC) Sub-district Map to change approximately 1.02 acres from Rural Cluster Center - Residential (RCC-R) to Rural Cluster Center (RCC), located on the southwest corner of Dixie Drive and U.S. Highway 17, north of County Line Road West, east of Cliett Avenue north of the City of Bowling Green in Section 33, Township 32, Range 25.*
- *The site is located in a Rural Development Area (RDA) which is the area “characterized by large open areas, agricultural use, with scattered development and rural centers. Services are limited and mostly found in the rural centers and clustered developments,” according to POLICY 2.108-A1 of the Comprehensive Plan.*
- *The site is comprised of approximately 1.02 acres of RCC-R. Extra acreage (right-of-way) is included in the request so that the eastern boundary meets the current RCC district.*
- *Based on numerous aerial images and both state and local business license records, staff had determined that the site has been vacant since 1941.*
- *Difference in uses allowed between RCC-R and RCC include the commercial vs. residential and reduced setback distances for certain structures (See page 12 and Exhibit 5).*
- *Section 220 of the Land Development Code requires additional separations for commercial properties that abut residential districts and residential land uses. These include a 50-foot setback from all residential land use districts for commercial buildings, dumpsters, outdoor sales, storage or display, air conditioning units, loading facilities/structures, drive-thru, grease traps, wastewater lift stations, and gasoline pump islands.*
- *Section 303, Gas Stations states that they may have no more than six pumps when abutting residential districts.*

- *A portion of the property was zoned Regional Commercial (C-3) from 1970 to the repeal of the zoning ordinance in 2000.*
- *The site abuts an RCC-R residential district on its northern, southern, and western borders and RCC on its eastern border opposite U.S. Highway 17.*
- *The closest schools are Bowling Green Elementary, Lewis Anna Woodbury Elementary in Ft. Meade, and Fort Meade Middle/Senior High School.*
- *Fire response to this site is from Hardee County Fire Rescue Station #3 located in Bowling Green. The travel distance is approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  miles from the Dixie Drive entrance.*
- *Ambulance response to this project is from Hardee County Fire Rescue Station #3 located in Bowling Green. The travel distance is approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  miles.*
- *The nearest Sheriff's substation is the Northeast Command Center on Dunson Road,  $25\frac{3}{4}$  miles to the north.*
- *Hardee County will not provide water and wastewater service to the site through its Bowling Green facilities.*
- *Dixie Boulevard and Hilcrest Drive are both local residential roadways.*
- *U.S. Highway 17 is a 4-lane divided state highway facility. It is currently operating at Level of Service "B."*
- *According to the Transportation Planning Organization, there is adequate capacity on U.S. Highway 17 and other roads in the area have such low traffic volumes that they are not tracked. A Minor Traffic Study is the most that would be required for redevelopment of this site per Section 703.C of the Land Development Code.*
- *The closest public park facilities are  $\frac{3}{4}$  miles away in the center of Bowling Green. There are no County parks south of Ft. Meade.*
- *The closest surface water is over  $1\frac{1}{4}$  miles to the west on the opposite side of U.S. Highway 27.*
- *There are no wetlands and flood hazard areas on or near the site.*
- *The site is comprised of Zolfo Fine Sands. This soil has only slight limitations to commercial development, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service, Polk County Survey.*
- *According to Polk County Endangered Habitat Maps, the proposed district change request is not located within a one-mile radius of an endangered species sighting. (Source: Florida Natural Areas Inventory, 2002, 2006 & 2011).*
- *The site is not within the flight path and height restriction buffer zones of a public use airport.*

#### **Development Review Committee (DRC)**

Based upon the information provided by the applicant and a recent site visit, the DRC finds that with the recommended conditions the request **IS COMPATIBLE** with the surrounding land uses and general character of the area, **IS CONSISTENT** with the Comprehensive Plan and the Land Development Code, and therefore, the DRC recommends **APPROVAL of LDCD-2025-5**.

**Planning Commission Recommendation:**

*At an advertised public hearing on September 10, 2025, the Planning Commission voted 7:0 to recommend APPROVAL of LDCC-2025-5 to the Board of County Commissioners after hearing public testimony.*

**Surrounding Land Use Designations and Current Land Use Activity**

The following table provides a reference point for notable and pertinent Future Land Use Map districts and existing land uses upon them.

<b>Table 1</b>		
<b>Northwest:</b> RCC-R Single-family Residence	<b>North:</b> Rural Cluster Center – Residential (RCC-R) Rural Cluster Center – Commercial (RCC) Vacant lot, single-family residence, and Mobile home	<b>Northeast:</b> Rural Cluster Center – Commercial (RCC) Bar, Tavern, Lounge (County Line Club)
<b>West:</b> RCC-R Mobile home	<b>Subject Property:</b> ±1.02 acres RCC-R Proposed RCC Vacant lot	<b>East:</b> RCC Agricultural equipment and fertilizer sales & services (Pro Plus Products Inc.)
<b>Southwest:</b> RCC-R Single-family Residence	<b>South:</b> RCC-R Single-family Residence	<b>Southeast:</b> RCC Agricultural equipment and fertilizer sales & services (Pro Plus Products Inc.)

Immediately to the west and north are single-family homes and mobile homes. These are the closest structures to the site. Across U.S. Highway 17 is the County Line Club Bar and ProPlusProducts Inc., an agricultural support use that provides custom blends fertilizers for various industries, but primarily agriculture and golf courses. There is RCC commercial north of the site on Hilton Road that has a single-family residence but is used for the storage of agricultural use vehicles.

**Compatibility with Infrastructure and Surrounding Land Uses:**

A portion of the property has been zoned commercially (Regional Commercial C-3) in the past but has never been developed. The only use visible in past aerial photos has been grove trailer storage. All others show the property vacant dating back to 1941. Development of this site for commercial uses will not result in a use or condition that will unduly negatively impact any neighboring property directly or indirectly. There are no public water or wastewater services that would enable intense commercial uses of this property. The Bowling Green area has a lot of urban services readily available but are not willing to serve the Polk County side. There is ample traffic capacity, few environmental limitations, and public safety services are at an urban level.

