



**Alachua County  
Development Review Committee  
Staff Report**

**Project Number: DR24-000006**

---

**Preliminary and Final Development Plan for Alachua County  
Cuscowilla Fire Station Phase 1**

**SUBJECT:** Cuscowilla (Micanopy) Fire Station, Phase 1

**DESCRIPTION:** Fire Station with associated parking and infrastructure

**AGENT/APPLICANT:** eda, inc.

**PROPERTY OWNER:** Alachua County

**PROPERTY DESCRIPTION:**

Location	12264 S US HWY 441
Parcel Numbers	16392-000-000 (portion)
Land Use	Rural/Agriculture (1 du/5 acres)
Zoning	Agricultural
Acreage	5.00

**CHRONOLOGY:**

Application Submittal	02/05/2024
Insufficiency Report Sent	02/28/2024
Application Resubmitted	04/01/2024
Sufficiency Determination	04/17/2024
Preliminary and Final Development Plan Hearing	05/16/2024

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Recommend **approval with conditions** of the Preliminary and Final Development Plan for Alachua County Cuscowilla Fire Station, Phase 1.

**Alachua County  
Development Review Committee  
Staff Report**

**DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED PLAN:**

This application proposes a Preliminary and Final Development Plan for a 1,920 SF apparatus building and associated parking and infrastructure for a fire/rescue station on approximately 5.0 Acres with parking and associated infrastructure improvements.

The Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) approved a Special Use Permit (SUP), Z23-000006, on December 12, 2023, for this Fire Station. Further analysis of the approved SUP Master Plan and conditions will be provided below.

**CONSISTENCY ANALYSIS:**

Following is an analysis of the consistency of the proposed plan with the applicable policies of the Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Regulations.

**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN:**

**FUTURE LAND USE ELEMENT**

Policy 5.2.1 of the Future Land Use Element states *that the following criteria shall determine the appropriateness of potential institutional locations and uses requiring special use permits shall be demonstrated prior to establishing the institutional use:*

*a) Optimum service area.*

The site provides an optimum service area for emergency response. The proposed station will provide a service area in the southeastern portion of the County around the Town of Micanopy to ensure that the level of service will continue to be met in this part of the County.

*b) Optimum operating size.*

The proposed station is expected to have three Alachua County Fire Rescue (ACFR) staff on site at any given time. This staffing level and building size are optimal to serve the intended population and may expand at a future date (Phase 2).

*c) Access to clientele.*

Access to clientele will be from S US Highway 441 with a dedicated egress point for emergency vehicles responding to calls including an emergency only median cut directly in front of the station. The proposed fire station will help maintain response times for citizens in this part of the county.

*d) Compatibility of the scale and intensity of the use in relationship to surrounding uses, taking into account impacts such as, noise, lighting, visual effect, traffic generation, odors.*

The proposed station will be housed in temporary structures consisting of an existing

**Alachua County  
Development Review Committee  
Staff Report**

mobile home on site plus shelters for various pieces of equipment. ACFR has indicated that a station of this size will be able to provide adequate service to the intended population. The proposed location adjacent to US 441 will provide ready access to the station's service area and will allow personnel to meet level-of-service response times. The anticipated number of calls is 1-2 per day. No eternal claxon or alarm device will be used on site. Staff does not expect any odors to impact surrounding parcels. Security lighting only will be employed on site.

*e) Nature of service provision.*

For the present, the proposed fire/rescue station will provide a fire engine, tanker, and brush truck to respond to emergency calls. An ambulance may be added at a future date. Fire stations are considered institutional uses (government building or facility). The proposed site has been identified as being in the optimal location to serve nearby residents within a five-mile radius as well as the City of Micanopy.

*f) Needs of the clientele.*

The proposed fire station serves emergency needs and level of service required for the population in this area of Alachua County. Locating a fire/rescue station in this area will help to ensure that the 12-minute response time level of service (outside the Urban Cluster) will be met.

*g) Availability and adequacy of public infrastructure to serve the particular use.*

The site is located outside the Urban Cluster on a major arterial (US 441). Adequate public infrastructure is in place to serve the fire/rescue station. The station will use on site well and septic service.

