

### **DeKalb County Zoning Board of Appeals**

# 330 Ponce De Leon Avenue, Suite 500 Decatur, GA 30030

(404) 371-2155 / plandev@dekalbcountyga.gov

# Wednesday, February 10, 2021 Planning Department Staff Analysis

Case No.: D3 A-20-1244495 Parcel ID(s): 18-047-05-005

Commission District: 04 Super District: 06

Applicant: Kristie Wilder

715 College Avenue Decatur, GA 30030

Owner: Miguel A. Moreno and Chean Chea

2501 Central Blvd. Decatur, GA 30035

**Project Name:** 604 Kentucky Street

Location/Address: The property is located west of Kentucky Street, at 604 Kentucky Street, Scottdale, GA

30079

**Requests:** 1) A variance from Chapter 27 of the DeKalb County Code to reduce the required 100-

foot separation distance of an animal shelter from a property line to 30 feet at the

rear of the subject property; and

2) A variance to reduce the required 100-foot separation distance of an animal shelter

from a property line to 19 feet at the north side of the subject property.

3) A variance to reduce the required 500-foot separation distance of an animal shelter

from a residential zoning district.

**Staff Recommendation:** 1) Approval of a variance from Chapter 27 of the DeKalb County Code to reduce the

required 100-foot separation distance of an animal shelter from a property line to 30

feet at the rear of the subject property;

2) Approval of a variance to reduce the required 100-foot separation distance of an

animal shelter from a property line to 19 feet at the north side of the subject property;

and

3) Approval of a variance to reduce the required 500-foot separation distance of an

animal shelter from a residential zoning district.

### **STAFF FINDINGS**

#### Site Location and Property Description:

The subject property is a 2.1-acre, 225-foot-wide lot with street frontage on Kentucky Street, a local street. The shape of the lot is irregular. It is zoned M (Light Industrial) and is developed with two metal buildings and a metal storage container. The topography is level.

The surrounding area to the north, west, and south is primarily industrial. Across Kentucky Street to the east, a fraternity, housed in a detached, residential structure, is an exception to the industrial and commercial development pattern. Another exception is a multifamily residential development that is located approximately 350 feet to the northwest of the subject property.

The applicant proposes to use two existing buildings as an animal shelter. As per Section 27-4.2.11 of the *DeKalb County Code*, any building or enclosed structure for the housing of animals shall have a minimum setback of at least one hundred (100) feet from all property lines. The submitted site plan indicates that the building on the western side of the subject property is 30 feet from the rear property line and 19 feet from the northern side property line. The other building complies with the 100-foot separation requirement. Additionally, Section 27-4.2.11 B3 stipulates that "no animal shelter shall be located within five hundred (500) feet of a residential [zoning] district." The Zoning Ordinance does specify a method for measuring that distance. For the purposes of this analysis, measurements were determined using the County GIS tool and measuring from the closest point of the closest applicable building footprint polygons to the property line of the nearest residential zoning districts. The proposed use will be approximately 475 feet from the MR-2 (Medium Density Residential-2) Zoning District to the northeast; 330 feet from the R-75 (Residential Medium Lot-75) Zoning District to the north; and 285 feet

#### **Surrounding Zoning and Land Use:**

Direction	Zoning	Land Use
North	M (Light Industrial)	Industrial/Commercial
Northeast	M (Light Industrial), Scottdale Overlay District, Tier 1	Industrial/Commercial
East	M (Light Industrial), Scottdale Overlay District, Tier 1	A fraternity house
Southeast	M (Light Industrial), Scottdale Overlay District, Tier 1	Industrial/Commercial
South	M (Light Industrial)	Industrial/Commercial
Southwest	M (Light Industrial)	Industrial/Commercial
West	M (Light Industrial)	Industrial/Commercial
Northwest	M (Light Industrial)	Industrial/Commercial

1. By reason of exceptional narrowness, shallowness or shape of a specific lot, or by reason of exceptional topographic conditions, which were not created by the owner or applicant, the strict application of the requirements of this chapter would deprive the property owner of rights and privileges enjoyed by other property owners in the same zoning district:

The dimensions of the subject property exceed the minimum size and square footage for M properties. The topography is not exceptional, but the shape is irregular. The irregular shape, together with the location of the existing buildings on the site, may deprive the property owner of rights and privileges enjoyed by other property owners in the same zoning district.

2. The requested variance does not go beyond the minimum necessary to afford relief, and does not constitute a grant of special privilege inconsistent with the limitations upon other properties in the zoning district in which the subject property is located:

The requested variance does not go beyond the minimum necessary to afford relief. Because it is based entirely on the location of existing buildings on the site.

### 3. The grant of the variance will not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the property or improvements in the zoning district in which the subject property is located:

Granting of the variance will not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the property or improvements in the zoning district in which the subject property is located. Use of the building as an animal shelter would not negatively affect the other land uses that are located on adjoining properties to the rear and side of the property.

### 4. The literal interpretation and strict application of the applicable provisions or requirements of this chapter would cause undue and unnecessary hardship:

The strict application of the applicable provisions and requirements of this chapter may cause undue and unnecessary hardship for the applicant because they would prevent use of a property for a purpose which may be both suitable and appropriate.

### 5. The requested variance would be consistent with the spirit and purpose of this Chapter and the DeKalb County Comprehensive Plan Text:

The requested variance may be consistent with the spirit and purpose of the Zoning Ordinance and the Comprehensive Plan.

#### STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

- 1) <u>Approval</u> of a variance from Chapter 27 of the DeKalb County Code to reduce the required 100-foot separation distance of an animal shelter from a property line to 30 feet at the rear of the subject property;
- 2) <u>Approval</u> of a variance to reduce the required 100-foot separation distance of an animal shelter from a property line to 19 feet at the north side of the subject property; and
- 3) <u>Approval</u> of a variance to reduce the required 500-foot separation distance of an animal shelter from a residential zoning district.