## A. Land Uses:

The compatibility requirements of Land Development Code Section 220 protect the residential areas. The commercial uses are also limited to lower intensities due to the lack of water and wastewater services. This may be why the site has remained vacant for so long. The applicant has sketched out a possible commercial development for the parcel taking into account the service limitations and LDC requirements in the design (see Exhibit 6). A similar request to change from RCC-R to RCC was approved in August 2021 one block to the south. Plans for commercial development of that site have yet to be submitted for review.

**The LDC defines compatibility as “A condition in which land uses or conditions can coexist in relative proximity to each other in a stable fashion over time such that no use or condition is unduly negatively impacted directly or indirectly by another use or condition.”**

This change in land use sub-district will enable the development of this property for commercial uses. Section 220 of the Land Development Code (LDC) has strict limitations on the use of commercial properties that abut residential development. There is a 50-foot setback from property lines for commercial buildings, dumpsters, drive-thrus, grease traps, gas pumps, air conditioning units as well as outdoor storage or display. There is also a limitation on the number of gas pumps that a gas station may have in Section 303 when abutting residential development if it were to occur. There are no identifiable environmental limitations to commercial development of this site.

## B. Infrastructure:

Development of this site for any substantial amount of commercial building size will need potable water and wastewater services. Without public water there are a lot of limitations but no more for commercial than for residential. There are a few commercial uses that may not need fire protection or a water source. Retail sales of dry goods can be supported by an on-site septic disposal system, well, and an internal fire suppression system with an external storage tank. The County has permitted several self-supported Dollar General stores. It's all a matter of the market supporting the additional development costs. There is plenty of capacity on the roadway system to serve the development. Public safety services are at an urban standard even though this is a rural area. The change from residential to commercial will not adversely impact the functioning of any schools or parks in the area.

## Nearest and Zoned Elementary, Middle, and High School

The closest school to this property is Bowling Green Elementary located at 4530 Church Avenue in Bowling Green. The nearest Polk County schools are in Fort Meade. Commercial land uses require no demand on public schools. This site is very far from any nearby schools to cause disruption in their operations. The following table is provided for general information regarding schools in this area.

Table 2

Name of School	Annual Estimated Demand	% Capacity 2024-2025 School Year	Average driving distance from subject site
Lewis Anna Woodbury Elementary	0	123%	±7½ miles driving distance
Ft. Meade Middle/Senior High School	0	78%	±8 miles driving distance
Ft. Meade Middle/Senior High School	0	71%	±8 miles driving distance

Source: Polk County School Board, Polk County Impact Fee Ordinance, GIS

## Nearest Sheriff, Fire, and EMS Station

Fire response to this site is from Hardee County Fire Rescue, Station 3 at 620 W Main Street in Bowling Green through reciprocal agreements. The travel distance is approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile from the property, and response times could average six or more minutes depending on the type of call. Ambulance response to this project is also from Fire Rescue Station 3. Polk County Fire Rescue Station #10 at 1235 9th St NE in Ft. Meade provides back-up. Often Polk County will provide ambulance service.

**Table 3**

	<b>Name of Station</b>	<b>Distance</b>	<b>Response Time*</b>
Sheriff	Southwest District Command (4120 U.S.98, Lakeland)	$\pm 25\frac{3}{4}$ miles	7 minutes
Fire	Hardee County Fire Rescue, Station 3 at 620 W Main Street in Bowling Green	$\pm \frac{3}{4}$ miles	6 minutes
EMS	Hardee County Fire Rescue, Station 3 at 620 W Main Street in Bowling Green	$\pm \frac{3}{4}$ miles	6 minutes
Back-up	Polk County Fire Rescue Station 10 (with ambulance) 1235 9th Street Northeast, Fort Meade	$\pm 9\frac{1}{4}$ miles	12 minutes

*Source: Polk County Sheriff's Office and Public Safety*

*\*Response times are based on when the station receives the call, not from when the call is made to 911.*

The nearest Sheriff's station is the Southwest Command Center on U.S. Highway 98,  $25\frac{3}{4}$  miles to the north. Sheriff response times are not as much a function of the distance to the nearest Sheriff's substation, but more a function of the overall number of patrol officers within the County. However, PCSO also serves as law enforcement for the City of Ft. Meade just  $7\frac{1}{2}$  miles up the road. The City of Bowling Green has a police department located at 104. East Main Street in Bowling Green, just over  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile to the south.

### **Water and Wastewater Demand and Capacity:**

The Hardee County Utilities Department in the City of Bowling Green is the closest provider of water or wastewater services to the site. However, they currently have no plans to extend services outside of the city or county. Polk County Utilities has no plans to serve this area.

#### **A. Estimated Demand:**

Retail and office uses that could contain partial food services are the most likely at this location. They typically require 0.24 gallons of water per square foot on an average daily basis. The applicant has designed a plaza that places the maximum amount of commercial development feasible with required allotments for parking and drainage in Exhibit 6. The property is vested for 22 lots per the Dixie Highway Homesites plat (PB 17, Pg 14). However, it's highly unlikely that 22 single family units could be constructed on this property. The lots are only 25 feet wide. With individual wells and septic tanks, it would be difficult to get more than two single-family units on this one acre property under today's standards for well and drain field separation. But for comparison purposes between the two different sub-districts, the following table is provided.

**Table 4**

Subject Property	Estimated Impact Analysis		
	Demand as Currently Permitted	Proposed Change 1.02± acres RCC	Percentage increase
1.02± acres RCC-R			
Permitted Use	2 single-family units	9,557 square feet retail/office	
Potable Water Consumption (GPD)	720	2,294	319%
Wastewater Generation (GPD)	540	1,835	340%

*Source: Polk County Concurrency Manual & Polk County Utilities SF water = 360 gpd/unit, sewer = 270gpd/unit, Retail/Office Water= 0.24/sq.ft, sewer 20% less*

Hypothetically, this change could result in a decrease in potential water and wastewater usage. But, without central water service, fire hydrants, and central sanitary sewer, the potential commercial uses will be limited to lower volume users.

