



**Marion County  
Board of County Commissioners**

**Growth Services**

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**PLANNING & ZONING SECTION  
STAFF REPORT**

<b>Public Hearing Dates</b>	<b>P&amp;Z: 5/28/2025</b> <b>Continued from 3/31/2025 after</b> <b>being continued from 1/27/2025</b>	<b>BCC: 6/16/2025</b>
<b>Case Number</b>	250204SU	
<b>CDP-AR No.</b>	32615	
<b>Type of Case: Special Use Permit</b>	Utility company service yard including office building, warehouse, and outdoor equipment and material storage "lay-down yard."	
<b>Owner</b>	<b>SECO Energy</b> / Sumter Electric Cooperative, Inc. (previously Southern Hills Limited, Inc., Nan P. Bonfield, and Bryan Laura Trust)	
<b>Applicant</b>	Victoria Diaz, Bowman	
<b>Street Address</b>	12644, 12830, and 12940 SW 16 <sup>th</sup> Avenue	
<b>Parcel Number</b>	41200-012-00, 41200-020-00, and 41200-020-01	
<b>Property Size</b>	±39.20, ±20.00, and ±20.00 acres, totaling ±79.20 acres	
<b>Future Land Use</b>	Employment Center (EC)	
<b>Zoning Classification</b>	Community Business (B-2) [Based on an approval for Zoning Case No. 250203ZC representing ±39.20 acres of the ±79.20-acre site.]	
<b>Overlays Zones &amp; Special Areas</b>	Outside Urban Growth Boundary (UGB), Marion Oaks/I-75 & Hwy 484 Urban Area, Secondary Springs Protection Zone (SSPZ), Marion County Utilities SW Service Area, and CR 475A Visual Enhancement Gateway Development Overlay ( <i>CR 475A Overlay</i> )	
<b>Staff Recommendation</b>	<b>DENIAL</b>	
<b>P&amp;ZC Recommendation</b>	<b>TBD</b>	
<b>Project Planner</b>	Christopher D. Rison, AICP, Senior Planner	
<b>Related LU &amp; Zoning Case(s)</b>	<b>250203ZC:</b> General Agriculture (A-1) to Community Business (B-2)	
<b>Related Code Case(s)</b>	N/A	

## I. ITEM SUMMARY

Victoria Diaz, with Bowman Consulting, filed a Special Use Permit Application on behalf of Sumter Electric Cooperative, Inc. (SECO Energy), proposing a utility company offices and service yard consisting of an office building, warehouse, and outdoor equipment and material storage “lay-down yard” on a ±79.20-acre site zoned Community Business (B-2). The site consists of three parcels identified as Parcel Identification Number(s) 41200-012-00, 41200-020-00, and 41200-020-01; the respective parcel addresses are 12644, 12830, and 12940 SW 16th Avenue, Ocala, and the legal description is provided within the application materials (see Attachments A, B, and C). The site is located outside the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) - in the Marion Oaks/I-75 & Hwy 484 Urban Area, in the Secondary Springs Protection Zone (SSPZ), in the Marion County Utilities SW Regional Service Area, and in the CR 475A Visual Enhancement Gateway Development Overlay (CR 475A Overlay). Following Figure 1 shows an aerial of the site and the immediate surroundings. *A concurrent Rezoning Application (250203ZC) for the north ±39.20-acres of this overall site was submitted to unify the site under a Community Business (B-2) zoning classification.* This request was continued from the January 27, 2025, and March 31, 2025, Planning and Zoning Commission public hearings at the request of the applicant.

**Figure 1**  
**Aerial Photograph of Subject Property**



The B-2 zoning classification generally calls for all uses to occur in a completely enclosed building, with only limited uses occurring outdoors, such as garden center storage/display, while uses focusing on outdoor storage of equipment and materials requires a more intense zoning classification. Land Development Code (LDC) Section 4.2.18.A states:

*“The Community Business classification provides for the shopping and limited service needs of several neighborhoods, a community, or a substantial land area. Retail stores are intended to include general merchandise, fashion, durable goods, and personal services. All commercial activity involving retail sales or rentals shall take place in a completely enclosed building.”*

Further, the B-2 zoning classification does not permit general warehousing, but does specifically list a “utility company service yard” as a use that may be considered as a Special Use Permit use in the B-2 zoning classification.

Finally, as noted, the site is within the CR 475A Overlay established between CR 475A and Interstate 75 (I-75) beginning at Hwy 484 and extending north to the Cross Florida Greenway. LDC Section 5.8.4.C regarding uses in the CR 475A Overlay states:

*“Commercial uses will be limited to those uses permitted within the B-2 “Community Business”, P-RV “Recreational Vehicle Park”, and RR “Recreational Resort” Zoning Districts, any proposed industrial uses may only be permitted by Special Use Permit, as set forth in Article 2, Division 8, only in order to review for compatibility with the surrounding agricultural, residential, and commercial uses within the overlay.”*

Given the provisions of B-2 zoning and the CR 475A Overlay, the applicant has functionally submitted this Special Use Permit Application as utility company service yard to include an office building, warehouse, and outdoor equipment and material storage “lay-down yard” for the SECO Energy utility company.

## II. STAFF SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends **DENIAL** as specified in Section V of this Staff Report. The recommended denial is based on failure to comply with the requirements of Land Development Code (LDC) Sections 2.8.2.D and 2.8.3.B, and 5.8.4.C. In the event the Commission or Board elects to disagree with the staff recommendation and act affirmatively regarding this application, staff has provided Alternative Approval Conditions for use in consideration of such an affirmative recommendation.

Staff further notes that a prior version of the conditions, published for the March 31, 2025 Planning and Zoning Commission meeting, were used by attorney Robert W. Batsel for an alternative set of proposed conditions in a letter dated March 26, 2025 letter (see Attachment K) representing three property owners in the vicinity of the site, including one property owner located within 300’ of the site (Woerner, PID# 41457-003-00).