**Staff also recommends the following condition:** the three variances above shall apply only to Life is Labs Rescue, Inc. (dba iWag). Any future animal shelter operator shall be subject to the requirements of Section 4.2.11 unless applicable variances are approved by the Zoning Board of Appeals.



### DeKalb County Department of Planning & Sustainability

Hon. Michael Thurmond Chief Executive Officer

Andrew Baker, AICP, Director

# ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS APPLICATION FOR PUBLIC HEARING (VARIANCES, SPECIAL EXCEPTIONS, APPEALS OF ADMINISTRATIVE DECISIONS)

Applicant and/or Authorized Representation	ve Kristie Wilder	ВОА	No
Mailing Address: 715 E	ast College Avenue		electric grade of
City/State/Zip Code:D	ecatur, GA 30030		
Email:kristie@i-wag	g.com		
Telephone Home: 678-	773-8711 Busin	ness: <u>678-773-8711</u>	Fax No.: 770-562-2742
		RD OF SUBJECT PROP	
Owner: MIGUEL A	MORENO and CHEAN C	HEA	
Address (Mailing): 250	1 PARK CENTRAL BLVI	) a server of the property	
City/State/Zip Code: DE	CATUR GA 30035		
Email: Slipuph	@gmail.com		
			Fax No.:
	ADDRESS/LOCATI	ON OF SUBJECT PROP	ERTY
Address: 604 Kentucky Street City:		: Scottdale Sta	te: <u>GA</u> Zip: <u>30079</u>
District(s): 18th	Land Lot(s): 6	Block:16	Parcel: <u>18 047 05</u> 005
District(s):	Land Lot(s):	Block:	Parcel:
District(s):	Land Lot(s):	Block:	Parcel:
Zoning Classification:	M	Commission District &	Super District: 4 and 6
CIRCLE TYPE OF HEAF	RING REQUESTED		
· VARIANCE (From Deve	elopment Standards causing u	ndue hardship upon owne	ers of property)
	S (To reduce or waive off-stree		
	OF ADMINISTRATIVE DECIS		
TO BE COMPLETED BY PLAN	NNING AND SUSTAINABILITY DEPA	ARTMENT	
Date Received:		Fee Pa	id:



2

# ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS APPLICATION AUTHORIZATION OF THE PROPERTY OWNER

I hereby authorize the staff and members of the Zoning Board of Appeals
To inspect the premises of the Subject Property

I hereby certify that the information provided in the application is true and correct.

I hereby certify that I am the owner of the property subject to the application.

DATE: 11-30-20

Applicant: Signature

=: 11.30-20

Applicant: Signature

11/19/2020



3

# ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS APPLICATION

### AUTHORIZATION TO REPRESENT THE PROPERTY OWNER

I hereby authorize the staff and members of the Zoning Board of Appeals to inspect the premises of the Subject Property

I hereby certify that the information provided in the application is true and correct.

I hereby certify that I am the owner of the property and that I authorize the applicant/agent to apply for a hearing to the Zoning Board of Appeals for the requests as shown in this application

DATE: 11/19/2020	Applicant/Agent: Kstalicalus Signature
TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:	
(I)/ (WE) MIGUEL A MORENO and	
being (owner/owners) of the property describe	(Name of Owners)  ed below or attached hereby delegate authority to:
Kristie Wilder	The state of the s
To file an application on (my) / (our) behalf Notary Public Notary Public	Owner  Owner
Notary Public	Owner



### **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

l.	Overview	1
II.	History	2
III.	Variance Request	3
IV.	Survey	9
V.	Exhibit 1: Comparable Properties	10
VI.	Exhibit 2: Letters of Support	17

### LETTER OF INTENT AND WRITTEN ANALYSIS DEKALB COUNTY VARIANCE APPLICATION

### Applicant:

Kristie Wilder, Executive Director iWag (a dba of Life is labs Rescue, Inc., a 501(c)3 charitable organization)

#### **Contact:**

Kristie Wilder, Executive Director 678-773-8711 (mobile) 770-562-2742 (fax) kristie@i-wag.com

### **Property Address:**

604 Kentucky Street Scottdale, GA 30079

2.1 acres of land with three structures totalling approximately 20,000 sq feet

Zoning: M



Figure 1 - Aerial View of Property

#### HISTORY

One of our two non-profit dog shelters has been on East College Avenue in Decatur since 2014. Our amazing team has worked hard to make us a valuable and respected community resource and to support dogs and families locally and beyond.

Not only do we rescue homeless dogs from local shelters (including Dekalb County) and prepare them for adoption, we also offer commercial services that support our mission. Local families use our services for boarding, training, daycare and more.

Our original location, in the country in West Georgia, has been in operation since 1996. Neither location has ever had a noise or other complaint from neighbors or the community in general. Both receive and pass regular inspections and licensing requirements. We have never even had someone make a call to either location with a complaint about our daily operation in terms of noise, odor or other issues.

We pride ourselves on a gold standard of care for all dogs and people we serve. This includes our neighbors. We manage our facilities in a way uncommon in dog sheltering. Our dogs get regular exercise and training. They are housed and cared for in a way that means our facility is quiet 95% of the day. We've even had people arrive to visit only to think they were in the wrong place because it was so quiet.

Unfortunately, like many properties in this area, our current building is now subject to demolition and development. Even more unfortunate is how difficult it is to find a suitable building for our use - it took us close to a year to find this building in the first place. Zoning, building construction, outdoor space and other considerations mean our options are limited for sites we can occupy both legally and logistically.

But we did find a unicorn - the subject property. It allows us to continue to serve the fine people of this area, maintain our existing volunteers and clientele and not have to move further away and start all over again. And it's only 1.7 miles from our existing space - still central to the people and dogs we currently serve and love.

This is my fourth time working with a county to seek approval from a board regarding property use. In every prior case, we have been approved - two for a SUP (Carroll and Douglas County), and one for a zoning change (Paulding County). I feel strongly that you will confidently approve our request when you learn more about our organization and our plans for the property.