#### B. Available Capacity:

Staff have limited information on the City of Bowling Green water and wastewater capacities. There is at least a 6-inch line less than 600 feet from the property in the right-of-way of County Line Road because there is a fire hydrant there. Staff also noticed a wastewater clean-out in the right-of-way of County line Road and a manhole on Cliett Avenue in the city. This is an indication of a sanitary sewer connection. It is possibly a gravity line.

#### C. Planned Improvements:

Hardee County Utilities were unable to provide the information on the capacity of their water and wastewater system in Bowling Green when contacted by staff. But they were able to state that they knew of no planned improvements to the system in the future.

### Roadways/ Transportation Network

U.S. Highway 17 is the main thoroughfare in the Bowling Green area. There is plenty of capacity available on it to serve any potential commercial uses of the site. The area is relatively rural, so the only sidewalk network is along the highway. Mass transit does not serve the area. Because of the relatively slow growth in the area, there are no roadway improvements planned for this area of the County, nor are any needed to support development of this site for commercial purposes. The maximum buildable with variances does not generate enough traffic for a major traffic study. The average annual daily vehicle trip rate on this portion of US 17 has declined over the past two years.

#### A. Estimated Demand:

The difference in traffic demand between RCC-R vs. RCC appears to be enormous on a site this small of a parcel. The Institute of Traffic Engineers (ITE) provides an estimate of 7.81 trips per single-family dwelling unit for average annual daily trips and only one trip is likely to occur during the peak hour of the day. RCC has a floor area ratio of 0.30 and will permit any form of retail which has an average trip rate of 24.43 per 1,000 square feet and a peak hour generation of 3.4 trips per 1,000 square feet. The property is vested for 15 single-family units per plat, but it is highly unlikely due to the lack of potable water and wastewater service. Without water and wastewater service, no more than two units are likely. Table 5 to follow calculates this difference but it is a bit of an exaggeration.

**Table 5**

Subject Property	Estimated Impact Analysis		
	Demand as Currently Permitted	Proposed Change 1.02± acres RCC	Percentage increase
1.02± acres RCC-R			
Permitted Use	2 single-family units	9,557 square feet retail/office	
Average Annual Daily Trips (AADT)	16	234	1,462%
PM Peak Hour Trips	2	25	1,250%

Source: Polk County TPO estimates 2022 based on Institute of Traffic Engineers (ITE): AADT 7.81/du Single-family, 24.43/1000SF Shopping Center, PM Peak 1/du single-family, 3.4/1000SF@76% new

The shape of the property, the parking required to meet the maximum floor area ratio, and the drainage system to manage that impervious surface will not enable commercial building to be larger than the one shown in Exhibit 6. The impervious surface ratio is 0.50 in RCC. This plan will require variances to right of way setbacks and impervious surface ratio. The applicant has submitted such a request under case number LDLVAR-2025-33 to be heard by the Land Use Hearing Officer (LUHO) in late October.

#### B. Available Capacity:

There is only one measured link that development on this site may demand capacity considerations, U.S. Highway 17. The next measured traffic link is U.S. Highway 98 going east out of Ft. Meade which is over 7½ miles away.

**Table 6**

Link #	Road Name	Current Level of Service (LOS)	Available PM Peak Hour Capacity	Minimum LOS Standard
5001N	U.S. Highway 17 From: Hardee County Line To: 9 <sup>th</sup> St. in Ft. Meade	C	1,173	D
5001S	U.S. Highway 17 From: 9 <sup>th</sup> St. in Ft. Meade To: Hardee County Line	C	1,198	D

Source: Polk County Transportation Planning Organization, Concurrency Roadway Network Database March 16, 2020

U.S. Highway 17 has more than ample capacity to serve any development that might occur as a result of this land use sub-district change. Even the maximum buildout that the floor area ratio would allow is not a significant portion of available capacity. The maximum build will only require a minor traffic study.

#### C. Roadway Conditions:

While the property has direct frontage on U.S. Highway 17, it cannot take access from its frontage not only due to driveway spacing requirements, and there is also a drainage structure located within the entire amount of frontage. The site has approximately 284 feet of frontage on Dixie Boulevard and 150 feet along Hilcrest Drive, which are both local residential roadways. Normally, local residential roads cannot be used for commercial access unless the route from the entrance to the highway does not pass a residential driveway along the street. Both frontages meet this requirement. Driveway separation from U.S. Highway 17 right-of-way is 150 feet.

Dixie Boulevard and Hilcrest Drive are under County maintenance and rated below “fair” condition according to the *Pavement Surface Evaluation and Rating* (PASER) method established by the Transportation Information Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Both have 20 feet of pavement width. Dixie Boulevard has 60 feet of right-of-way Hilcrest Drive has only 50 feet. There is a slight swale system for right-of-way drainage. The pavement and drainage system

within the right-of-way frontage will require improvements to develop this site commercially. Right-of-way dedication will be required on the north side up to 30 feet from centerline.

**D. Sidewalks**

There is a sidewalk along U.S. Highway 17 that connects the site to the city center of Bowling Green. It is the only roadway with sidewalk frontage in the entire area until you reach Main Street in Bowling Green. There are no plans for additional sidewalks on the Polk County side. Future redevelopment of this site will require a sidewalk connection along the frontage on Dixie Boulevard and Hilcrest Drive to connect to the sidewalk on U.S. Highway 17.

**E. Planned Improvements:**

There are no improvements planned to any roadway systems in the Ft. Meade area of the County in the current 5-year Community Investment Program (CIP). The closest is the Avon Park Cutoff Road Bridge replacement over Bowlegs Creek 8½ miles away. There are no improvements necessary to the surrounding roadway network to enable the development of this site for commercial use.

**F. Mass Transit**

There are no fixed route transit services provided to the Bowling Green area. The closest stop is in Bartow over 20 miles travel distance to the north. There are no mass transit services in Hardy County or the city of Bowling Green.

