Staff Report – Jerome Township Zoning Amendment

Jurisdiction: **Applicant:**	**Jerome Township Zoning Commission** c/o Elizabeth Morrisson 9777 Industrial Parkway Plain City, OH 43064 (614) 873-4480 emorrison@jerometownship.com **Terra Land Holdings, LLC** c/o Jeff Stroupe 11515 Taylor Rd. Plain City, OH 43064
Request:	The Zoning Commission received an application to rezone 20.374 +/- acres. The proposal would rezone 12.971 acres from a Planned Development District (PD) to a Planned Development District (PD) and 7.403 acres from Medium Density Residential (MDR) to a Planned Development District (PD). Parcels involved: • 1400060110000 (1.684 +/- acres) • 1400060111000 (11.296 +/- acres) • 1400060112010 (7.403 +/- acres) Existing Use: • A landscaping business, one single-family home, and an agricultural field. The preliminary development plan for the existing PD was approved in 2019. Proposed use: • A landscaping business and one single-family home as indicated in the preliminary development plan submitted in February 2026.
Location:	The property is located along Watkins California Road and fronts onto its west side. US 33 bounds the property to the southwest. The property is approximately 0.83 miles northwest of the intersection of Watkins California Road and US-42.

Staff Analysis:	This staff report considers the Jerome Township Zoning Resolution (Resolution), the Jerome Township

Comprehensive Plan (Jerome Plan), and the Union County Comprehensive Plan (County Plan).

Area Zoning:
The east section of the property is currently zoned Planned Development (PD) and the west section is zoned Medium Density Residential (MDR). The adjacent zoning is Rural Residential (RU) and Medium Density Residential (MDR). Local Retail (LR) districts exist nearby to the south and southeast of the property.

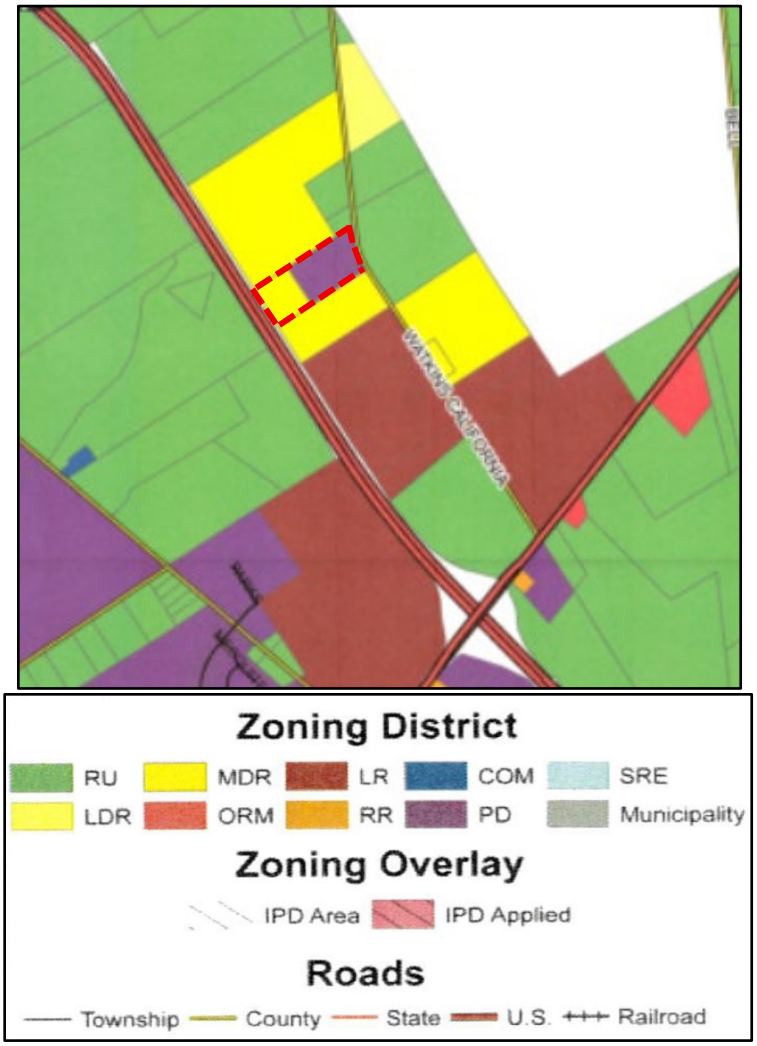

Figure 1: Jerome Twp Zoning Map (July 2025)

The purpose of the PD District is to, among other things, "provide an opportunity for a mix of open space and other uses not otherwise permitted within the standard zoning district classifications" and "encourages unified

development projects that exhibit creative planning and design in ways that cannot be achieved through a standard zoning district" (Resolution, pp. 5-1).