Please help us SAVE OUR SHELTER! Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kristie Wilder Executive Director

Citchiden

#### **OUR VARIANCE REQUEST**

We intend to house our animals in the two metal structures on site (See Fig 1, Page 1). The block building will not be used for animal housing.

Based on using the two metal structures as our animal shelter, we kindly request a reduction of setbacks as follows:

- 1. Rear from 100 feet to 30 feet.
- 2. Side from 100 feet to 19 feet.

### WHY SHOULD YOU APPROVE OUR VARIANCE REQUESTS?

I would first like to discuss the following regulation:

Sec. 4.2.11. - Animal care facilities.

- B. Animal shelter, four (4) or more.
  - 1. Any building or enclosed structure for the housing of animals shall have a minimum setback of at least one hundred (100) feet from all property lines and at least two hundred (200) from property zoned for residential use.

With these requirements, a 10,000 square foot building would need to sit perfectly centered on two acres. There are several reasons why this would be virtually impossible in Dekalb County:

- 1. The availability of suitably zoned property in the area is minimal.
- 2. The few appropriately zoned properties are in remote Dekalb county, inconveniently located for our volunteer, patrons and general business..
- 3. Finding an existing building that meets setback requirements is near impossible, if not impossible.
- 4. Building a new space is cost-prohibitive, especially given Covid-related issues with building materials and construction, and is not in the best interest of most non-profit dog shelters or even animal care facilities.

Given these constraints, we can conclude that virtually ANY animal care facility of any type wishing to operate near any populated area of Dekalb will do so on property requiring a fairly significant variance regarding setbacks.

To that point, I have also included aerial photographs (Exhibit 1) from the county GIS of currently operating dog and animal care facilities in the area for your review. From my research, there are no locations currently operating in unincorporated Dekalb County with even a single 100 foot setback from any property line and none have as much acreage as we will have. Facilities within city limits appear visually to have at least one part of their building right on the property line and minimal setbacks on most, or all, sides. Most of these businesses have been around for years.

Our request satisfies all of the criteria for approval in Dekalb County Zoning Ordinance 7.5.3:

1. By reason of exceptional narrowness, shallowness, or shape of a specific lot, or by reason of exceptional topographic and other site conditions (such as, but not limited to, floodplain, major stand of trees, steep slope), which were not created by the owner or applicant, the strict application of the requirements of this chapter would deprive the property owner of rights and privileges enjoyed by other property owners in the same zoning district.

Given the shape of the lot, which was not created by the applicant, there is no feasible way to occupy this property for our use without a variance for setbacks. The variance requires, at minimum, a perfectly square 2 acres and a 10,000 or fewer square foot building. This is an unreasonable expectation in a populated urban area.

The applicant is also not responsible for the placement of the buildings. However, demolishing and rebuilding structures central to the property would only afford a slight improvement in setbacks and we feel no significant difference from current setbacks in terms of our operation and impact on the community. Moreover the cost would be exorbitant and wasteful.

Exhibit 1 illustrates other animal care facilities operating in unincorporated Dekalb. Each of these locations enjoys the rights and privileges of some fairly significant setback variances. We ask that the same rights and privileges are extended to us.

2. The requested variance does not go beyond the minimum necessary to afford relief, and does not constitute a grant of special privilege inconsistent with the limitations upon other properties in the zoning district in which the subject property is located.

The requested variance does not go beyond the minimum necessary to afford relief because the buildings are pre-existing and we are simply asking to operate within them.

It also does not constitute special privilege as other similar facilities are operating with tighter setbacks than we are requesting. To the contrary, denying our application would be showing special privilege to other businesses operating in the same manner in the same zoning.

3. The grant of the variance will not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the property or improvements in the zoning district in which the subject property is located.

Our use virtually always brings joy to the surrounding area. Neighbors love to see the dogs and stop by for puppy breaks. They volunteer with us, donate to us and otherwise support us. We feel we have great relationships with our neighbors (see letters of support attached - Exhibit 2).

Our facility is always kept clean and attractive. We have a standard of "showing we care" by how our property appears at first impression.

We would be making no changes to the property that would affect it negatively in any way.

We do feel that the uses of adjoining properties will not be affected at all by our operation. We are currently operating directly attached to retail, with an office building directly behind us. If there were issues with noise or odor at our Decatur site, we would have had complaints based on the nature of these adjoining businesses.

Our future adjoining neighbors have the following types of businesses:

- Healthcare
- Auto repair
- Storage
- Waterproofing
- Video/Film
- Construction & Engineering
- Cemetery

We feel that our noise level and general traffic will be consistent with our future neighbors.

We will also have someone on site 24/7 to monitor the dogs and property.

More than anything, we feel we would be a bright ray of sunshine in an otherwise well-kept standard industrial area.

4. The literal interpretation and strict application of the applicable provisions or requirements of this chapter would cause undue and unnecessary hardship.

I refer back to the difficulty with finding suitable property in the area for our use. Literal and strict interpretation of the provisions would mean you would not allow or want any animal care facility in any part of Dekalb except in the very remote areas away from the general population. I cannot imagine this to be true.

Over 50% of the American population own dogs and consider them an integral part of their family. Dog care facilities are in high demand in urban areas and should be accessible to the communities they serve.

Forcing us to a remote part of the county, if we could even find property, would most likely mean the demise of our organization.

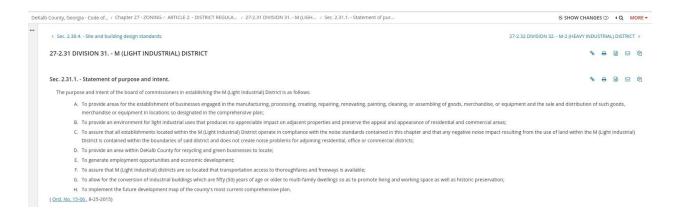
It would also mean that some of our staff would not be able to continue working with us. We currently employ over 25 people, several of whom rely on public transportation and live nearby.

Finally, it would mean the community's loss of a valuable resource for support and services.