## III. NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

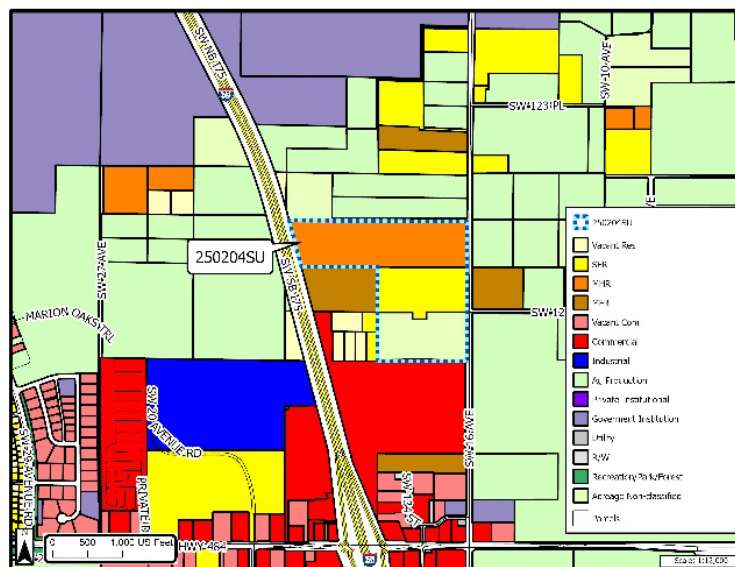
Consistent with LDC Section 2.7.3.B., public notice was posted on the subject property May 18, 2025. Consistent with LDC Section 2.7.3.C., notice of public hearing was mailed to all property owners (1 owners) within 300-feet on May 9, 2025. Consistent with LDC Section 2.7.3.E., due public notice was published in the Ocala Star-Banner on May 12, 2025. Evidence of the above-described public notices is on file with the Growth Services Department and is incorporated herein by reference. Letters of opposition and support have been received related to this request, and are on file with the Clerk of the Court’s Commission Records Office.

#### IV. BACKGROUND/CHARACTER OF THE AREA

A. *Existing Site and Surroundings Conditions.* The property consists of three (3) parcels in a series along the west side of SW 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue (aka CR Hwy 475A), with the northern property extending fully west to I-75, and the two southern properties extending  $\pm 1/4$  mile west from SW 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue towards I-75, leaving an isolated area between the Special Use Permit site and I-75. Each of the site's parcels were historically farms, with the northern parcel including the remains of a former horse track. The two southern parcels appear to have been one farm that was divided into north and south halves at some time in the past. Few trees are located on the main area of the site, while some trees are present near the perimeters, but some of the internal trees appear to be slated for removal given the conceptual plan set provided (see Attachment B Set). The different properties include various residences, some currently occupied while others appear unoccupied, and barns. The southern property formerly included an arena ("Lucky 7 Arena") recently dismantled with the properties' recent ownership change.

The site's south boundary is SW 130<sup>th</sup> Street Road that separates the site from the General RV Dealership location to the south. SW 130<sup>th</sup> Street Road is a substandard private historic access that follows along the southern boundary of the site that provides access to the historic arena and is also the access to series of seven (7) parcels totaling  $\pm 25$  acres to the south/west that form an isolated area surrounded by I-75 to the west, General RV to the southwest and south, and this application site to the east and north. Prior Figure 1 and following Figure 2 shows the overall surrounding uses including the seven isolated parcels wherein two are occupied by individual single-family residences while one is occupied by two manufactured homes (single-family home and family/guest residence); each of the three main residences are directly across an unpaved portion of SW 130<sup>th</sup> Street Road from the site, and they face the functional "rear" of this proposed Special Use Permit site (see Attachment I). East across CR 475A are a series of acreage tracts with various farms, including the northwestern portion of the Good Chance Farm that occupies a significant portion of the northeast corner of the CR 475A and CR 484 intersection.

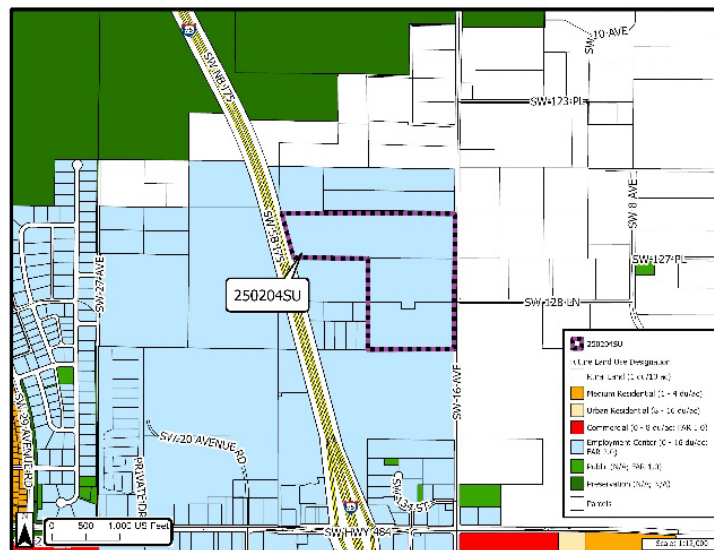
**Figure 2**  
**Existing Uses Per Property Appraiser's Property Use Code**





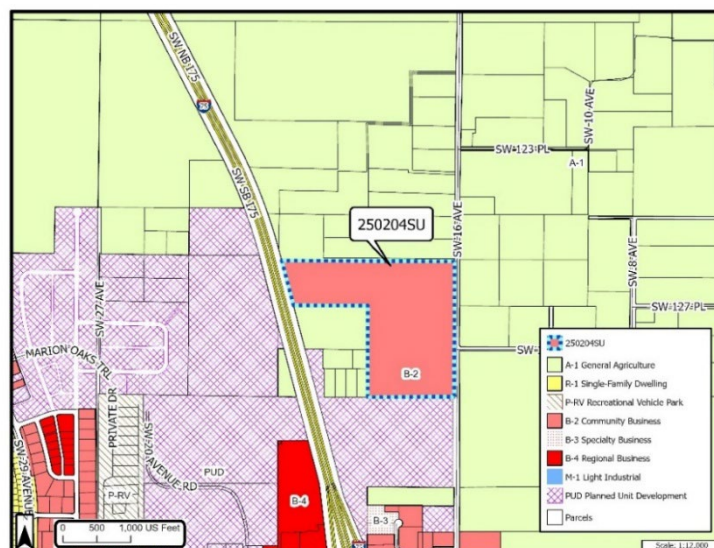
B. *Future Land Use Map (FLUM) Designation.* Following Figure 3 is the FLUMS and it shows that the subject property and the lands to the north and south of the site are designated Employment Center (EC) that allows residential development up to 16 dwelling units per acre, or non-residential uses with a maximum floor area ratio (FAR) of 2.0. East across CR 475A, the lands are designated as Rural Lands.

**Figure 3**  
**FLUMS Designations**



C. *Zoning District Map.* Following Figure 4 shows the subject property is zoned Community Business (B-2). Properties to the north and east across CR 475A, along with the enclave area west/south of the site are zoned General Agriculture (A-1). South of the site is the General RV Dealership that is subject to a Planned Unit Development (PUD) zoning, wherein up to three potential outparcel areas with cross access have been provided in that sites southeast corner along CR 475A.

