



CITY OF FORT PIERCE

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

REBECCA GROHALL, AICP, PLANNING DIRECTOR
COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING ◊ DEVELOPMENT REVIEW
HISTORIC PRESERVATION ◊ URBAN DESIGN ◊ URBAN FORESTRY ◊ ZONING

TO: Nicholas Mimms, PE, City Manager

THROUGH: Rebecca Grohall, AICP, Planning Director

FROM: Vennis Gilmore, Planning Analyst

SUBJECT: **Application for Conditional Use**
Rico Farms Research & Wholesale Trade Facility
5300 S. US Highway 1

DATE: March 11, 2016

STAFF REPORT

Applicant: Rico Farms USA, LLC
5300 S. US Highway 1
Fort Pierce, FL. 34982

Representative: McCarty & Associates Land Planning and Design, LLC
73 SW Flagler Avenue
Stuart, FL. 34994

Applicant's Request: Approval of a Conditional Use to operate a Research & Wholesale Trade facility in the C-3 General Commercial District

Location: 5300 S. US Highway 1

Parcel ID: 3403-433-0007-000-5

Current Zoning: General Commercial Zone (C-3)

Future Land Use: General Commercial (GC)

Surrounding Zoning:

North	East	South	West
C-3	CG	C-3	C-3

Site Size: 0.71 acre

Utilities: FPUA

Staff Analysis:

Request

In accordance with Sections 22-22, and 22-76 of the City Code, the applicant is requesting the review and approval of a Conditional Use to operate a Research & Wholesale Trade Facility at 5300 S. US Highway 1. The applicant seeks to conduct research and innovative indoor farming of mushrooms for distribution to various consumer outlets. The property is located at the southeast corner of US Highway 1 and Smallwood Avenue, and is zoned General Commercial Zone (C-3).

The subject building requested for use has a finished floor area of approximately 2,500 square feet; proposed to contain a lab, an office, two growing areas, a cold room, and a preparation kitchen. The subject parcel contains three detached buildings with separate uses; however the applicant is only seeking use of the structure fronting US Highway 1. The selected building features a primary driveway entrance from US Highway 1.

The site is surrounded by businesses to the north and west, and a single family home to the east. The property to the south remains undeveloped.

Precision farming is presented as a multi-faceted agriculture and educational venture centered on the cultivation of a broad range of contamination-free and healthy produce and mushrooms. The applicant's goal is to build upon a commitment to develop and manage small urban farms using organic and sustainable practices. They have structured their "Rico Farms" precision farming plan to implement new and expanded ideas in a flexible and sequential manner that builds upon innovation and repurpose of materials to build new and affordable technologies and techniques.

Rico Farms will be using coffee grounds and sawdust as their main growing medium. These materials will be supplemented with various raw materials for production. The material is pasteurized and filled into plastic bags together with spawn (seeds). The spawn will occupy the raw materials for approximately 4 weeks until the growing medium transforms into mushrooms. A cycle of 3 harvests are the norm, before the growing medium is exhausted and used up. The total process takes roughly 3 to 4 months. Once the medium is no longer producing, it will be repurposed for soil amendment.

The finished product will then be distributed at wholesale to various organic food markets, stores, etc. The and research data collected from observation will be studied further and provided to coordinating agricultural organizations for promotion of hydroponic growth solutions.

Zoning & Land Use

The subject site is located within the General Commercial Zone (C-3) district which is intended to provide for a broad variety of business activities including shoppers' goods stores, convenience goods and service establishments, offices and tourist/entertainment facilities. Many public and semi-public uses are also appropriate. Compared to the C-4 zone, this district is more suitable for uses requiring a high degree of accessibility to vehicular traffic, low intensity uses on large tracts of land, most repair services and small warehousing and wholesaling operations. Although this zone should be located along or near arterial or collector streets, it is not the intent of this district to encourage the extension of strip commercial areas. Instead it should promote concentrations of commercial activities.

The General Commercial (GC) future land use designation provides for higher intensity commercial developments or horizontal and vertical mixed-use developments. Uses allowed within this designation include multifamily residential, intensive and general commercial, retail, service, offices, tourist/entertainment facilities, hotels/motels, parks and recreation, along with compatible public, quasi-public, and special uses. This land use designation allows for a maximum density of 15 dwelling units per acre and a maximum FAR of 1.0. Development shall include either commercial or mixed uses fronting major roadway corridors with higher intensity near major intersections.

Traffic & Parking

The traffic generation from the proposed use is projected to be very minimal. Review of similar uses of this scale, in comparison to impacts of an indoor farm laboratory with wholesale distribution; suggests an insignificant effect overall evaluation; however the pick-up and drop-off of supplies and delivery of mushrooms are variables that may concentrate trips during operational hours. Delivery will be conducted via smaller trucks (i.e. small box truck).

The site improvement plan proposed the integration of a handicap parking stall, pursuant to City Code Section 22-60 (c), 3, to supplement four (4) regular spaces. Pursuant to City Code Section 22-62 (d) (2), Safe and efficient sidewalk linkages shall be provided between building entrances and parking areas, and adjacent portions of the development, and adjacent rights-of-way. An accessible route is proposed to connect the subject structure to the adjacent US Highway 1 right-of-way.

Conditional Use

The purpose of the conditional use process is to allow, when desirable, uses that would not be appropriate generally or without restriction throughout the particular zoning district, but which, if controlled as to number, area, location or relation to the neighborhood, would not adversely affect the public health, safety, comfort, good order, appearance, convenience and the general welfare. The use as presented features wholesale distribution aspects that are not generally appropriate for general commercial environments. The authorization of a Conditional Use to establish a research & wholesale trade facility, of the presented scope and scale, in the General Commercial Zone District should not impact the existing, and predominate-commercial operations in the area.

Technical Review Committee

All affected departments have reviewed the proposed Conditional Use with regards requirements of the City Code. Findings from the review by corresponding departments and the associated responses by the applicant are provided for review.

Property Owner Response Summary:

A total of 23 notifications of the proposed Conditional Use were mailed to the owners of property located within 500 feet of the subject property. As of March 10th, 0 responses have been received. An update will be provided to the City Commission at the public hearing.

Planning Board Recommendation:

The Planning Board, at their March 8th, 2016 meeting voted unanimously to recommend approval of the request with staff recommended conditions.

Staff Recommendation:

The proposed Conditional Use and associated site improvement plan are consistent with the City's Land Development Code and Comprehensive Plan; therefore staff recommends the Planning Board forward a recommendation to **approve** the presented request with the condition that the applicant installs a bike rack on-site.