I cannot stress enough how much of a "unicorn" this property is for us. It has two acres, which is unheard of in an area like this. And five times more space than our existing location. It will allow us to offer so much more to the community!

## 5. The requested variance would be consistent with the spirit and purpose of this chapter and the DeKalb County Comprehensive Plan text.

The property is zoned Light Industrial (M) and is not part of a Zoning District that would have further restrictions. Short of a heavy industrial zoning, the M zoning is the most permissive zoning category in the county. This makes it a perfect fit for our use.



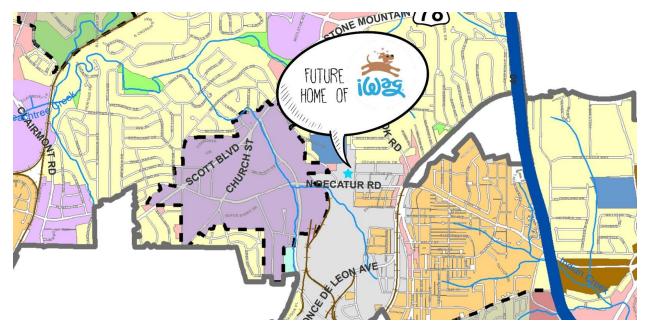
The spirit of Light Industrial Zoning is as follows:

"The intent of the Light Industrial Character Area is identity areas appropriate for industrial type uses. The location of these areas shall preserve the appeal and appearance of residential and commercial areas from the prospective intrusion of light industrial land uses. These areas consist of areas used in low intensity manufacturing, including wholesale trade, and distribution activities that do not generate excessive noise, vibration, air pollution or other nuisance characteristics."

Our operation is consistent with this description. Furthermore, our use falls into the Primary Land Uses designated by the county for these properties as noted in the Comprehensive Plan: Manufacturing, Warehouse/Distribution, Wholesale/Trade, Automotive, Accessory Commercial, Educational Institutions, Community Facilities.

We are somewhere between Accessory Commercial and Community Facilities as a non-profit dog shelter and are fully within the spirit of the chapter.

In addition, I was excited to read the Dekalb County Comprehensive plan and that it further and wholeheartedly supports our operation at this location.



The current plans show that this area will be retained as Light Industrial (LIND) into the future and further mentions on page 75 under Industrial Character Area Policies a guideline to: "Minimize the rezoning of light industrial properties to residential uses." Since this area, along with the one along Dekalb Industrial to the south, are the only LIND areas nearby, I would conclude that the county would protect them as such. LIND is described as follows in the Comprehensive Plan:

Section 8 Land Use DeKalb Plan 2035

#### Light Industrial (LIND)

The intent of the Light Industrial Character Area is identity areas appropriate for industrial type uses. The location of these areas shall preserve the appeal and appearance of residential and commercial areas from the prospective intrusion of light industrial land uses. These areas consist of areas used in low intensity manufacturing, including wholesale trade, and distribution activities that do not generate excessive noise, vibration, air pollution or other nuisance characteristics.

Primary Land Uses	Permitted Zoning
<ul> <li>Light Industrial Uses</li> <li>Manufacturing</li> <li>Warehouse/Distribution</li> <li>Wholesale/Trade</li> <li>Automotive</li> <li>Accessory Commercial</li> <li>Educational Institutions</li> <li>Community Facilities</li> </ul>	M-1

#### Light Industrial Character Area Policies

- Infrastructure Provide appropriate infrastructure support for industrial development in designated industrial areas.
- Buffer Protect surrounding areas from the negative impacts of noise and light pollutants.
- Residential Protection Prohibit the encroachment of industrial uses into established residential areas.
- Environmental Compatibility Direct development to industrial districts located in areas with compatible soils drainage and other environmental characteristics.
- Zoning Compatibility Protect existing and zoned undeveloped industrial land from unnecessary intrusion by conflicting land uses.
- 6. Re-zoning Minimize the rezoning of light industrial properties to residential uses.
- Future Designations Designate specific areas through the use of zoning and other land use tools for industrial development.
- Retrofit Develop or, where possible, retrofit property planned industrial parks with adequate water, sewer, storm-water, and transportation infrastructure for all component uses at build-out.
- Location of Centers Locate industrial centers in areas with good access to highways.
- Landscaping Incorporate landscaping and site design to soften or shield views of buildings and parking lots, loading docks, etc.
- 11. Regulations Compatibility Create and implement zoning and development regulations for industrial uses.
- Truck Routes Designate truck routes to reduce noise, pollutants and traffic congestion in residential areas.
- Access Management Provide access controls and management standards in compliance with the DeKalb County Transportation Plan.
- Adaptable Reuse Convert obsolete and empty industrial buildings into multifamily and/or live-work establishments.

As the area continues to develop, there will be fewer and fewer sites available for animal care facilities if they are subject to the strict interpretation of these regulations.