Section 500.02 of the Resolution identifies additional purposes relative to commercial and office development, including minimizing "negative impacts and conflicts with rural agriculture and residential development", creating a "pedestrian friendly environment", "interconnecting with adjacent neighborhoods", and "master planning is encouraged that focuses on a much broader scale than a single development site, taking into account the larger physical context within which the proposed development is to occur" (Resolution, pp. 5-2).

Figure 2: 2024 Aerial Image from Union County Auditor GIS

The majority of the property is already part of the 11315 Watkins California Road PD, which was approved by the Township in 2019. When LUC originally reviewed the proposal in 2019, the proposal was to rezone the parcel from Medium Density Residential (MDR) to PD. At the time, LUC recommended denial because landscaping services were neither permitted in the existing MDR zoning district, nor the zoning districts of adjacent properties. The proposal was

	also contrary to the Township's Comprehensive Plan which has since been updated. The proposed PD is larger than the existing PD, adding 7.403 additional acres currently zoned Medium Density Residential (MDR) but with an active agricultural use. Aside from the size difference, the primary differences between the existing PD and the proposed PD lie in their uses, their setbacks, and in some special standards related to the residence on the property. Under the existing regulation text, the only uses allowed on the property are "one (1) single family residence, and the use of the property as the base of operations for a landscape services company" (pg. 2). The proposed text permits additional uses that are related to the landscaping business on site. These include Landscape Services, All Specialty Trade Contractors, Repair and Maintenance, as well as the one single-family residence. The proposed text also has significantly diminished setbacks, with the front and side setbacks being reduced from 150 feet and 40 feet under the existing text to 100 feet and 20 feet respectively. The proposed text also does not mention any setbacks related to parking and circulation. However, section 610.03 12. b. of the Resolution does state that "Where no specific setback is provided by the regulations for a district, parking areas and circulation aisles for any use other than a single-family dwelling or two-family dwelling shall be setback at least ten (10) feet from any front lot line" (pp. 6-11). The existing text by contrast provides a front setback of 120 feet and a side setback of 20 feet for parking and circulation areas. Additionally, the proposed text imposes rear and side setbacks (of 30 feet and 10 feet respectively) to the single-family residence while the existing text has no specific rear or side setbacks for it. The existing text does feature a 56-foot front setback for the residence, which is reduced to 25 feet under the proposed text. The proposed text also includes some special standards related to the residence on the property which are not found in the existing text. These include a provision that land in the development can be subdivided into no more than two lots of record (allowing the residence to be split out) and a provision stipulating that the residence shall not be

	considered a residential use under the Resolution until conveyance of the residence to a separate owner has taken place. The proposed text also stipulates that once the residence has been conveyed to a separate owner, single family residences shall cease to be a permitted use on the remainder of the property and that no non-residential uses may be established on the newly created residential lot so long as the primary residential use continues. **Jerome Twp Comprehensive Plan** The Jerome Township Comprehensive Plan is a guide for decision-makers considering land use changes, and its Future Land Use Section provides recommendations (Jerome Plan, pp. 52-61). In the Township Plan, the area is proposed as an "Employment District". These areas “aim to provide a long-term employment base for the Township” and sometimes “have access to centralized water and sewer utilities provided by the City of Marysville” depending on their location. Ideal land uses for this area include, but are not limited to “flex industrial, warehousing, data centers, medical facilities, office headquarters, research and development, logistics, and light manufacturing” (Jerome Plan, pp. 61). The Jerome Plan lists multiple “statements of intent” for Employment districts. These include: • Promote land uses that generate high-wage job growth in the Township. • Enforce high quality site development standards that protect and enhance the Township’s rural character. • Maintain sufficient landscape buffers and building setbacks from residential uses and from public rights-of way to protect rural viewsheds. • Protect environmentally sensitive areas, like woodlots, stream corridors, and highly-erodible soils.