*h) Preservation and strengthening of community and neighborhood character through design.*

The location of the station is consistent with the Master Plan approved with the Special Use Permit and is located on the site to maximize the distance from adjacent residences (the parcel to the west is a non-residential retail building not presently occupied). There is also a 40-foot wide buffer along the eastern site boundary to lessen visual impacts and ensure compatibility with the adjoining property.

*i) Consistency with the goals, objectives, and policies of the Conservation and Open Space Element.*

The proposed fire station is consistent with the goals, objectives and policies of the Conservation and Open Space Element (COSE). The proposed request is consistent with the protection of natural resources and the SUP. Specific EPD conditions have

**Alachua County  
Development Review Committee  
Staff Report**

been included as part of the SUP and are addressed by the Preliminary and Final Development Plan.

*Policy 5.4.2 FIRE PROTECTION: Fire stations shall be located so as to provide the most cost effective, efficient protection of life and property.*

As indicated by Alachua County Fire Rescue Department in the 2012 Fire and Emergency Medical Services Performance Update, the proposed location of the station will provide more effective service for this part of the County as ACFR assumes the duties of the City of Micanopy Fire/Rescue Department.

*Policy 5.4.2.1 Fire stations may be permitted in all land use categories designated on the Future Land Use Map through the special use permit process, subject to performance criteria regarding site size, scale, and dimensions, building coverage, parking, buffering, access, and other impacts.*

The proposed site of the fire station is designated as Rural/Agriculture (1 dwelling unit/5 acres) future land use. The proposed application is consistent with the SUP conditions ensuring compatibility with surrounding residences and other off-site impacts.

**UNIFIED LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE:**

**ZONING DISTRICT AND USE REGULATIONS**

Government buildings and facilities are allowed within the Agricultural zoning district by means of a SUP. Institutional uses are allowed in a range of land use categories, including Rural/Agriculture.

The SUP for this site, Z23-000006, was approved by the BoCC on December 12, 2023, with conditions to support compatibility which this application provides.

The following conditions were approved with the resolution for SUP Z-23-04.

- 1. This special use permit shall allow a fire/rescue station on the portion of Parcel 16392-000-000 found in the legal description attached to the resolution.*

The master plan outlines the limits of the SUP area, the limits of each phase, and the appropriate location of structures, stormwater and parking. The impacts to the dripline of protected trees are minimal, and the impacts and proposed mitigation was evaluated by the County Forester. Buffering is consistent with the Master Plan approved with the Special Use Permit and structures are located on the site to maximize the distance from adjacent residences (the parcel to the west is a non-residential retail building not presently occupied). There is also a 40-foot wide buffer along the eastern site boundary to lessen visual impacts and ensure compatibility with the adjoining property. The minimum 20% tree canopy preservation has also been provided. The proposed Preliminary and Final Development Plan implements the special use permit master

**Alachua County  
Development Review Committee  
Staff Report**

plan.

2. *Refuse and service areas shall be located to the rear of the building.*

The proposed dumpster with screened enclosure is located to the rear of the facility.

## **NATURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES PROTECTION**

### **CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT AREAS AND MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The proposed development site does not have any conservation areas and is outside of flood zones and wetlands.

### **OPEN SPACE**

Non-residential development is not required to provide Open Space, unless there are conservation resources present on site (Sec. 407.52 *Minimum open space requirement*). There are no conservation resources for the subject property, and therefore no Open Space is provided.

### **TREE PRESERVATION**

Overall, 50 percent of existing trees will remain on the site. This exceeds the minimum 20 percent required by Sec. 406.12.

Sec. 406.13 *Relocation, Replacement, Mitigation* requires either relocation, replacement, or mitigation for the alteration of regulated trees. Due to the number and size of the trees removed and limited space to replant trees onsite, there is a mitigation deficit. Mitigation by replacement is proposed for 38 inches. There is still a remaining deficit of 176 inches which will require a fee-in-lieu payment of \$22,880.00 prior to the issuance of Construction Permit. A fee-in-lieu payment is required when relocation or mitigation by replacement onsite is not feasible and is based on the adopted fee schedule rate of \$130 per caliper inch for the mitigation.

## **GENERAL DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS**

### **ARCHITECTURE**

The Station will use an existing mobile home as headquarters plus the addition of an open-air apparatus shelter for Phase 1. No architectural review is required.