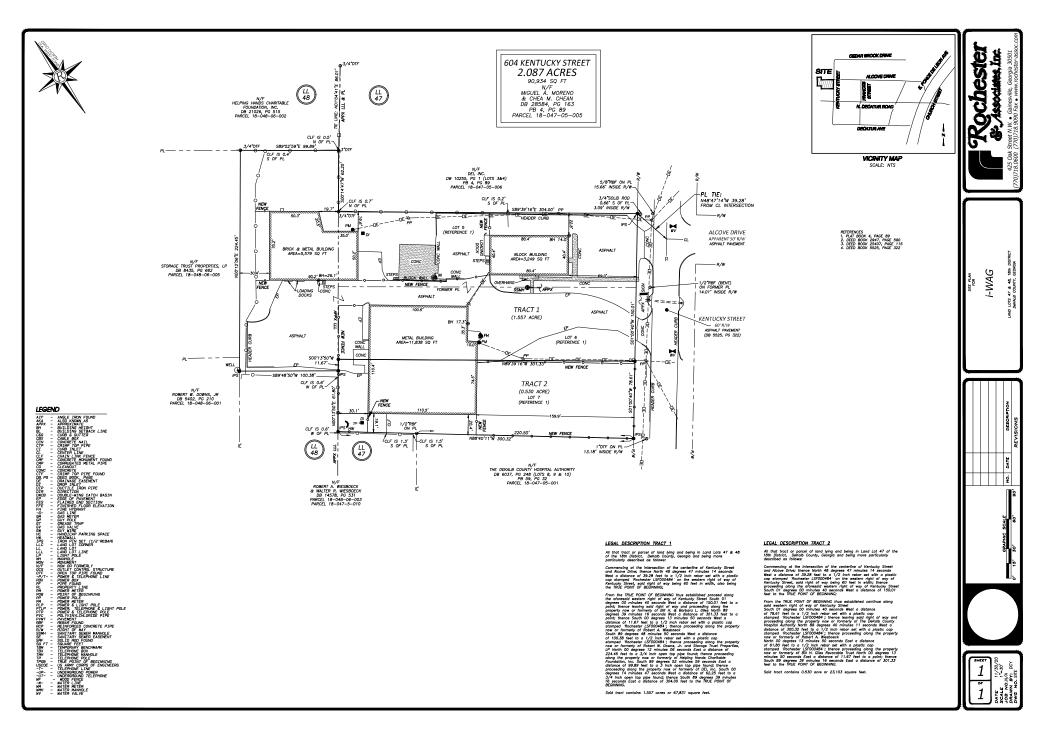
This area will remain appropriate for our use and is fully in the spirit of the comprehensive plan. This also means that we would not be moving to an area slated for future residential or office-type use. This means we can make this location our home!

Based on the Comprehensive Plan, I feel this sets us up firmly for success in and with Dekalb County and its residents well into the future!

### THANK YOU FOR CONSIDERING OUR REQUEST

We understand that your time is a premium and we respect its value. We hope we have made it as easy as possible, through our research and presentation, for you to approve our request. We feel it's important to make it as easy as possible for people to help us with our mission.

Thank you for your consideration in helping us SAVE OUR SHELTER.



### **EXHIBIT 1 - Comparable properties in Unincorporated Dekalb**

Barking Hound Village - Decatur (unincorporated Dekalb)
Property Size .37 acres, approximate setbacks 21 ft - 70 ft

#### 18 009 29 009

Address: 229 Rio Circle Decatur, GA

30030

Owner: Fg Shepherd Llc

Co-Owner:

Appraised \$825,000

Value:

Tax District: 04 - Unincorporated

Acreage: 0.37

Dimensions:

Subdivision:

Class: I3
Zoning: M

Zoning Condition:

Land Use: LIND

Overlay District:

Historic District:

Legal Block:

Legal Lot:

Legal Building:

Legal Unit:



### Pets Playhouse on Ponce - Decatur (unincorporated Dekalb) Property Size .5 acres, approximate setbacks 2 ft - 80 ft

#### 18 008 03 024

Address: 2959 East Ponce De Leon Avenue Decatur, GA

30030

Owner: Ocp East Ponce Llc

Co-Owner:

Appraised

\$650,000

Value:

Tax District: 04 - Unincorporated

Acreage: 0.50

Dimensions: 8 x 30 x 19 x 15 x ....

Subdivision:

Class: C3

Zoning:
Zoning
Condition:
Land Use:

Overlay District:

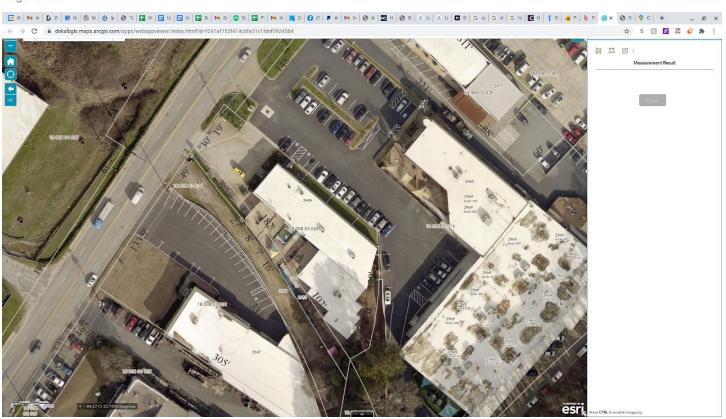
Historic District:

Legal Block:

Legal Lot:

Legal Building:

Legal Unit:



# Wag-a-Lot - Decatur (unincorporated Dekalb) Property Size .84 acres, approximate setbacks 5 ft - 84 ft

#### 18 008 04 014

Address: 225 Dekalb Industrial Way Decatur, GA

30030

Owner: Alpha Logic Llc

Co-Owner:

Appraised

\$826,100

Value:

Tax District: 04 - Unincorporated

Acreage: 0.70

Dimensions:

Subdivision:

Class: I3

Zoning: M

Zoning

Condition:

Land Use: LIND

Overlay District:

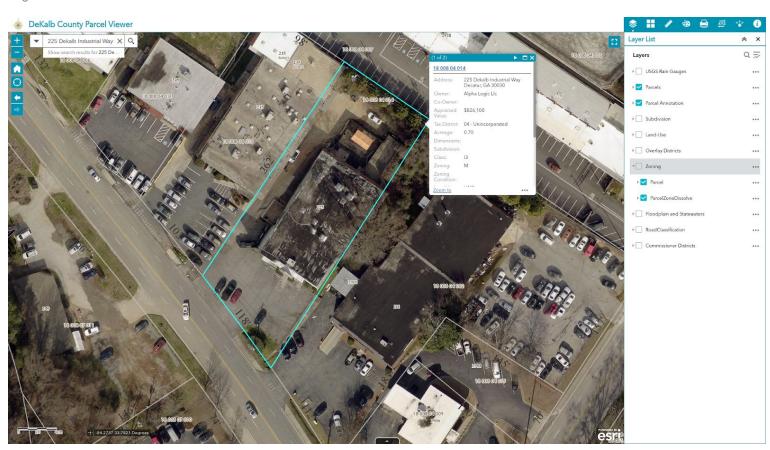
Historic District:

Legal Block:

Legal Lot:

Legal Building:

Legal Unit:



### **OUTSIDE OF UNINCORPORATED DEKALB in similarly or more dense neighboring**

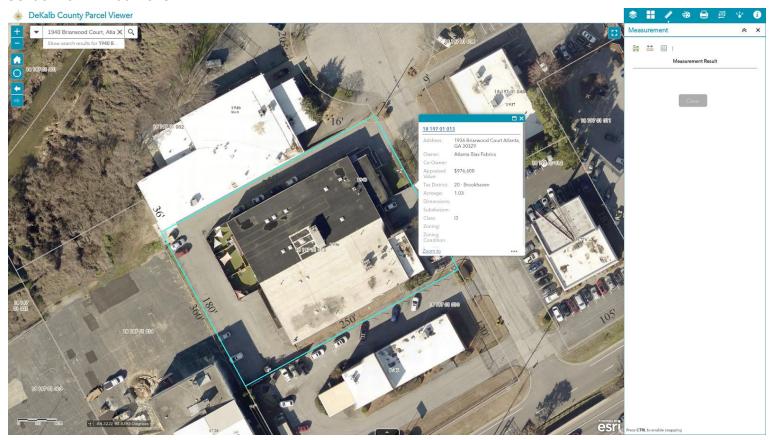
Spot for Dogs and Frogs to Dogs - Decatur



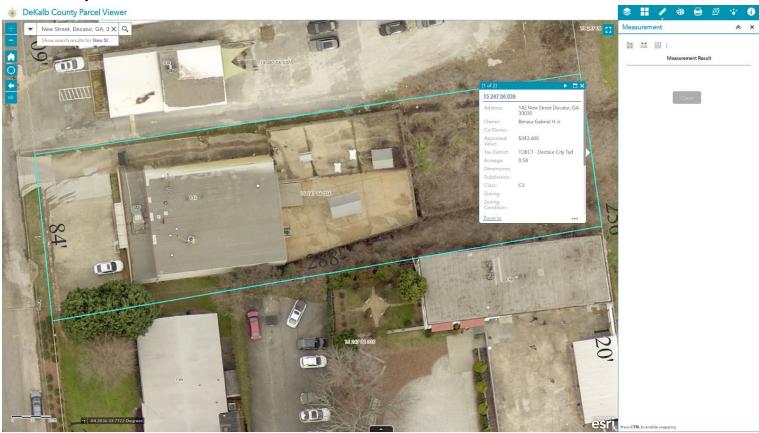
### Dogphoria - Chamblee



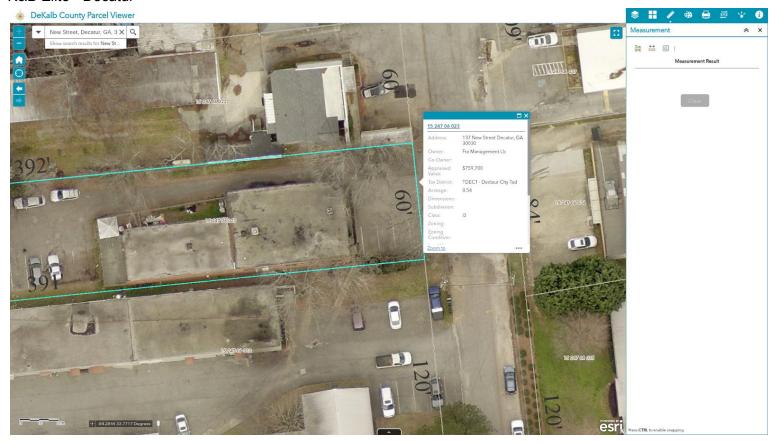
### Central Bark - Brookhaven



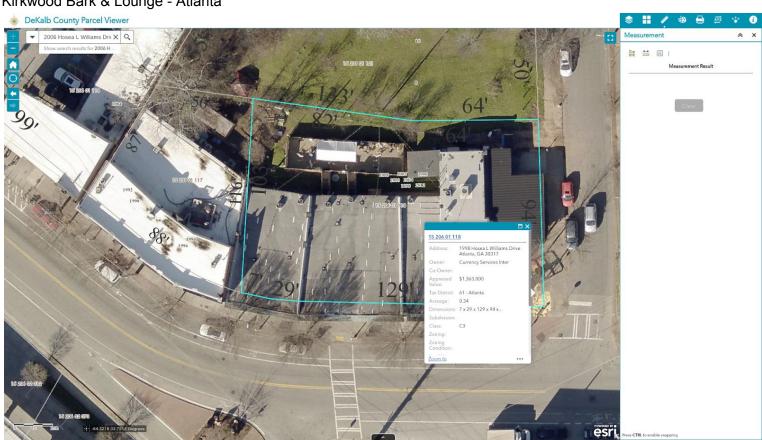
### Rex and Roxy's - Decatur



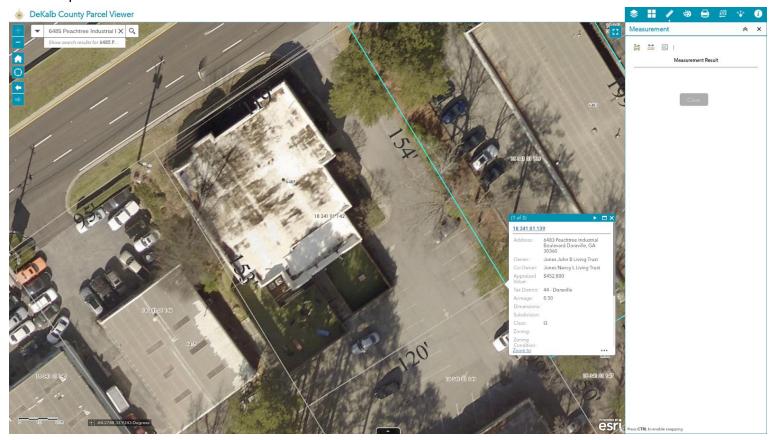
#### K&B Elite - Decatur



### Kirkwood Bark & Lounge - Atlanta



### Ark Pet Spa & Hotel - Doraville



Meghan Byrne

858 Derrydown Way Decatur, GA 30030

404-444-4030
Meghan.byrne@comcast.net

November 20, 2020

To whom it may concern:

This is a letter of reference for iWag and it is directed to the DeKalb County Department of Planning & Sustainability. I can enthusiastically recommend iWag both as a responsible business neighbor and a generous and contributing community member.