**Park Facilities:**

There are no County parks within the immediate vicinity of the proposed development. However, there are public parks within the City of Bowling Green. The closest is Pryatt Park ¾ miles to the south. Paynes Creek Historic State Park is over two miles to the south in Hardee County. This change from residential to commercial will have no impact on the demand for parks or interfere with the operation of a park.

**A. Location:**

Pryatt Park is located at 408 W Main Street in Bowling Green, approximately ¾ mile from the site.

**B. Services:**

There is one lighted softball field, one lighted T-ball field, a tennis court, a tot lot and a covered picnic pavilion at Pryatt Park.

**C. Multi-use Trails:**

There are no multiuse trails in this area under Transportation Planning Organization's (TPO) 2035 Multimodal Plan.

**D. Environmental Lands:**

Paynes Creek Historic State Park is over two miles to the south in Hardee County.

E. Planned Improvements:

There are no recreational improvements scheduled for this quadrant of the County at this time.

**Environmental Conditions**

There are few environmental limitations with the development of this property. Surface water flow is easily absorbed onsite because of the soil conditions, and any other flow is easterly towards the state highway that has a drainage system. There are no wetland or flood hazard areas on or near the site. The nearest surface water is over 1¼ mile away, and the sandy nature of the soil provides optimal drainage absorption. There have been no sightings of protected species in the area. There are no runways or well fields nearby or known historical or archaeological resources onsite.

A. Surface Water:

The closest surface water is the Peace River over 1¼ miles to the east. Runoff from the site is currently flowing towards the retention pond within the right-of-way of U.S. Highway 17.

B. Wetlands/Floodplains:

There are no wetlands or flood hazard areas onsite. The closest flood hazard area is nearly 2,000 feet to the west on property formally mined for phosphate. The closest wetland is over 2,300 feet to the east. The change from RCC-R to RCC will pose no increase in potential impacts to flood hazard areas or wetlands.

C. Soils:

The entire site is comprised of Zolfo Fine Sand, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service, Polk County Survey. Zolfo Sand is porous and well drained. Soil additives are sometimes needed for road base stabilization and housing foundations.

**Table 8**

Soil Name	Septic Tank Absorption Field Limitations	Limitations to Dwellings w/o Basements	% of Site (approximate)
Zolfo Fine Sand	Slight	Slight	100%

*Source: Soil Survey of Polk County, Florida, USDA, Soil Conservation Service*

D. Protected Species

According to Polk County Endangered Habitat Maps, the proposed district change is not located within a one-mile radius of an endangered species sighting. (Source: Florida Natural Areas Inventory, 2002, 2006 & 2011). This area has been developed for a substantial amount of time. Species sightings would be rare.

E. Archeological Resources:

According to the Florida Department of State, Division of Historical Resources, there are no archeological sites listed in the Florida Master Site File for Section 33, Township 32, Range 25.

F. Conservation Easements

The closest conservation easements are over a mile to the northwest. They are associated with the Peace River floodplain.

#### G. Wells (Public/Private)

There is public use wellfield in the City of Bowling Green to the southwest just over ½ mile away from the development boundary. This is a significant distance, and the site drainage flows towards the drainage structure in the right-of-way of U.S. Highway 17. The surrounding residential units are on individual wells for potable water. Development of this property will not conflict with well sites if it meets typical code requirements for stormwater management and drainage containment. However, if it is used in a substandard manner there is a higher potential for groundwater contamination over time.

#### H. Airports:

The site is not within the flight path and height restriction buffer zones of a public use airport. The closest public use airport is over 22 miles to the northeast in the city of Lake Wales.

#### **Economic Factors:**

This site was once zoned commercially (C-3, Regional Commercial) on the former zoning map. In the 1980s, it was used for parking citrus trailers, which is an agricultural-support use. It could have been developed with commercial uses until September 1, 2000, when the LDC and its companion Sub-district map became effective. Approval of this request will restore most of the commercial development rights that were lost with the adoption of the LDC. While restoration of those rights is a legal benefit, the lack of infrastructure remains a barrier to development as it was prior. However, there are a few more development options with the commercial designation over a residential one.

Without public water, it is difficult to get more than one detached dwelling unit on the property given the separation distances necessary between well, septic tank, and drain field. Two attached units or duplex may be possible, especially if well or septic can be shared. As a commercial use, there are several businesses that may not need fire protection such as commercial vehicle parking or self-storage. A small office may be exempt from fire code requirements. This can lend itself to vehicle sales uses.

The city of Bowling Green is not growing. The population has been consistently declining over the past decade, according to the U.S. Census. The city experienced a 17.9 percent drop between 2010 and 2020. Current demographics indicate the decline is continuing at an estimated rate of 8.1 percent year to year, according to the Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR) at the University of Florida. Additionally, median household income is also declining. This is not positive data to support an improving market for business development. The Board of County Commissioners approved a similar request for a sub-district change just over 200 feet to the south of the subject property in 2021. The owner has yet to apply for any other permitting since.

The return to commercial zoning on the property will not encumber Polk County or the city of Bowling Green any more than if it were to remain residential since there are few services provided to the site. If anything, the potential for commercial use will be less burdensome on infrastructure since residences require more public safety services than businesses and residences require garbage collection from the County and businesses do not.

## Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan, LDC, and Other County Ordinances:

The site is located within the Rural Development Area (RDA), which are those areas “characterized by large open areas, agricultural use, with scattered development and rural centers. Services are limited and mostly found in the rural centers and clustered developments,” according to POLICY 2.108-A1 of the Comprehensive Plan. The greater Bowling Green area is designated as a Rural Center in the Comprehensive Plan. According to POLICY 2.110-B1, “a Rural-Cluster Center serves as a focus for the rural community and generally contains public services, such as fire stations and schools, and retail-commercial uses at a level to serve the surrounding population.” This RCC is an extension of the city of Bowling Green roadway network with the same name and street pattern. However, streets are the only infrastructure consistency. Neither potable water nor wastewater services are extended across the County line. There is a reciprocal agreement with Hardee County for fire rescue, but Polk County’s Station 10 in Fort Meade is the first responder to non-fire related and medical emergencies.