**Figure 4**  
**Zoning Designation Map**

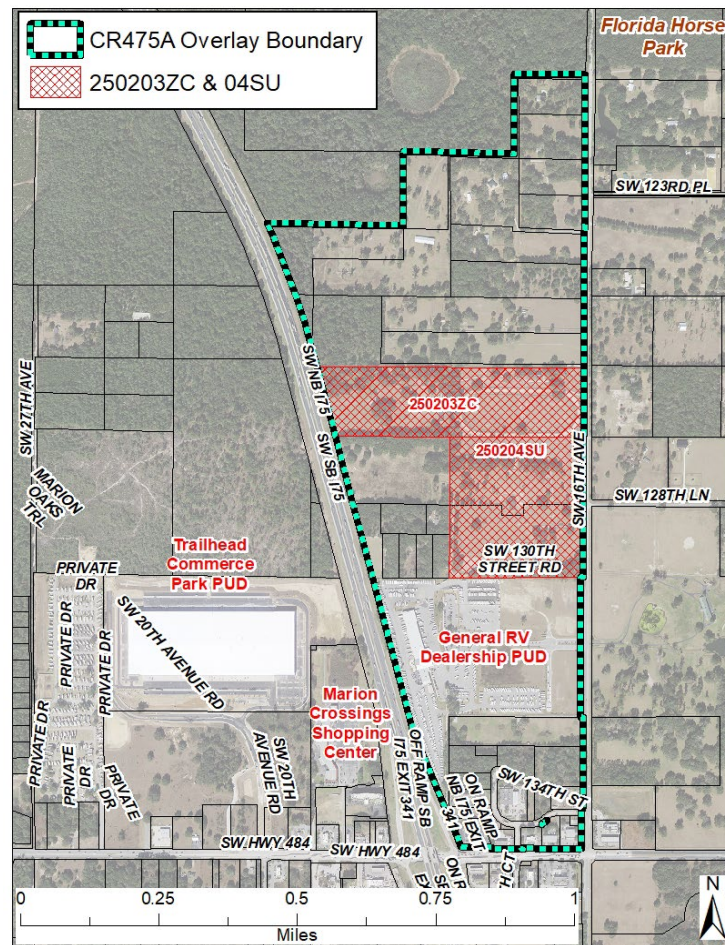


D. **CR 475A Overlay.** The site is in Marion County's CR 475A Visual Enhancement Gateway Development Overlay (CR 475A Overlay) as shown in following Figure 5. The CR 475 Overlay is surrounded by I-75 to the west, the Cross-Florida Greenway to the north, CR 475A to the east, and Hwy 484 to the south (see Attachments G and H). LDC Section 5.8.1 states the purpose and intent of the CR 475A Overlay as:

*"Develop overlay standards from the Florida Horse Park to CR 484 that create an attractive an efficient development pattern in a defined portion of southern Marion County and regulate the intensity of use."*

The CR 475A Overlay limits the range of uses to those listed in the Community Business (B-2) zoning unless considered by Special Use Permit or Planned Unit Development Applications, and establishes enlarged buffer and sidewalk/trail requirements, along with encouraging the provision of a decorative "board fence" along CR 475A.

**Figure 5**  
**CR 475A Visual Enhancement Gateway Development Overlay**



*The Special Use Permit Application site represents 24% of the CR 475A Overlay and 33% of the northeast quadrant of the I-75 & Hwy 484 Employment Center along CR 475A. Combined with the existing General RV Dealership PUD, the two sites represent 43% of the CR 475A Overlay and 59% of the northeast quadrant of the I-75 & Hwy 484*

*Employment Center along CR 475A. Table A following identifies the acreages and percentages of these areas and sites in further detail.*

<b>TABLE A. I-75/Hwy 484 Employment Center and CR 475A Overlay Area Acreages and Percentages</b>							
Area	Total Acres	Gen RV Dealer		SECO Energy		Gen RV + SECO	
		Acres	Percent	Acres	Percent	Acres	Percent
NE EC Quadrant	242	63	26	79	33	142	59
CR 475A Overlay	327	63	19	79	24	142	43

E. *Summary.* Table B following summarizes the above area characteristics, from items A, B, and C. The subject site is a former farm proposed to be a limited office complex with significant storage facilities and outdoor storage or “lay-down” areas. The site is former farms, and is surrounded to the north, east, and southwest by other farm and/or residential sites.

<b>TABLE B. Adjacent Property Characteristics</b>			
Direction	FLUM Designation	Zoning Classification	Existing Use per Property Appraiser Code
North	Employment Center (EC)	General Agriculture (A-1)	Farms and/or residences
South-West	Employment Center (EC)	General Agriculture (A-1)	Farms and/or residences (w/residential enclave)
South-East	Employment Center (EC)	Planned Unit Development (PUD)	General RV Dealership
East	Rural Land (RL)	General Agriculture (A-1)	Farms and/or residences, incl. Good Chance Farm
West-North	Employment Center (EC)	Planned Unit Development (PUD)	Trailhead Commerce Park
West-South	Employment Center (EC)	General Agriculture (A-1)	Farms and/or residences (w/residential enclave)

F. *Special Use Permit Proposal.*

SECO Energy is one of Marion County's existing electric utility providers, that also provides services to other surrounding counties. SECO Energy's service territory in Marion County is ±247,132 acres, wherein ±90,094 acres or 36% of the territory is located east of Interstate 75, while ±157,038 acres or 64% is located west of Interstate 75. The facility is proposed as a new utility company service yard facility to support SECO Energy's operations. The applicant provided a Concept Plan Set (revised 5/16/2025) consisting of a Site Plan, Landscape Plan, Aerial & Buffer Exhibits illustrating views of the site and buffers, along with a sheet illustrating the proposed 8-foot high opaque metal security fence that will surround the property. The main components of the Site Plan are provided as Figures 6 and 7 following, with the full plan sheets provided as Attachments B1 through B3