I negotiated a lease on behalf of the Landlord in 2014 and was the Property Manager for Iwag from 2014-2020 at East Decatur Station. Kristie and Iwag took a beat up old building, and renovated it to a functional and attractive space. It has been a pleasure to watch their organization grow and to see well trained dogs and pups in the fenced yard. They do a great job of training and quieting dogs keeping it very clean. We have never experienced odors, loose dogs, or barking.

Krisite and Iwag participated in community events even before they occupied their building. They are known throughout Decatur for advocating and training dogs. They make sure all pets are neutered/spayed. They make a positive contribution to animal welfare, and I will miss having them in my neighborhood.

Just last week I found a stray cat and reached out to them to see if the cat was chipped to research ownership. Literally within 5 minutes they met me to scan the kitty. They called the owner registered with the cat's chip. Within 20 minutes, a very relieved cat owner was picking up their lost cat. IWag's care for animals is so attentive and responsive. The week before I reached out to them to post a missing neighborhood dog. They acted immediately.

We wish them luck in their new space. It will be larger and allow them to add to the services they can provide to our community. Dekalb County is fortunate to have them.

I will miss them!

Yours Sincerely,

Meghan Byrne



Date: November 19, 2020

To Whom it May Concern

This is to confirm that Life is Lab Rescue, Inc. has been leasing one of our spaces since February 01,2015.

I have not received any complaints from any other tenant concerning a disturbing or noise issue, since I started my job as a Facilities/Property Manager here at East Decatur Station.

Should you have any questions, please email me at nuha@eastdecaturstation.com.

Regards,

Nuha Hammoody | Property Manager

East Decatur Station

111-C New Street, Decatur GA 30030

O - 404-377-3095 | F - 404-377-3033

C-470-424-4005



November 28, 2020

DeKalb County Department of Planning & Sustainability 330 W. Ponce de Leon Ave. Decatur, GA 30030

TO: Whom it May Concern:

I am writing in support of I-Wag, a non-profit 501(c)(3) dog rescue and dog care facility in Decatur. I-Wag is located at 715 E. College Ave and my business, Lemon Zesty, is located just a few steps away at 731 E. College.

I-Wag is an excellent neighbor and unproblematic in every way. In fact, I would add that they bring a wonderful variation to a somewhat sleepy corporate area. Their establishment has curb appeal far beyond what one might expect from an animal rescue, and every detail is meticulously planned and executed. Their building is a great representation of Kristie Wilder herself: bright, welcoming, and innovative.

In the years that we have been neighbors, I have never experienced any issues with working next to a dog care facility. My employees and I have been at my shop at all hours of the day and night and never heard barking or other noise. And due to the below-the-ground sanitary drainage and waste disposal system, there are no odors. I am proud to be near a business that cares about giving back and saving animals, and my customers are overjoyed when they find out that there are adoptable dogs just a few steps away from my door.

Several years ago I founded Detroit's first no-kill animal shelter (Detroit Dog Rescue), and during the design process of our building we researched ways to assimilate into the community and to make the rescue process as gentle and productive for the dogs themselves. Upon touring the I-Wag facilities, I was amazed and delighted to see design elements that were far beyond anything I dreamed of during my time in rescue work. These are compassionate, caring and hard-working people who love their business and community. They are exactly the kind of people you want as your neighbors and we will be sorry to see them go.

I hope that this letter of recommendation will be beneficial when deciding whether to allow requested zoning variances as I-Wag searches for another Decatur-based facility where it can continue to operate.

Sincerely,

Monica Martino Owner Lemon Zesty

### **The CHAMPION**

DeKalb County Department of Planning & Sustainability 330 W. Ponce de Leon Ave. Decatur, GA 30030

TO: Whom it may concern

RE: I-Wag Kennel and Boarding facility reference

Please accept this letter of reference on behalf of Kristie Wilder, executive director of I-Wag on E. Ponce de Leon Ave. in Decatur.

Our office entrance is less than 20 yards from I-Wag's outdoor play area where dogs boarded at the facility play under constant supervision, yet we have never experienced any unpleasantries such as odor or noise and are happy to have I-Wag as a corporate neighbor.

When some tenants in our building initially heard that a canine boarding facility was taking over the space formerly operated by Dearborne Veterinary Clinic, there were understandable concerns. However, under Wilder's leadership and innovative approaches to canine care, those concerns were quickly forgotten.

Wilder and the I-Wag staff have been wonderful neighbors and have gone to great lengths to control barking and odor. Soon after opening the facility, a below-the-ground sanitary drainage and waste disposal system was installed and subsequently covered with artificial turf.

I-Wag's efforts to help displaced and homeless animals are commendable to say the least and the management, staff and facility have proven to be great neighbors in our community. It is my hope that this letter of recommendation will be beneficial when deciding whether to allow requested zoning variances as I-Wag searches for another Decatur-based facility where it can continue to operate.

Sincerely,

John Hewitt Chief Operating Officer



www.thevillagevets.com

11.19.20

### To whom it may concern:

This is a letter of reference for iWag Rescue and is directed to the DeKalb County Department of Planning & Sustainability.

The Village Vets-Decatur has been a veterinarian healthcare provider for I-Wag Rescue over the past 6 years and as a long-standing DeKalb County community business member, we can vouch for the integrity and humane way this organization operates iWag Rescue is one of our top recommendations for client pet adoptions as they provide high-quality pet care for their rescue dogs.

iWag Rescue supports Dekalb County businesses, facilitates the increase of pet welfare and enriches the lives of those who adopt from their organization. We highly recommend iWag Rescue as both a responsible non-profit business group and a much needed organization for the community.