POLICY 2.110-B4 of the Comprehensive Plan allows residential development within the Rural-Cluster Center up to two dwelling units per acre (2 DU/AC). Non-residential development within a Rural Cluster limits commercial uses “to an intensity and scale necessary to provide the immediate rural population with retail and personal services.” The maximum floor area ratio cannot exceed 0.30 in an RCC land use district. Additionally, “non-residential uses should be concentrated at the center of the cluster, with direct access to a collector or arterial intersection” according to the policies. Typical non-residential uses in RCC are grocery, pharmacy, medical offices, and personal services. However, without public water which brings fire hydrants, the maximum density or most commercial uses are very feasible. Although, there are more options for non-residential development.

The LDC separates the RCC Future Land Use Map designation into two categories, residential and commercial to implement the Comprehensive Plan POLICY 2.110-B4. The following table provides a listing of the differences in standards for the two LDC subdistricts.

**Table 10**

	<b>Standard Comparison</b>	
<b>Standard</b>	<b>RCC-R (residential)</b>	<b>RCC (commercial)</b>
<b>Different Land Uses</b>	Residential	Commercial
<b>Density by Right</b>	Two (1) dwelling/acre	None
<b>Minimum Lot Size</b>	20,000 square feet	None
<b>ROW Setbacks</b>	25 feet from Local Roads	15 feet from Local Roads
<b>Interior Side</b>	15’ Primary, 10’ Accessory	7’ Primary, 5’ Accessory
<b>Interior Rear</b>	20’ Primary, 10’ Accessory	15’ Primary, 5’ Accessory
<b>Prohibited Uses</b>	Commercial	Single-family Detached and Duplex

Section 220 of the Land Development Code requires additional separations for commercial properties that abut residential districts and residential land uses. These include a 50-foot setback from all residential land use districts for commercial buildings, dumpsters, outdoor sales, storage or display, air conditioning units, loading facilities/structures, drive-thru, grease traps, wastewater lift stations, and gasoline pump islands. Additionally, gas stations may have no more than six pumps when abutting residential districts. This will significantly limit the future commercial development of this property but provide better protection for abutting residences and their financial value.