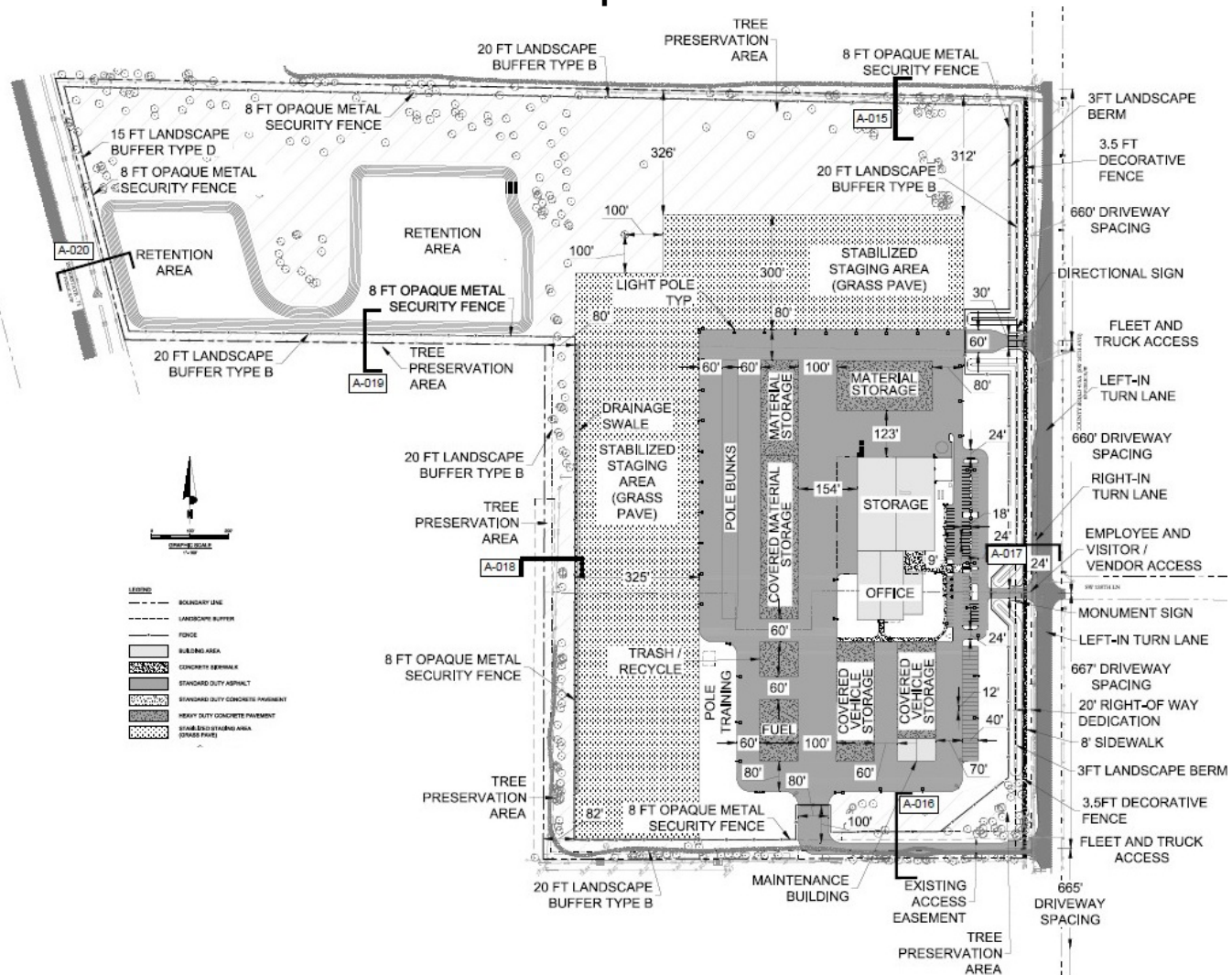
An office building with storage warehouse will be in the center of the southern 2/3 of the site. Paved areas will then be provided north, south, and west of the building where covered vehicle storage areas will be south while combinations of covered and open material storage will be west and north. Stabilized grass paved staging/storage areas will



then be located to the west and north of the paved areas; the findings indicate these grass paved areas will be used for overflow parking during emergency responses. The grass paved areas to the west will extend to that area's west boundary while the grass paved area to the north will be separated from the site's north boundary by 312-foot wide "open space area" including the site proposed buffer. The western portion of the site's north parcel will serve as the stormwater drainage retention area (DRA), with the open space along the north boundary extending west to I-75, that will support maintaining existing trees along the north portion of the site. Public and employee parking areas will be located primarily between the office/warehouse and covered parking areas and CR 475A.

Three site access points are proposed. One employee and visitor/vendor access will be provided in the general center of the site with a driveway access point that aligns with SW 128<sup>th</sup> Lane. Fleet & truck entrances will be provided at the north and south ends of the facility. The south fleet & truck access point will incorporate the existing SW 130<sup>th</sup> Street Road access alignment and continue to provide access to the set of historic parcels south/west of the site. Vehicles accessing the site will turn off the improved SW 130<sup>th</sup> Street Road to enter the site through a gated entrance, while traffic for the historic parcels will then continue west.