### **PARKING STANDARDS**

Per Table 407.14.1 Parking Schedule the Fire Station requires 1 space per person on duty and ACFR indicated that there are 3 employees on site during the largest shift, therefore 5 parking spaces are provided. Additionally, 2 bicycle spaces are provided.

### **OUTDOOR LIGHTING**

The photometric plan submitted with the Preliminary and Final Development Plan demonstrates lighting levels are consistent with ULDC Article 14 of Chapter 407 for Outdoor Lighting.

**Alachua County  
Development Review Committee  
Staff Report**

**LANDSCAPING AND BUFFERING**

The Landscape Plan demonstrates that 80 percent of the site will have canopy coverage in 20 years, exceeding the 30 percent minimum required in Sec 407.41(n) *Landscape and planting plan objectives*. The stormwater basins are appropriately landscaped per Sec. 407.43.2.

According to ULDC 407.43.1(c) for landscaping of paved ground surface areas, “it shall be demonstrated that at least 50 percent of the paved ground surface area will be under mature canopy within 20 years”. The projected canopy coverage for paved ground surface areas in 20 years will be 51 percent which is consistent with this requirement.

All project boundary buffers, required by the SUP, consisting of a 40-foot high density buffer on the south with existing vegetation to remain and a 30-foot buffer on the east with existing vegetation to remain have been provided and are shown on the Landscape Plans.

No final certificate of occupancy shall be issued until the County has granted final approval and acceptance of the installed landscape as well as the protection of existing native vegetation. Final approval shall include as-built landscape plan certification from a registered landscape architect certifying that the landscaping is installed and functioning as intended, that prohibited and discouraged non-native vegetation listed in Table 406.16.2 has been removed, and that all of the provisions of this Chapter have been met. The land owner shall submit a Certificate of Compliance, in a form acceptable by the Director, to the County as a condition of issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy.

Landscape Irrigation Design and Maintenance Standards, Article II of Part II, Title 7, Chapter 79 of the Alachua County Code went into effect 4/1/16. All new irrigation systems installed in unincorporated Alachua County now require County approval prior to installation, which includes a review fee and site plan. All systems will then go through an inspection process. The Alachua County Irrigation Professional Portal has been created to allow irrigation professionals to submit required documents and pay fees entirely online. For those who are not online, required information may be submitted on paper in person at the EPD office at 408 West University Ave in Gainesville, 8:30-5:00 Monday through Friday. For more information about the Landscape Irrigation Efficiency Code and for a list of helpful resources, we encourage you to click [HERE](#). For more information, contact Water Resources staff at 352-264-6800 or at [Irrigation@AlachuaCounty.us](mailto:Irrigation@AlachuaCounty.us).

**ACCESS MANAGEMENT**

The proposed project provides one access point off S US Highway 44, with a southbound deceleration lane and a modified median opening on US Highway 441.

**WATER AND WASTEWATER SERVICES**

The development is not within the Urban Cluster and central water and sewer are not

**Alachua County  
Development Review Committee  
Staff Report**

available. The Phase 1 improvements will use an existing on-site well and septic system.

**STORMWATER MANAGEMENT**

The stormwater management facility complies with the requirements of Article 407, Article 9.

**CONCURRENCY**

A Final Certificate of Levels of Service Compliance (CLSC) for all public facilities will be issued upon Final Development Plan Approval and will be valid for one year. Provided that construction has commenced within the allowable period, the project shall have reserved capacity for a period of no more than two years from commencement of construction.

**STATE AND FEDERAL PERMIT**

The issuance of a state or federal permit shall not obligate the County to grant approval of any local permit and shall not be deemed to satisfy the requirements of the ULDC. As well, the issuance of this permit does not indicate that Alachua County believes that the applicant has all federal and state permits necessary prior to commencing construction.

Because §125.022(4), F.S. makes it hard for local governments to coordinate their permitting activities with state and federal permitting agencies, the applicant is advised that conflict with a subsequently issued state or federal permit may cause a need to apply for an amendment to this development plan approval.

Upon approval of a development plan, the applicant shall obtain all required state and federal permits prior to commencement of the development. Upon issuance of a required state or federal permit, the applicant shall furnish a copy of such permit to the applicable County department.