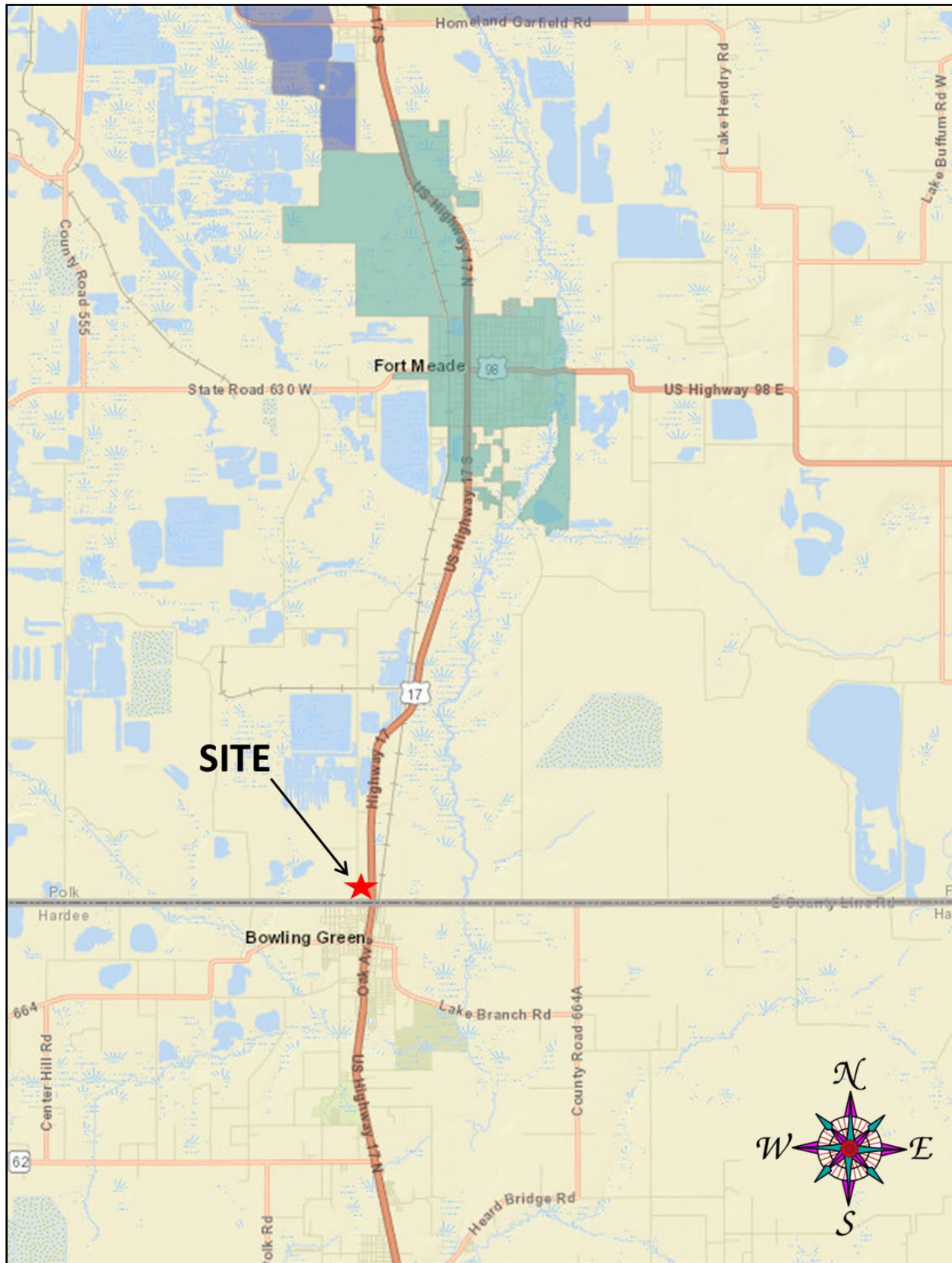


**Comments from other Agencies:** None.

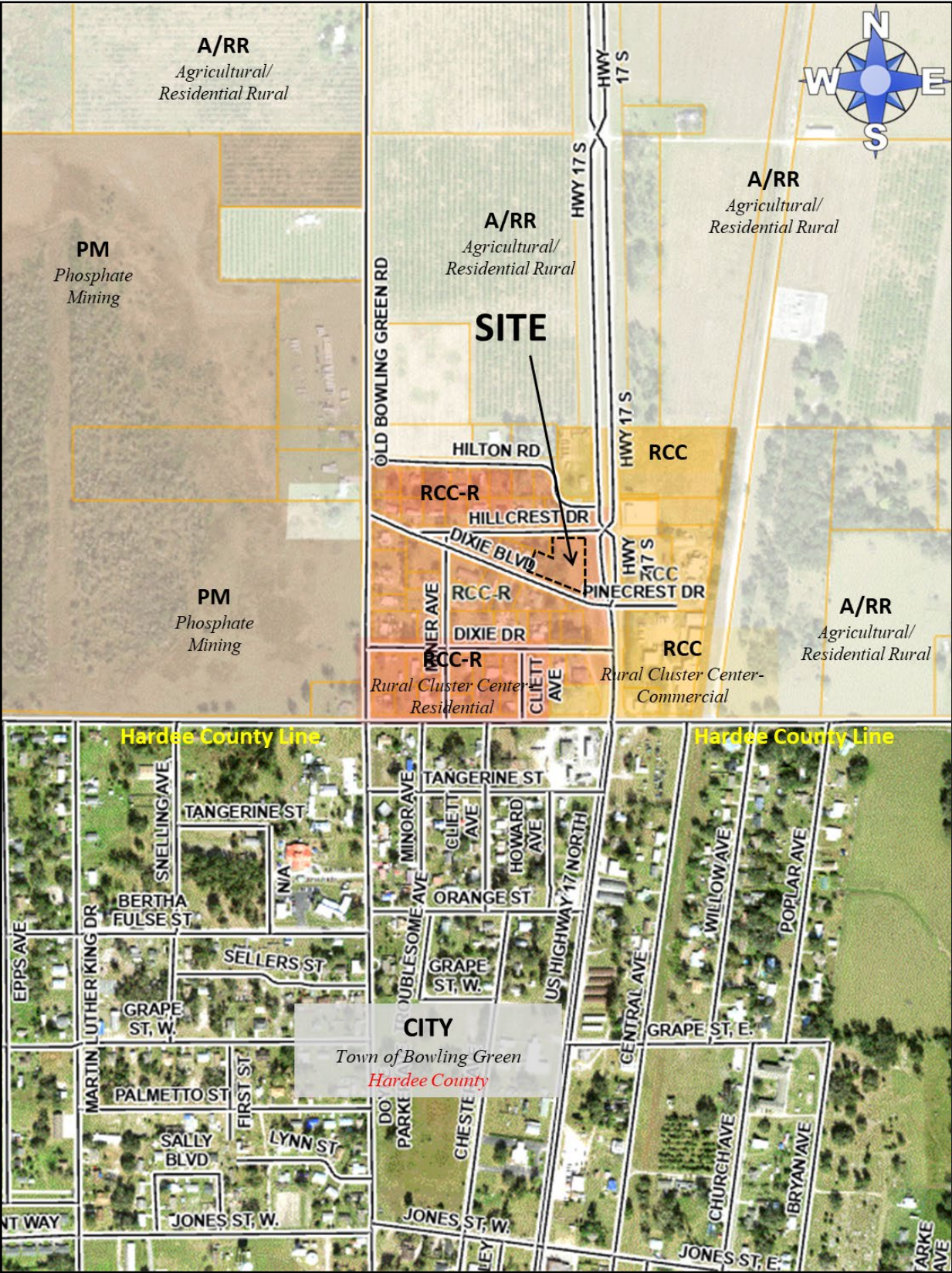
**Exhibits:**

Exhibit – 1      Location Map  
Exhibit – 2      Future Land Use Map  
Exhibit – 3      2023 Satellite Photo (Context)  
Exhibit – 4      2023 Satellite Photo (Close-up)  
Exhibit – 5      District Use Comparison Table  
Exhibit – 6      Conceptual Site Plan