**Figure 6**  
**Concept - Site Plan**

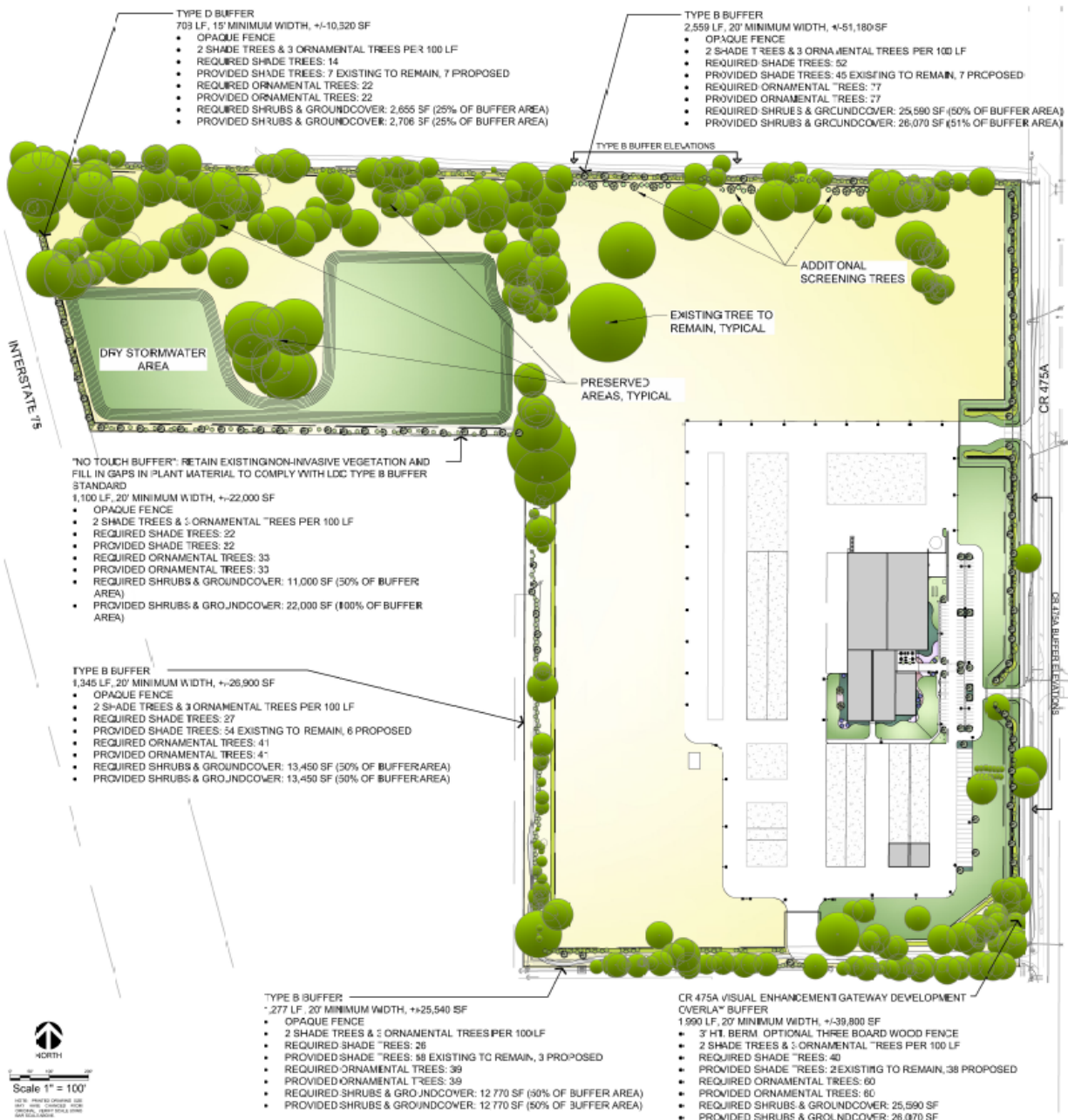




The submitted Concept Landscape Plan proposes a series of buffers along the site's boundaries based on the adjoining uses. The buffers are illustrated on the general site plan and landscape plan, with the site plan providing cross-section markers that reference the page numbers in the aerial & buffer exhibit that illustrate the buffers.

Along CR 475A, a berm topped with the required Type "C" Buffer, widened to 20-feet rather than 15-feet as required by the CR 475A Overlay, is indicated. The plan notes the provision of 3-foot high decorative board fence within the buffer as supported by the CR 475A Overlay; further, an 8-foot high opaque metal fence with green metal and trim finish is proposed on the far internal side of the CR 475A buffer, and that same opaque fence will extend around the full site.

**Figure 7**  
**Concept – Landscape Plan**



The immediately adjoining properties to the north, and the isolated properties to the south/west, are either developed with single-family homes and/or in agricultural use with General Agriculture (A-1) zoning. Commercial use of the site is required to provide a B-Type Buffer to single-family uses and a D-Type Buffer to agricultural uses; both the B-Type and D-Type Buffers require the provision of a minimum 6-foot high wall along the interior side of the buffer. *In lieu of the required wall, the plan proposes the noted 8-foot high opaque metal fence with green metal and trim finish for the buffer walls.* The buffer requirements for each boundary are summarized below, wherein compliance with the applicable design standards is proposed, except for the noted replacement of the required wall with the *8-foot high opaque metal fence*:

- 1) North boundary - 20-foot wide B-Type Buffer; *however, the plan proposes an opaque security fence in lieu of a wall*, along with an area of open space approximately 300-feet in depth south of the buffer.
- 2) West boundary shared with I-75 (north parcel of the site) - 15-foot wide D-Type Buffer; *however, the plan proposes an opaque security fence in lieu of a wall against the planned DRA.*
- 3) South boundary (north parcel of the site) - 20-foot wide B-Type "No Touch Buffer" with vegetation added to meet the Type "B" Buffer vegetation standards; *however, the plan proposes an opaque security fence in lieu of a wall against the proposed DRA.*
- 4) South boundary (corresponds to SW 130<sup>th</sup> Street Road) - 20-foot B-Type Buffer; *however, the plan proposes an opaque security fence in lieu of a wall.*
- 5) West boundary (north project of SW 130th Street Road shared with the isolated parcels) - 20-foot wide B-Type "B" Buffer; *however, the plan proposes an opaque security fence in lieu of a wall.* Staff notes that for this boundary location, the site is expected to be elevated above the existing off-site grade levels, so the site and the outside equipment and materials storage will be "above" the adjoining residential properties to the west. Currently, that shared boundary features limited vegetation, and while plantings will be provided, lighting from that area is a concern due to its elevated position. *The applicant has proposed that all site lighting will comply with LDC Division 6.19 - Outdoor Lighting, and has agreed to comply with "Dark Sky" principles in response to Attorney Batsel's March 29th letter.*

In regards to the proposed structures, a conceptual Aerial & Buffer Exhibit with a view of the overall facility was provided, providing buffering illustrations for along CR 475A the buffer at installation, 3-years, and maturity, wherein the illustrations show the proposed office/warehouse facility. Staff notes that the proposed warehouse portion of the complex would remain visible CR 475A, even at maturity, and the warehouse will extend  $\pm 250$  parallel to the roadway. *The visual appearance of that structure is a concern to ensure it does not have an intrusive monolithic appearance that is not supportive of the visual interest outlined for the CR 475A Overlay.*

#### G. Conclusion.

As noted, the site is in the CR 475A Overlay that is intended to support a gateway presentation to, and potentially host facilities that support, the Florida Horse Park and the Cross-Florida Greenway, such the CR 475A Landbridge Trailhead, and other potential tourism activities. The proposed use will occupy a significant location with substantial frontage on CR 475A and while a berm/buffer will be provided, the site, combined with

the existing General RV Dealership represents over 40% of the CR 475A Overlay. Further, the use will isolate an existing  $\pm 25$ -acre area of agriculture tracts and homes to the south/west, and will influence the potential to develop/redevelop those sites in the future in relation to the CR 475A Overlay, and in the NE quadrant of the I-75 Interchange. As such, staff does not support the proposed Special Use Permit as being compatible with the existing and surrounding uses, or the CRA 475A Overlay.

## V. ANALYSIS

LDC Section 2.8.2.D requires that in making a recommendation to the Board, the Planning and Zoning Commission shall make a written finding the SUP addresses nine (9) specific requirements. LDC Section 2.8.3.B requires consistency with the Comprehensive Plan. Staff's analysis of compliance with these ten (10) requirements is addressed below.

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

The site fronts along CR 475A, a paved Collector roadway that parallels I-75 extending south from Ocala, crossing Hwy 484, and then turning east to proceed to CR Hwy 475 and US Hwy 301. Three access points are proposed, and a Traffic Methodology has been completed (AR# 32365, see Attachment E). A Traffic Study submitted for development review has been provided that indicates no level of service failures due to the project are expected; however, turn-lane improvements to address direct site access will be required at the development's expense (see Attachment F). Growth Services is not opposed to the "center" access' alignment with SE 128<sup>th</sup> Lane which will align the entry with the proposed office. Staff notes that provision of the southern access using the SW 130<sup>th</sup> Street Road alignment will require improving that route as required by the LDC, which will also provide for improved access for the isolated residential parcels to the west, but the improvements will likely necessitate the removal of multiple trees along the route to accommodate SECO vehicles, equipment, and materials, and comply with safety requirements.