Sincerely,

Donald Langley

Practice manager

The Village Vets-Decatur





To whom it may concern,

I am writing to you to on behalf of Kristie Wilder and her non profit I Wag. I have known Kristie for several years personally. In a professional capacity, my organization LifeLineAnimal Project has transferred many dogs to Kristie, who has taken care of their medical needs and found them homes. Kristie and I both have a soft spot for the senior dogs and she is always quick to step up and help a needy senior.

I have had the pleasure of watching the transformation of the old Dearborn Animal Hospital building to a bright and inviting animal adoption center with Kristie and her staff's hard work.

Sincerely,

Tracy Thompson Shelter Director

LifeLine Animal Project

3180 Presidential Dr.

Atlanta, Ga. 30340

tthompson@lifelineanimal.org

November 21, 2020

DeKalb County Department of Planning & Sustainability 330 W. Ponce de Leon Ave Decatur, GA 30030

To Whom It May Concern:

I'm writing this letter of reference in support of iWag to assist the members of the DeKalb County Department of Planning & Sustainability in confidently approving a variance for the shelter. I can recommend iWag due to my personal experiences at the shelter on many occasions both as a client and a volunteer.

I became a client of iWag 2 ½ years ago. One of the many things that attracted me to the shelter was the transparency and connection that Kristie and her team builds with her clients. One of the many ways that is done is with the live cams in the puppy nurseries. When I first visited the location in Decatur I felt like I had already been there as I'd seen so much of what they do in their live videos.

2 years ago I became a volunteer and still remain one today. As a volunteer I have unrestricted access to all areas of the shelter. The dogs are treated as if they're in a home and enjoy the benefits of large play yards and quiet, smaller places to sleep. All areas of the shelter are kept very clean.

I have been witness to the care and time that the team at iWag takes to make sure the dog each client takes home is perfect for their family by matching lifestyle and living situation to ensure the happiness of the clients and the dogs. I have personally adopted two dogs from iWag and witnessed hundreds more find their forever homes.

IWag quickly becomes community favorite because of how they operate both before a person adopts a dog and after. IWag is unique by design and takes care to add value to any community it joins.

I look forward to volunteering at their new, larger space and helping them rescue even more dogs.

Thank you,

Kassindra 'Sindy' Ross

Regional Manager Helzberg Diamonds

KROSS

smross@helzberg.com

816-309-4825

Molly Olsen Certified Franchised Jazzercise Instructor Jazzercise Decatur Fitness Center 114 New St., Ste. A Decatur, GA 30030

November 23, 2020

DeKalb County Department of Planning & Sustainability 330 W. Ponce de Leon Ave. Decatur, GA 30030

To Whom it May Concern,

I write to you in support of iWag, a 501(c)(3) dog rescue and dog care facility. I am an instructor at the Jazzercise Decatur Fitness Center in East Decatur Station which shares a parking lot and a lawn with iWag and can personally vouch for iWag being a wonderful neighbor and asset to the local community. The shelter itself is incredibly well-managed and as neighbors, we have never had concerns about loose dogs, noise, or being sure the dogs are being cleaned up after. In fact, having so many lovable, adoptable dogs right next door is something our customers and instructors alike have very much enjoyed. A number of our customers have visited the shelter, and several have become volunteers or adopted pets from iWag. During our outdoor classes on the lawn over the past few months, we have enjoyed dancing along with iWag's staff and volunteers and having an amazing canine audience.

In addition, I also became a volunteer at iWag where I learned how much work and consideration goes into making sure the dogs in their care are safe and comfortable. Most of the protocols in place to ensure the dogs' safety has the added benefit of making the rescue excellent neighbors. The facility itself and the play yards are kept extremely clean by dedicated staff members and volunteers and the dogs begin their training when they arrive at the rescue, which means they learn to keep the noise to a minimum and become excellent neighbors for the urban neighborhoods where they hope to find forever homes.

I was so impressed and happy with iWag overall that I very quickly adopted my own dog from them. She's a very well-mannered, happy dog and I know she owes much of that to the excellent care and training she received while living in iWag's Decatur shelter. She is an amazing companion and loves going back to visit her friends at iWag whenever she can.

Sincerely,

Mary P. Olsen
Mary P. "Molly" Olsen

To whom it may concern:

This is a letter of reference for iWag and is directed to the DeKalb County Department of Planning & Sustainability. I sincerely recommend iWag as a wonderful and honest community organization.

I have volunteer with this wonderful organization since 2014 and for the last 6 years it has been a pleasure to watch their organization grow and to see the happy pups in their play area. They do a great job of managing the number of dogs out at once, and the keeping it very clean.

As a volunteer member, I can vouch for the integrity, conscientiousness, and responsible way this organization operates. I have seen this organization not only care for the dogs, but also for the community as a whole to ensure the number of homeless animals decreases by spaying/neutering all of their dogs, rescuing dogs from the shelter, and placing them into loving homes by properly and thoroughly vetting all adopters to ensure the right dog goes to the right family. All of this is done while maintaining high standards of cleanliness, strictly adhering to all regulations, and having the outmost concern for the businesses around them. They ensure they make appointment for possible adopter to visit the facility with enough time to ensure the flow of traffic and parking is not an issue. All the dogs are properly classified by age, size and medical issues to ensure they are all in a comfortable environment attending to their need, this allow for them to be calm and reduce the level of noise within the facility. Volunteer are always ready to help and ensure the dogs are properly taken care of while following all regulations to ensure no businesses around them are disturbed or inconvenience. It has been my experience iWag has and will continue to make a positive contribution to animal welfare in Dekalb County and it is my hope the county knows they are fortunate to have them.

With extreme pride and confidence I support iWag and the wonderful work they do for the dogs in Dekalb County

Annabel Hudgins
GySgt USMC(Ret.)