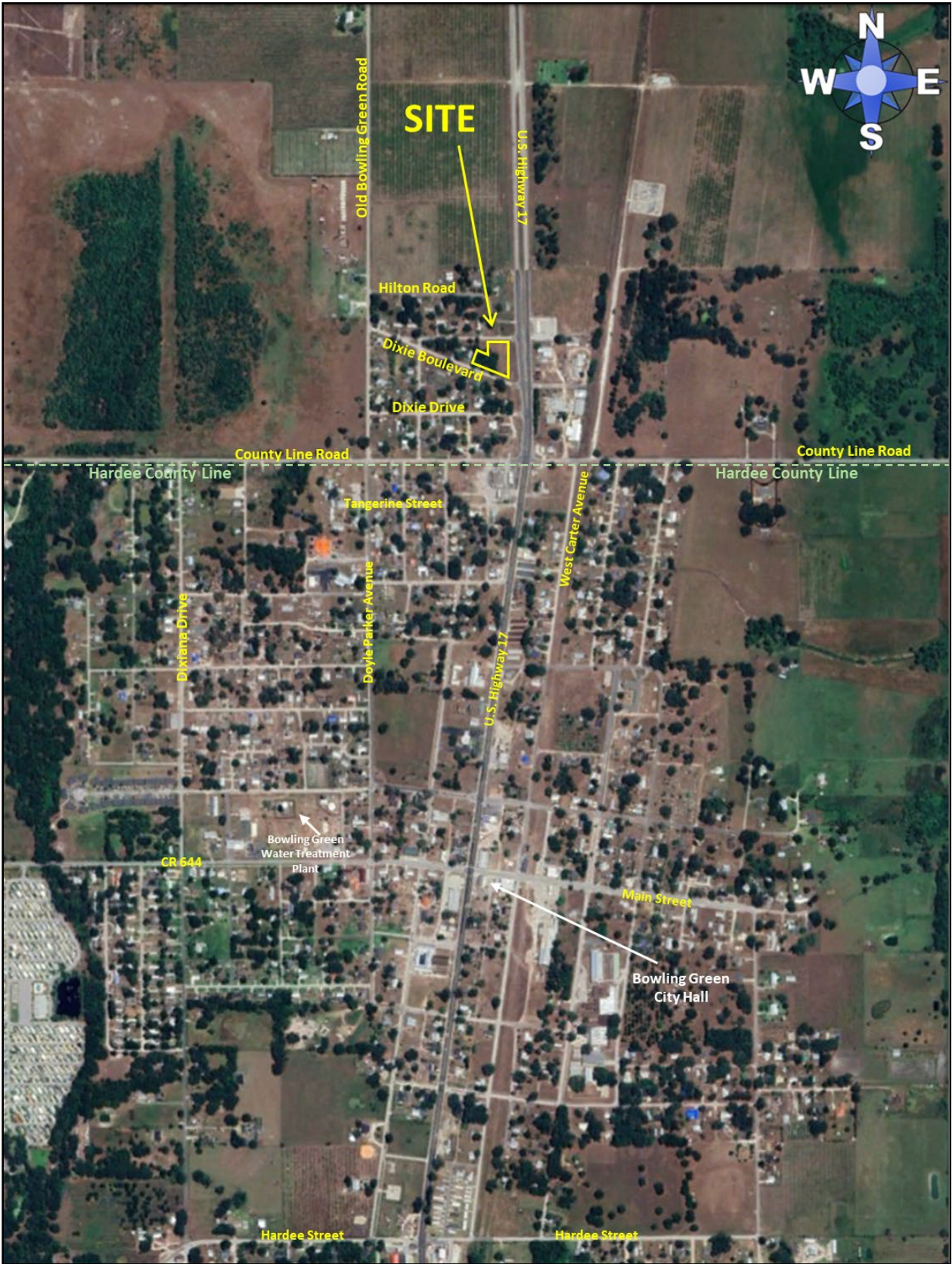
Ordinance – under separate attachment



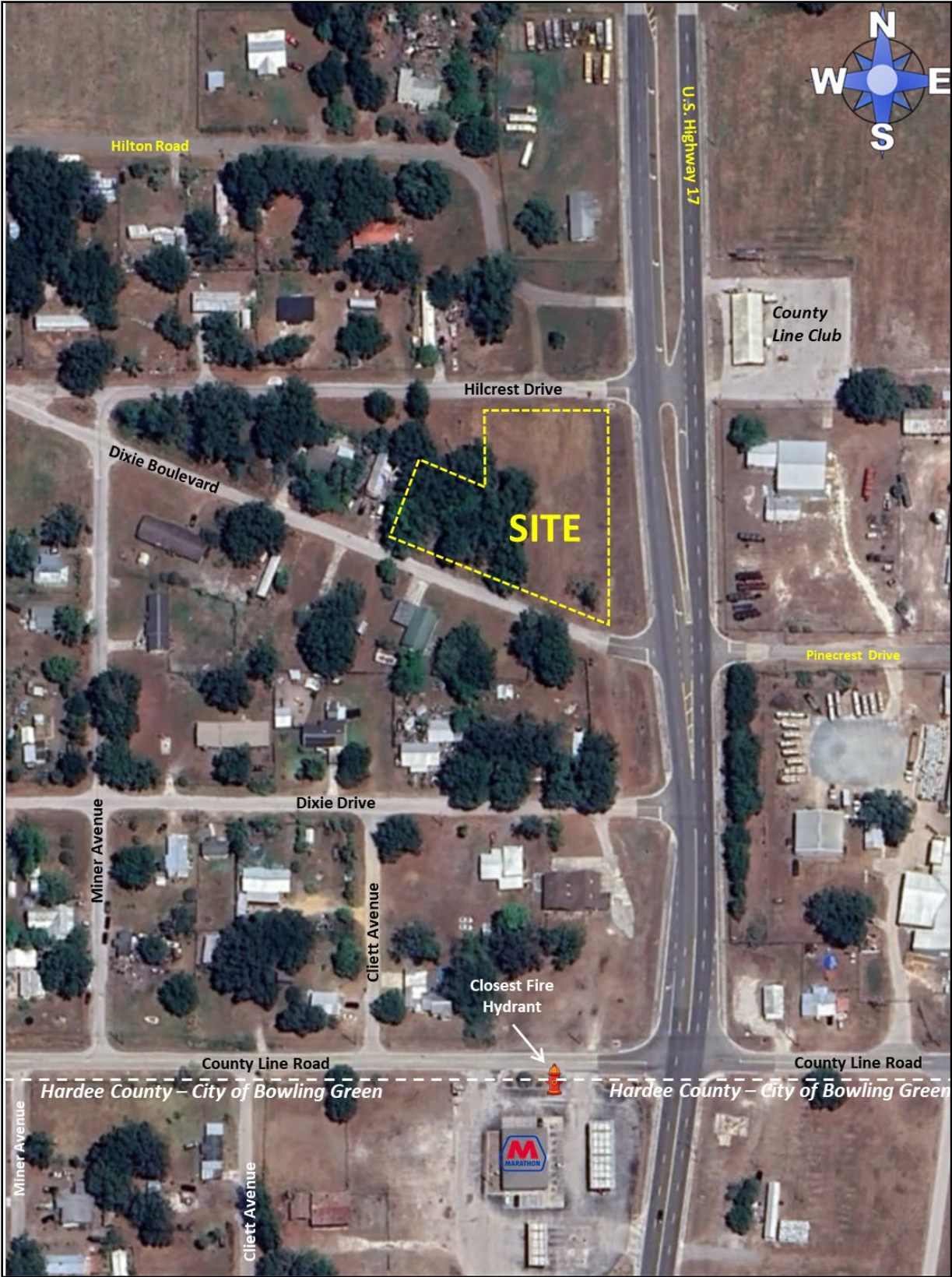
Location Map



# Future Land Use Map



2023 Satellite Photo (Context)



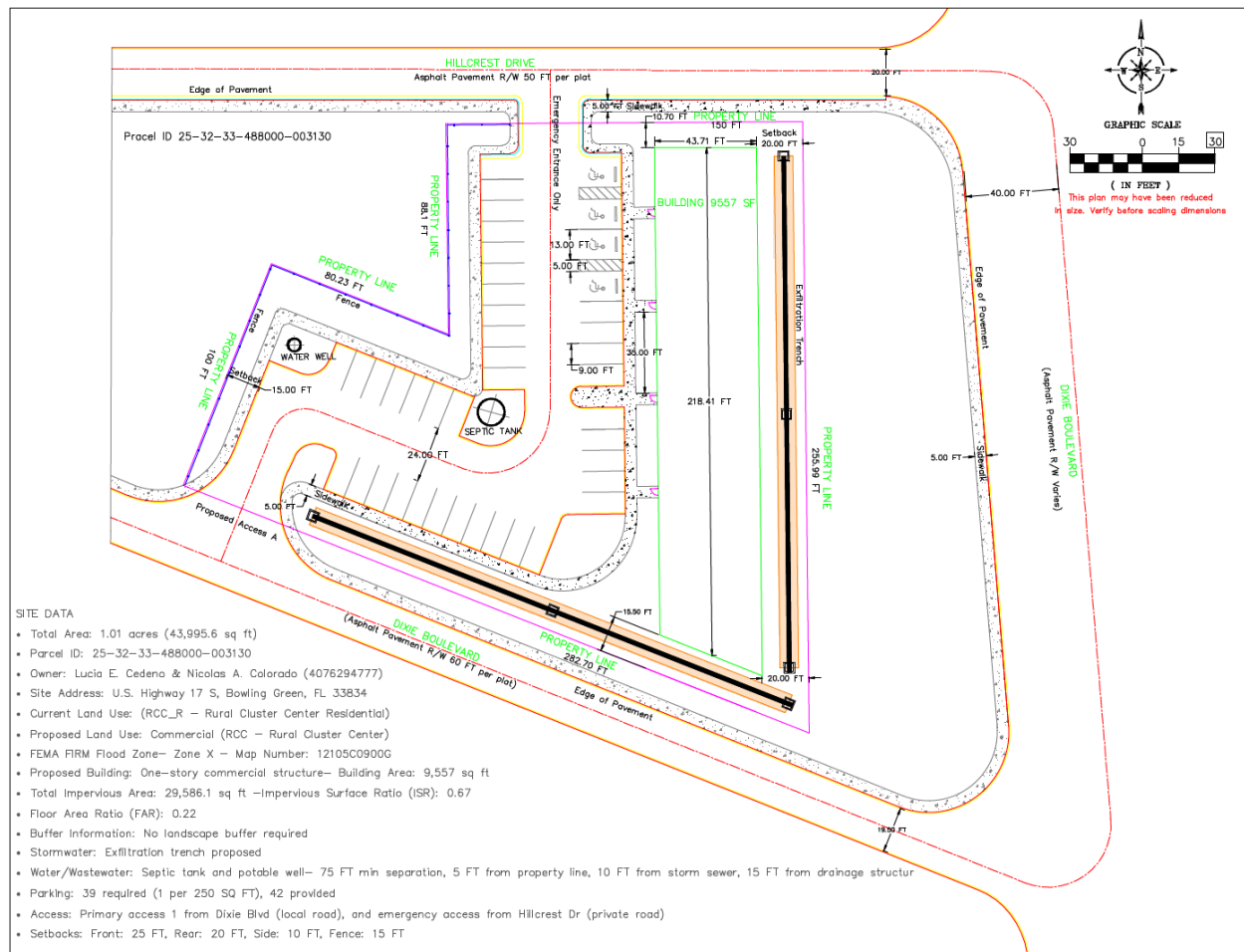
2023 Satellite (Close Up)

## Comparison of Permitted and Conditional Uses

*(differences indicated in bold font)*

<b>District</b>	<b>Permitted Uses</b>	<b>Administrative Review</b>	<b>Public Hearing(s) Required</b>
<b>RCC-R</b>  <i>Rural Cluster Center - Residential</i>	Single-family Detached Home	Small Group Home (<or=6 residents) Individual Mobile Homes Small Emergency Shelter (<or=6) Regulation Golf Course Low Intensity Recreation Elementary School Middle School	Group Living Facility (7+residents) Mobile Home Park & Subdivision Adult Day Care Center (7+ clients) Off Site Agricultural Support Bed and Breakfast Childcare Center Community Center Cultural Facility Emergency Shelter, Large (15+) Government Facility Helistops Non-Phosphate Mining High Intensity Recreation Religious Institution High School
<b>RCC</b>  <i>Rural Cluster Center - Commercial</i>	Off Site Agricultural Support Intensive Animal Farm Childcare Center Financial Institution Government Facility Hospitals Livestock Auction Lodges and Retreats Retail Nursery Retail <10,000 square feet Riding Academies Production Studio Transit Facility Mechanical Vehicle Service	Alcohol Package Sales Bed and Breakfast Incidental Carwash Clinics and Medical Offices Community Center Drive-thru Financial Institution Funeral Home Gas Station Boarding Kennels Medical Marijuana Dispensaries Nursing home Office Personal Services Recreation and Amusement Recreational Vehicle Park Recreational Vehicle Storage All Restaurants Vehicle Recovery Autobody Repair Vehicle Sales Veterinary Services Religious Institution	Exotic Animal Facility Commercial Vehicle Parking Regulation Golf Course Lime Stabilization Facility (septic) Marinas Retail 10,000-39,000 square feet Vocational School Self-storage Facility Water Ski School

*Uses with the same level of review in both categories not listed*



## Conceptual Site Plan