*B. Provision for off-street parking and loading areas, where required, with particular attention to the items in (A) above and the economic, noise, glare, or odor effects of the SUP on adjoining properties and properties generally in the surrounding area.*

The concept plan illustrates various parking areas and covered parking structures, along with sizeable on-site vehicle aisles that will be provided to support SECO vehicles and the necessary movements of products and materials around the "lay-down" yard. The concept plan notes the opaque 8-foot high security fencing, proposed in lieu of a wall, will also serve to control site access, and the placement of gates will need to comply with LDC requirements to ensure vehicles do not obstruct CR 475A traffic when queuing at the gates as well as providing for emergency access for emergency services. As previously noted, the preliminary Traffic Study indicates turn-lane improvements will be required at the access points, that may also serve to address queuing concerns.

The proposed SECO facility will include a significant outdoor storage “lay-down” yard that will be predominantly be paved, except for the specialized, pole bunk area, while an auxiliary stabilized staging area for overflow parking and equipment during emergency responses will be also be provided. Such areas are a potential concern as frequent use may lead to generating dust and noise as vehicles and equipment are delivered, removed, or re-arranged on the site which will generate noise as well with the site’s active access. Additionally, as a primary facility, the areas may be accessed at various times, including in the evening and/or overnight in the event of outages and/or emergency situations that may create significant light/glare impacts from the site. *The isolated area to the south/west is a concern should the placement of walls and/or berms and vegetation fail to adequately screen the activity and serve to block noise, light, sound, and potential windborne dust/debris from the site, particularly as the vegetation currently present is limited, and newly installed vegetation will require time to “grow-in” to establish a proper screening effect. Sufficient irrigation of these buffers to ensure their expeditious growth and maturity will be a critical concern along with their complete installation before site operations begin.*

- C. *Provisions for refuse and service area, with particular reference to the items in (A) and (B) above.*

The findings reference a dumpster will be provided at the rear of the site with screening, and the concept plan indicates an area for trash/recycling. With its rear location, staff noted the dumpster location will be sufficiently screened to comply with the LDC.

- D. *Provision for utilities, with reference to locations, availability and compatibility.*

The site includes a series single-family residences and accompanying accessory structures that have been utilizing on-site potable water and sanitary sewer facilities. Marion County Utilities currently provides sanitary sewer service to the General RV Dealership south of the site, and a sanitary sewer force main is located within the CR 475A right-of-way, extending north past the site to the Florida Horse Park. Marion County Utilities currently provides potable water service to the General RV Dealership as well. The findings provided specify the facility will be served by Marion County Utilities. Staff recommends that this item has been adequately addressed at this time.

- E. *Provision for screening and buffering of dissimilar uses and of adjacent properties where necessary.*

The site consists of former farm properties with limited trees and screening vegetation; additionally, given the proposal for an ultimately extensive “lay-down” yard and the need to accommodate the maneuvering of vehicles, equipment, and stored materials, typical of such industrial-type storage yards, vegetation is discouraged which is a significant concern for staff. Aerial observations of a similar SECO Energy facility in Sumterville, FL supports this concern (see Attachment J). An extensive open area unobstructed by buffers or on-site vegetation may enable windborne dust and debris to be generated from the site. The lack of interior



vegetation and immature buffers may enable noise, glare/light, and dust to be generated from the site, potentially affecting CR 475A, properties along the north boundary and the isolated area south/west of the site, during both construction of the site, and its long-term operation. The application proposes that the outdoor storage areas will be paved or grass covered stabilized areas to limit potential dust, and the proposed buffers will provide a perimeter screen/break for potential noise, dust, light, etc.; *however, as noted, the pace at which the buffer vegetation matures is a concern, wherein installation and irrigation will be a critical need to support establishment and growth of the buffers before beginning operations.* However, in regards to noise, the applicants note that ordinary daytime business days/hours are typically observed by the SECO operations, with weekend/night activities occurring in the event of emergencies and/or disasters.

- F. *Provision for signs, if any, and exterior lighting with consideration given to glare, traffic safety, economic effects and compatibility and harmony with properties in the surrounding area.*

The Concept Plan Set indicates the expected location for a site sign, and a sign graphic has been provided with the application materials. The findings further note that the signage will be provided consistent with the CR 475A Overlay standards. Compliance with LDC Outdoor Lighting provisions and "Dark Sky" practices are also proposed. Staff recommends that this item has been adequately addressed at this time.

- G. *Provision for required yards and other green space.*

Existing vegetation will support the proposed project buffers; however, given the site's extensive frontages and limited existing vegetation, the size and extent of buffer plantings at installation is a concern as the vegetation will take time to be established and mature if installed consistent with current LDC standards. This is especially a concern along CR 475 and the boundaries shared with the adjoining residential properties. *Staff notes that the complete installation of all buffers, including all landscaping and irrigation, prior to commencing site operation (not construction) is a critical need. Further, regarding the 312-foot wide open space area at the north end of the site, a physical barrier to prevent encroachment into the area from vehicles and other equipment is needed to ensure properly maintaining that designated open space area.*

- H. *Provision for general compatibility with adjacent properties and other property in the surrounding area.*

The preceding items review and summarize staff concerns for potential impacts to the adjoining and surrounding properties, along with CR 475A and in regards to the adjoining residential/agriculture properties to the north and the isolated area to the south/west. Should the proposed request be deemed an acceptable use of the site given its location within the CR 475A Overlay, conditions to address staff's noted concerns would be necessary to ensure the site and its operations remain compatible with the existing and future surrounding uses.

*I. Provision for meeting any special requirements required by the site analysis for the particular use involved.*

The site is part of the CR Hwy 475A Overlay that emphasizes the *permitted* uses enabled by the B-2 zoning class, which may then support the area's and Marion County's potential tourism opportunities and gateway efforts. The applicant has noted the facility is specifically for SECO Energy and is intended to support the utility's operations in Marion County supporting County in general along with tourism opportunities. Should the proposed utility company service yard be determined to be an acceptable use for the site, staff notes that Special Use Permit (SUP) considerations may address the expiration and/or renewal of the SUP along with identifying the specific receiving authority for the SUP. The applicant has requested that no expiration be provided, acknowledging that any failure to comply with an approval would be subject to code enforcement action consistent with the County's regulations. Staff notes as well, that Attorney Batsel has recommended a clarified condition regarding limiting the Special Use Permit, if approved, to the corporate entity SECO Energy . Sumter Electric Cooperative, Inc.

