

THE McFARLAND PARKWAY ENTITLEMENT BLUEPRINT

From site control to rezoning approval - and the decision not to build

An original proposed Stables Motor Condos® automotive destination on McFarland Parkway. The record documents site control, municipal engagement, a two-part rezoning, land closings and civil/site planning. Jeff reports that a later engineering finding led the team to abandon this location.

PROJECT	DOCUMENTED FACT
Location	North side of McFarland Parkway, between Union Hill Road and Atlanta Highway, Forsyth County, GA
Applicant	The Stables Motor Plaza, LLC (2017 public participation report)
Rezoning request	9.044 acres A1 → CBD (ZA3872); 16.772 acres A1 → M1 (ZA3873)
Approval milestone	October 11, 2017 - Board of Commissioners adopted resolutions ZA3872 & ZA3873
Later phase	2018 surveys, wetlands study, civil engineering and land-disturbance-plan submission

THE CENTRAL LESSON

An entitlement approval establishes a path for a proposed use. It does not, by itself, resolve every physical, infrastructure or financial development risk.

Prepared as a public-facing account based on the original project timeline, public participation materials, and 2018 civil-plan documents. The final engineering finding and decision to leave the site are attributed to Jeff Beal's firsthand account; the supplied records do not establish the technical cause or quantify a loss or savings.

The opportunity became a controlled project before it became an approved project.

May - August 2017

The project timeline records an accepted letter of intent and signed purchase-and-sale agreement on May 15, 2017. An initial meeting with the Forsyth County Development Authority followed May 23, and a kickoff with PEC Civil Engineers followed May 25. After a July 12 county follow-up, the project moved into pre-application discussions and a county-initiated rezoning process in August.

DATE	RECORDED MILESTONE
May 15, 2017	LOI accepted; purchase-and-sale agreement signed; property under control
May 23-25	Development Authority meeting; initial civil site-plan kickoff
July 12	County follow-up; project green-lit to proceed with rezoning, per timeline
August 2-15	Pre-application meeting; county-initiated rezoning approval to proceed; site plan submitted

Why this sequence matters

The project was not framed as a zoning request in isolation. Site control, early civil work, agency engagement and the proposed land-use program were advanced together. This is a practical example of aligning the acquisition process with an entitlement strategy before major construction commitments.

SOURCE NOTE | McFarland site Entitlement Timeline.docx, 2017 entries.

One proposed destination. Two distinct zoning applications.

The requested program

The Stables Motor Plaza, LLC sought to rezone approximately 25.81 acres on McFarland Parkway. The public participation report identifies two applications: 9.044 acres from Agricultural (A1) to Commercial Business District (CBD) for a retail village; and 16.772 acres from A1 to Light Industrial (M1) for offices and showrooms and/or storage and warehouses. The two areas total 25.816 acres; the report rounds the overall site to approximately 25.81 acres.

APPLICATION	REQUEST / PROPOSED USE
ZA3872	9.044 acres: A1 → CBD; retail village
ZA3873	16.772 acres: A1 → M1; offices/showrooms and/or storage/warehouses

Community and county process

The public participation materials record notice to adjacent owners and interested parties and a September 18, 2017 public meeting at DeSana Middle School. The timeline records an October 5 public hearing and unanimous rezoning approval by Forsyth County commissioners on October 11, 2017.

DOCUMENTED RESULT

Rezoning approval was a material milestone in the project's development path - not a representation that the proposed destination was ultimately constructed.

SOURCE NOTE | Public Participation Report (ZA3872 / ZA3873); McFarland site Entitlement Timeline.docx.

The work continued after the zoning vote.

2018 development work

The timeline records an ALTA survey beginning January 9, three land closings on January 11, 22 and 23 (described as 2, 21 and 2 acres respectively), a wetlands study beginning February 27, a topographic survey beginning April 16, and a June 21 kickoff with Good Group Civil Engineers to finalize the site plan. On October 19, the site plan was submitted for land-disturbance-permit approval; the team met with the county to review comments on October 31.

What the civil plans show

The 2018 clearing and grading plan identifies the Stables Motor Condos project, Forsyth County parcels 041-004, 041-199 and 041-185, and a site north of McFarland Parkway. The Good Group mass-grading sheet includes existing/proposed contours, stream buffers, a stream impervious setback, erosion-control references and proposed drainage features. These are documented design considerations, not proof of the later fatal engineering issue.

STAGE	EVIDENCE
Site acquisition	Three January 2018 closings in the project timeline
Physical diligence	ALTA, wetlands and topographic survey milestones
Engineering	Good Group civil kickoff and 2018 clearing/grading plans
Permitting	Land-disturbance-plan submission and county comment review

IMPORTANT DISTINCTION

The timeline establishes submission for land-disturbance-permit approval. The supplied timeline and plan set alone do not establish the issuance date or final permit status.

An approved concept still has to survive diligence.

The outcome

Jeff Beal's firsthand account is that during the country's Technical Site Review Board process, the county determined that a dotted blue line, the mapping notation for a intermittent stream that flows only after rain, ran through the property, which had not appeared in any other study before that review. Crossing it would have required a nationwide permit, a retaining wall and structural vehicle bridge at an estimated cost at \$2 million before any other infrastructure was in place. This was not cost effective, and we elected to release the site.

THE DECISION FRAMEWORK

Control

Secure time and contractual rights to investigate the site.

Entitle

Advance a specific land-use program through the appropriate county process.

Verify

Continue surveys, engineering, utilities and permit-stage diligence after approval.

Decide

Reassess the development thesis when material new information emerges.

THE TRANSFERABLE TAKEAWAY

The value of pre-development leadership is not measured only by approvals obtained. It is also demonstrated by the discipline to reassess a project when subsequent findings change the decision.

What this case demonstrates

- Site-control strategy connected to a defined entitlement path.
- Early engagement with county stakeholders and civil professionals.
- A documented two-application zoning program and public participation process.
- Continued acquisition, survey, wetlands, grading and permit-stage work after rezoning.
- A reported decision to stop rather than proceed with an unsuitable site.

Advisory application

For landowners, developers and investors, the McFarland experience illustrates a practical approach: screen the site, secure appropriate control, define the proposed use, coordinate specialist diligence, navigate approvals, test feasibility and revisit the go/no-go decision whenever the facts change. Legal, civil-engineering, environmental and other professional opinions remain within the respective specialists' scopes.

PROJECT SOURCES

McFarland site Entitlement Timeline.docx (2017-2018 milestones).

The Stables Motor Plaza, LLC, Public Participation Report, applications ZA3872 and ZA3873 (2017).

The Good Group, clearing and grading plan set / McFarland mass-grading layout (2018).

Jeff Beal firsthand account of subsequent engineering finding and abandonment of this location.

DISCUSS A LAND ACQUISITION OR PRE-DEVELOPMENT ASSIGNMENT

Jeff Beal | Real Estate Development & Land Strategy Consultant
jeffreybeal.com