**DEVELOPMENT PLAN EXPIRATION**

According to Section 402.47(b), an approved Final Development Plan shall expire unless a complete application for a construction, building or other required permit has been accepted by the appropriate reviewing department within 12 months of the date of final approval and that such development is continuing in good faith. Applications for extension of time limit may be processed pursuant to Article 6 or Article 10 of Chapter 402 of the ULDC.

**Alachua County  
Development Review Committee  
Staff Report**

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff has found the proposed Preliminary and Final Development Plan to be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, requirements of the Unified Land Development Code, an Special Use Permit.

Staff recommends **approval with conditions** of the Preliminary and Final Development Plan for the Alachua County Cuscowilla Fire Station.

**CONDITIONS**

**Growth Management:**

1. Prior to issuance of Construction Permit, pay tree mitigation fee of \$22,880.00 to Alachua County Parks and Conservation Lands tree planting fund or provide a revised plan demonstrating compliance with tree mitigation requirements.
2. The applicant shall obtain all required state and federal permits prior to commencement of the development. Upon issuance of a required state or federal permit, the applicant shall furnish a copy of such permit to the applicable County department.
3. Any utility changes that affect the approved development plan will require additional approvals by Alachua County subject to the Unified Land Development Code.

**Environmental Protection Department:**

4. No clearing or construction activities can commence until the applicant has satisfied all applicable state regulations regarding gopher tortoises [68A-27.003, F.A.C.; §125.022(5) F.S.]. This will include an additional GT survey of the 5-acre project limits within 90-days prior to scheduled construction activities, and coordination with FWC concerning decisions on appropriate on-site relocation within the County's Cuscowilla property and/or off-site relocation options. Since the project is being conducted on County-owned property, all the GT correspondence with FWC and/or other representatives will include copying EPD staff including applicable state permits, and if applicable, relocation activities completed prior to the County can issue a Construction Permit (§406.05, ULDC; §406.28, ULDC).
5. Silt screen fencing is required along the perimeter boundary of the construction area, and the fencing locations are required to be depicted on the sedimentation and erosion control plan sheet presented on a plan sheet plan. Prior to conducting any vegetation clearing activities, the approved project boundaries will be delineated with flagging tape ribbon at appropriate distance so ribbons



**Alachua County  
Development Review Committee  
Staff Report**

can be viewed, however, placed at intervals no further than 100 ft. apart to designate the limits of clearing and construction activities for the project. Removal of vegetation is restricted to within a maximum 15 ft. inside-width of the flagged perimeter to allow walking and equipment access to install silt-screen fencing along the project boundary. After installation of the perimeter silt-fence, clearing and grading activities can commence within the project boundary except for trees and other features designated for protection and preservation.

6. If a security fence (e.g. chain-link, barb-wire, hog-wire etc.) is installed along the east, west and south perimeters of the 5-acre project areas, it will be unnecessary to include appropriate Conservation signage along the boundary referencing protected natural resources present beyond the fence boundary. If a security fence is not installed, Conservation signage will be necessary prior to issuance of the certificate of occupancy [Sec. 406.103, ULDC].
7. Prior to commencing construction, the applicant must submit documentation of coordination and comments from the Florida Division of Historic Resources (DHR) (Sec. 406.77, ULDC; Sec. 406.82, ULDC). Due to the proposed project site being located in an area of high archaeological site potential, at this time, it is recommended that professional archaeological monitoring occur during all ground-disturbing construction activities. Should any resources be encountered during construction, the applicant will contact ACEPD and DHR immediately and all work will stop until a formal archeological assessment is completed in coordination with ACEPD and DHR.
8. Two wetlands and their adjacent 75 ft. wetland buffers are located adjacent to the proposed 5-acre project boundaries. Silt screen fencing is required along the perimeter boundary of the construction area, and the fencing locations are depicted on the sedimentation and erosion control plan sheet [Sec. 406.102(b), ULDC]. Prior to conducting any vegetation clearing activities, the approved project boundaries will be delineated with flagging tape ribbon at appropriate distance so ribbons can be viewed, however, placed at intervals no further than 100 ft. apart to designate the limits of clearing and construction activities for the project. Removal of vegetation is restricted to within a maximum 15 ft. inside-width of the flagged perimeter to allow walking and equipment access to install silt-screen fencing along the project boundary. After installation of the perimeter silt-fence, clearing and grading activities can commence within the project boundary except for trees and other features designated for protection and preservation.