The specific extent proposed for the office, warehouse, and outdoor equipment and material storage, with defined areas for overflow during emergencies will limit the site use, but the *effectiveness of proposed landscaping at installation and the timing of that landscape to "grow-in" is a concern as previously noted, wherein the complete installation of required buffers and supporting irrigation is a key concern to support the installation and further maturity of the buffers.*

*J. Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan.*

1. FLUE Policy 1.1.6: Buffering of Uses – The County shall require new development or substantial redevelopment to provide buffering to address compatibility concerns and reduce potential adverse impacts to surrounding properties, as further defined in the LDC.

**Analysis:** The project will result in a utility company service yard including office, warehouse, and outdoor equipment and materials storage "lay-down yard" for SECO Energy. The buffering illustrated by the concept plan conforms to LDC requirements except for proposing an 8-foot opaque security fence in lieu of a wall. The timing/size of buffer vegetation installations is a concern as site use is expected to begin upon the conclusion of construction, and the vegetation may not be sufficient enough to mitigate potential negative impacts for some time; as such, *ensuring the completion of all buffers including material planting and irrigation prior to commencing actual operations is a key concern should the request be approved.*

2. FLUE Policy 2.1.5: Permitted & Special Uses – The county shall identify permitted and special uses for each land use designation and zoning classification, as further defined in the Comprehensive Plan, Zoning, and LDC.

**Analysis:** The project proposes a use that is not ordinarily permitted in the site's Community Business (B-2) zoning, and such uses not encouraged in the CR 475A Overlay. However, consistent with County practices and the CR 475A Overlay provisions, utility company service yard including office, warehouse, and outdoor equipment and materials storage "lay-down yard" for SECO Energy is eligible for consideration through the Special Use Permit consideration process, consistent with this policy.

3. FLUE Policy 8.1.1: Protection of Existing Residential Development – The County shall recognize existing residential development and require that new development address issues of compatibility through implementation and maintenance of LDC that address density and intensity of impacts of new development to the surrounding area and uses.

**Analysis:** The project will result in a utility company service yard including office, warehouse, and outdoor equipment and materials storage "lay-down yard" for SECO Energy. Buffering is proposed along the full perimeter of the site including landscaping and opaque fencing with a 3-foot berm along CR 475A. The timing/size of buffer installations is a concern, particularly in relation to the isolated area of residential homes in the south/west that will overlook the rear of site. *Complete installation of all landscaping and irrigation prior to commencing site operations will be a key need for the site development.*

4. FLUE Objective 10.4 on Innovative Planning Strategies provides, "To develop and enforce innovative planning techniques an LDC designed to protect residential neighborhoods, enhance the economic viability of the community, promote the efficient use of infrastructure, preserve natural resources, reinforce the market area concepts, and reduce the proliferation of urban sprawl."

**Analysis:** The project is in the CR 475A Overlay established to focus on the site's unique location between the I-75/Hwy 484 Interchange and the Florida Horse Park and the Cross-Florida Greenway with the 475A Landbridge Trailhead. Use limitations and design provisions for enlarged roadside buffers and sidewalk/trails along CR 475A are required to support the gateway appearance for the corridor and the connectivity between the interchange area and the Florida Horse Park and Landbridge Trailhead facilities. The plan proposes complying with the CR 475A Overlay buffer standards, including the provision of a decorative 3-board fence. The compatibility of the use with adjoining properties to the north and the isolated area to the south/west is a concern, particularly in relation to the isolated area which will be surrounded by this project, the General RV Dealership, and I-75 that may then influence future use of those properties. Further, this site's proposed development, combined with the General RV Dealership, represent 43% of the CR 475A Overlay and 59% of the northeast quadrant of the I-75/Hwy 484 Employment Center along CR 475A, potentially limiting uses and services that may serve Horse Park and Greenway patrons along with the surrounding communities. Staff

recommends that this policy has not been adequately addressed at this time.

Based on the above findings, staff concludes the SUP is not consistent with the noted Comprehensive Plan provisions as required by LDC Sections 2.8.2.D and 2.8.3.B along with LDC Division 5.8.

## VI. ALTERNATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

- A. Enter into the record the Staff Report and all other competent substantial evidence presented at the hearing, adopt the findings and conclusions contained herein, and make a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners to **DENY** the special use permit amendment.
- B. Enter into the record the Staff Report and all other competent substantial evidence presented at the hearing, and make a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners to adopt a proposed Ordinance to **APPROVE AS CONDITIONED** the special use permit.
- C. Enter into the record the Staff Report and all other competent substantial evidence presented at the hearing, amend the findings and conclusions contained herein so as to support the approval of the Ordinance with amended conditions and make a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners to adopt a proposed Ordinance to **APPROVE WITH AMENDED CONDITIONS** the special use permit.
- D. Enter into the record the Staff Report and all other competent substantial evidence presented at the hearing, identify any additional data and analysis needed to support a recommendation on the proposed Ordinance, and make a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners to **TABLE** the application for up to two months in order to provide the identified data and analysis needed to make an informed recommendation on the proposed Ordinance.

## VII. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

- A. Staff recommends **DENIAL** of the applicant's request as reasoned in Section V. of this report above wherein the proposed use is **not consistent** with each of the required Special Use Permit Findings and is therefore **not consistent** the Comprehensive Plan as required in LDC Sections 2.8.2.D and 2.8.3.B along with LDC Division 5.8.
- B. Should the Commission and/or Board make a finding that the applicant's request is consistent with each of the required Special Use Permit Findings and is therefore consistent the Comprehensive Plan as required in LDC Sections 2.8.2.D and 2.8.3.B along with LDC Division 5.8. staff has provided the following list of potential development conditions regarding the proposed use for reference and guidance:
  - 1. The site shall be operated consistent with this Special Use Permit approval wherein any Master Plan, Site Plan, or use and enjoyment of the Property