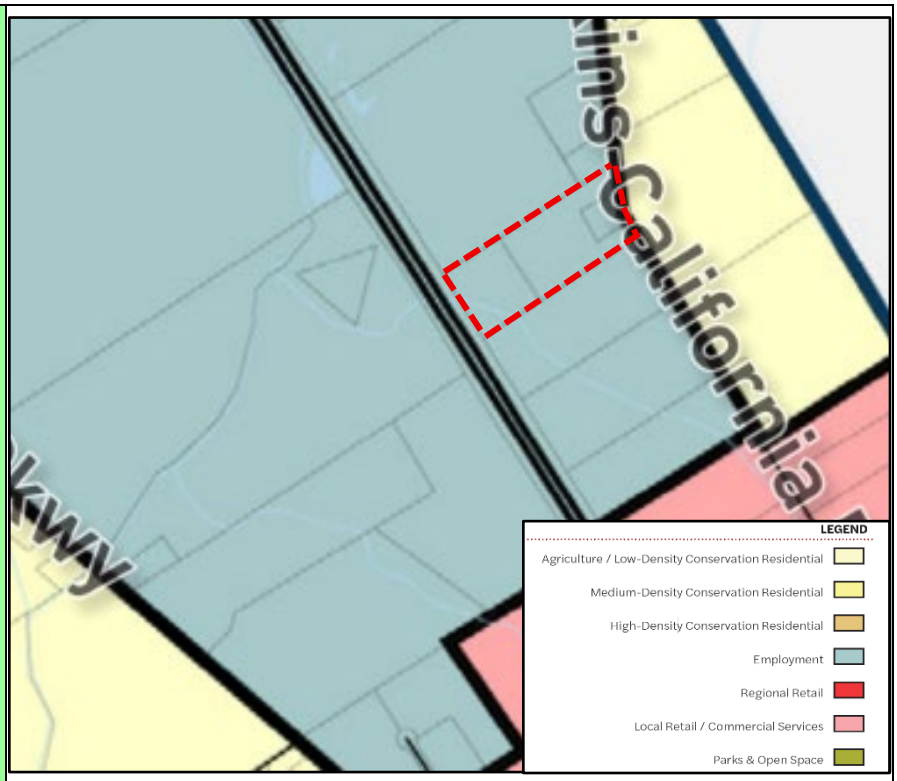

Figure 3: Future Land Use Map (Jerome Plan, pp. 54)

Union County Comprehensive Plan
The Union County Comprehensive Plan does not make any specific recommendations for the property. However, the County Plan does call for encouraging the growth of commercial activities in the County (County Plan, pp. 131) and using Planned Unit Developments as a tool to redevelop certain properties (County Plan, 155).

Regulation Text & Exhibits
Staff analyzed the proposed Regulation Text and offers the following recommendations:

- **Application**
  - The applicant has not provided a statement of how this proposed amendment of the Regulation Text relates to the Jerome Township Comprehensive Plan, which the Zoning Commission requires for a complete application (500.08, 3, p, xiv). Staff recommends that this statement be provided.
- **III. Development Standards**

	○ **6. Signage** ▪ While the Preliminary Development Plan does include the maximum height and display area of signage, it does not include the "design, layout and dimensions of all proposed ground, window and wall signs as well as the setbacks from the rights-of-way and the type and intensity of illumination" as required by 500.06 8. of the Resolution. Staff recommends the inclusion of these elements within the proposed signage plan. ○ **10. Lighting** ▪ While the Preliminary Development Plan does include the maximum height of light poles, it does not include the proposed pole and luminary design, lighting source, wattage, and shielding as required by 500.06 7. of the Resolution. Staff recommends the inclusion of these elements within the proposed lighting plan.

Staff Recommendations:	Staff recommends ***APPROVAL WITH MODIFICATIONS*** of the proposed zoning parcel amendment. Those modifications are listed above in this staff report. This recommendation is made based on the Jerome Township Zoning Resolution and Comprehensive Plan (2025). **ADDITIONAL COMMENT:** Staff acknowledges this is an existing PD, and that the applicant and Township may be trying to improve the existing PD text. However, Staff questions the long-term policy implications of approving small, single-use parcels as PDs. When comparing the purpose of the PD District (Sections 500.001-500.03) with these types of requests, it is hard to see how these align. It may make more sense to do a

	rezoning to an existing district rather than a PD in these types of instances.

Z&S Committee Recommendations:	*Options for action:* • *Approval* • *Approval with modifications (state modifications)* • *Denial*