- referenced herein (the "Property") shall be consistent with the preliminary site plan, landscape plan and exhibits depicting signage, fences or other improvements described on the attached Exhibit A ("SUP Conceptual Plan Set") and the conditions set forth herein.
2. This Special Use Permit shall run with the ownership and occupancy of SECO and not the property. Thus, conveyance, lease or license of the Property or any portion thereof, except
    - a) to an entity in which a majority of the voting interests (in the form of stock, membership interests, partnership interests or other similar interest thereof) is owned or controlled, directly or indirectly, by Sumter electric Cooperative, Inc.;
    - b) any grant of easement rights on or over the property; or (c) to any governmental entity, shall terminate and nullify this Special Use Permit as it relates to the subject property conveyed, leased, or licensed, which shall thereafter be used in a manner consistent with the site's underlying future land use designation, zoning classification, and applicable sections of the Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code, including but not limited to regulations concerning the Marion County CR 475A Visual Enhancement Gateway Development Overlay ("CR 475A Overlay").
  3. The site's three parcels shall be combined into, and maintained as, a single  $\pm 79$ -acre parcel owned and controlled by Sumter Electric Cooperative, Inc.
  4. All buffers and boundaries shall include those improvements depicted or noted on the SUP Conceptual Plan Set and accompanying documents and complying with the following:
    - c) The site shall include the 8-foot opaque security fencing and gates, as shown in the SUP Conceptual Plan Set, that shall be provided around the entire property as indicated,
    - d) B-Type Buffers shall consist of a 20-foot landscaped strip and an eight-foot (8') opaque security fence. The landscaped strip shall contain at least three shade trees and five accent / ornamental trees for every 100 lineal feet or fractional part thereof. Shrubs and groundcovers, excluding turfgrass, shall comprise at least 50 percent of the required buffer area and shall form a layered landscape screen with a minimum height of three feet within one year of planting.
    - e) The B-Type Buffer along the west side of subject property's two southern parcels, adjoining off-site PID#s 41200-011-00, 41200-023-00, and 41200-024-00, shall be provided as indicated, subject to the following:
      - 1) At the time of planting/installation, a minimum of 1/3 of the shade trees and 1/5 of the accent/ornamental trees shall be increased in size at the time of planting to be 25% above the minimum planting size as specified by the LDC.
      - 2) The 8-foot opaque fencing along this west boundary shall be installed at the outer perimeter of the outdoor storage "lay-down" yard areas as indicated in the SUP Conceptual Plan Set, and the minimum fencing height shall be based on, and measured from, the finished grade elevation of the adjoining outdoor storage "lay-down" yard areas, to screen those areas when their finished grades have been elevated in relation to the site's adjoining property lines.
    - f) D-Type Buffers shall consist of a 15-foot landscaped strip and an eight-foot (8') opaque security fence. The landscaped strip shall contain at

- least three shade trees and five accent / ornamental trees for every 100 lineal feet or fractional part thereof. Shrubs and groundcovers, excluding turfgrass, shall comprise at least 25 percent of the required buffer area and shall form a layered landscape screen with a minimum height of three feet within one year of planting.
- g) CR 475A (modified C-Type) Buffer shall consist of a 20-foot landscaped strip and an eight-foot (8') opaque security fence. The landscaped strip shall contain at least two shade trees and three accent / ornamental trees for every 100 lineal feet or fractional part thereof. Shrubs and groundcovers, excluding turfgrass, shall comprise at least 50 percent of the required buffer area and shall form a layered landscape screen with a minimum height of three feet within one year of planting. In addition to the foregoing and as depicted on the SUP Conceptual Plan Set, the eastern boundary shall also include a three-foot (3') berm and decorative 3-board fence, pursuant to LDC Section 5.8.A, Figure 5.8.5-1.
  - h) All berms and landscaping shall be constructed and maintained in a manner compliant with the Land Development Code, preventing materials stored outdoors on the Property or any portion thereof used as a laydown yard from the viewshed of adjacent properties.
  - i) All buffers, including berm(s) and landscaping, shall be constructed or installed prior to receipt of a final inspection for any building improvements constructed on the Property, and shall be maintained consistent with LDC requirements in perpetuity.
  - j) All landscaping shall be served by an irrigation system installed, maintained, and operated in perpetuity by SECO.
  - k) SECO shall install six-foot (6') opaque construction fencing around the entire Property during construction.
5. Except for (a) the pole bunk area on the Property (which shall have a stone base) and (b) the portion of the existing access road identified as SW 130th Street Road shared by neighboring property owners lying west of the "turn-to the north" to enter the site's interior storage area, all internal site vehicle driving aisles, including personnel and vehicle parking areas and access aisles throughout the outdoor materials storage "lay-down" yard, shall be paved and maintained with a permanent asphalt or concrete surface in order to limit on-site dust generation that could become airborne and prevent dust or debris from vehicles exiting the site.
6. Along the north boundary of the northern 300-foot wide stabilized staging area (grass pave), a physical barrier (e.g., curbing, bollards, vertical/horizontal poles, chain-link fencing, etc.) shall be provided to clearly delineate the limits of the area and ensure vehicles, equipment, and material storage do not encroach into the 312-foot wide open space area that extends east-to-west along the property's north boundary line. Only vehicles/equipment maintaining the open space may access that area (e.g., mowers, etc.).
7. The proposed office, warehouse, and covered vehicle parking shall be placed consistent with the SUP Conceptual Plan Set wherein the office aligns with the site's central access aligning with SE 128<sup>th</sup> Lane (identified as "Employee and Visitor/Vendor Access") and shall be designed and constructed in a manner consistent with the following standards:
- a) The office and warehouse shall be a single structure with varied vertical elevations consistent with the Community Business (B-2) Zoning height

- standards, and present visually as a fully enclosed structure with no bay doors or loading docks visible to CR 475A; and
- b) The office and warehouse shall not be a metal/corrugated siding or similar industrial appearance and shall present a façade varied in depth and finish in to avoid presenting a uniform monolithic appearance to CR 475A.
8. Outdoor lighting shall fully comply with DarkSky certification requirements and Marion County LDC Division 6.19 – Outdoor Lighting and the project shall not be eligible for LDC Waivers in regards that division. Further, no outdoor lighting shall exceed 20-feet in height (rather than the 30-feet in height listed in LDC Section 6.19.6.E(4)).
9. Any failure to satisfy or comply with the conditions set forth herein or the concept plan approved simultaneously herewith shall constitute a violation of this Special Use Permit, which shall be cause for revocation of this Special Use Permit by the Marion County Board of County Commissioners following reasonable notice of violation to SECO Energy and reasonable opportunity to cure.

## **VIII. PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION**

To be determined.

## **IX. BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' ACTION**

To be determined.

## **X. LIST OF ATTACHMENTS**

- A. SUP Application and ownership information, filed September 25, 2024, as subsequently revised.
- B. SECO Ocala Plan Set (rev. 5/16/2025):
1. District Office Site Plan,
  2. Landscape Plan,
  3. Aerial & Buffer Exhibits.
- C. Findings of Facts & Applicant Condition Qualifications
- D. DRC Staff Review Remarks.
- E. Approved SECO Energy Traffic Methodology AR# 32365.
- F. Submitted SECO Energy Traffic Study AR# Main Report w/Appendix M-1.
- G. LDC Division 5.8 – CR 475A Overlay code provisions.
- H. June 7, 2016 BCC Minutes – establishment of the CR 475A Overlay.
- I. Site and Sign Photos.
- J. Google 2025 Aerial view of SECO Energy Sumterville Facility.
- K. Attorney Batsel SECO SUP Proposed Conditions 3/26/2025.