

..Title

Vote to approve a legislative request for a text amendment to the Chatham County Zoning Ordinance by Gregory Smith to have the use of Recreational Facilities (gyms, yoga studios, et cetera) as a “P” Permitted use in the Industrial Light (Ind-L) zoning districts

..Abstract

Introduction & Background:

A legislative public hearing was held November 17, 2025. Planning staff presented the item and the applicant provided an explanation for the requested amendment. No one signed up to speak and no written comments were provided to staff.

Discussion & Analysis:

This request is a citizen-initiated amendment to the Chatham County Zoning Ordinance to modify the Table of Permitted Uses in Section 10.13.

Currently the use of Recreation Facilities is a “P” Permitted use in B-1 (legacy district), NB, CB, and RB. This request is to also allow the use as “P” Permitted in the IL Light Industrial zoning districts.

Zoning District	R5	R2	R1	O&I	B-1*	NB	CB	RB	IL	IH
Public parks and recreation areas including marinas and concessions with a minimum lot area of three acres and provided that all buildings, structures and high intensity activity areas shall be set back a minimum of two times the minimum yard requirement for the district in which it is located	SUP	SUP	SUP							
Public utility transmission lines	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Radio and television stations and their towers when the towers are located on the same site with the station					P			P		
Rag, bag and carpet cleaning establishments										P
Railroad freight yards, terminals or classification yards and rights-of-way									P	P
Railroad rights-of-way									P	P
Recreational Facilities (Gyms, yoga studios, et cetera)					P	P	P	P		
Recreational Vehicle Storage Facility					SUP	SUP	SUP	SUP	SUP	SUP

The applicant stated that in many jurisdictions, warehouses and other types of larger buildings are being utilized for this type of use. He stated he has seen evidence that the upfitting, repurposing, and utilization of these otherwise abandoned structures has reduced additional rezonings on vacant properties, increases the land value, reduces waste, has community and economic value to the area, and allows for reinvesting in existing buildings.

The applicant understands that the use of any building will require additional permits if the amendment is approved, including building and fire inspections.

All applications for amendments to this Ordinance must address the following items:

- 1. The alleged error in this Ordinance, if any, which would be remedied by the proposed amendment with a detailed explanation of such error in the Ordinance and detailed reasons how the proposed amendment will correct the same.** The applicant is not claiming any error in the Ordinance.
- 2. The changed or changing conditions, if any, in the area or in the County generally, which make the proposed amendment reasonably necessary to the promotion of the public health, safety, and general welfare.** The applicant states this will provide more options for needed space for athletics. In most cases, there are larger more

accessible buildings located within the Light Industrial districts than can be located in a general business district. Generally, ample parking, access, and other infrastructure are already in place or would provide for more intense uses.

3. The manner in which the proposed amendment will carry out the intent and purpose of the adopted Land Use Plan or parts thereof.

- Chapter 3, Goals and Objectives- Obj. 6- encourages providing recreational opportunities and access to open space, specifically to community facilities.
- Chapter 3, Goals and Objectives-Obj. 10- encourages fostering a healthy community to support active lifestyles
- Chapter 3, Strategy 4.2- encourages adding more indoor recreational facilities.

4. All other circumstances, factors, or reasons which the applicant offers in support of the proposed amendment. The applicant stated he is heavily involved in athletic sports, specifically, volleyball, which needs more indoor recreational facilities in which to practice and hold games. Utilizing buildings that already allow for more intensive uses would be well suited for such activities.

How does this relate to the Comprehensive Plan:

- Chapter 3, Goals and Objectives- Obj. 6- encourages providing recreational opportunities and access to open space, specifically to community facilities.
- Chapter 3, Goals and Objectives-Obj. 10- encourages fostering a healthy community to support active lifestyles
- Chapter 3, Strategy 4.2- encourages adding more indoor recreational facilities.

Budgetary Impact: N/A

The Planning Board reviewed this item during their regular meeting on December 2, 2025. One concern expressed was if a precedent was being set by allowing recreational uses in light industrial districts. The Board discussed that this use is currently permitted by right in other zoning business zoning districts. They also discussed that all other regulatory requirements must be met prior to this use occupying a building in a light industrial zoning district, including building inspections, fire marshal, and environmental health.

The question was posed by one member asking if there any downsides to allowing recreational uses in the Light Industrial zoning districts and none were mentioned.

The applicant also spoke on the matter.

Recommendation/Motion:

The Planning Board voted unanimously, 9-0, to recommend to the Board of Commissioners adoption of an ordinance amending the Zoning Ordinance to add Recreational Facilities as a “P” Permitted use in the IL Light Industrial zoning districts.

The board voted unanimously, 9-0, to recommend adoption of a resolution approving the following consistency statement:

The requested amendment meets the intent of Plan Chatham, specifically Chapter 3, Goals and Objectives- Obj. 6- encourages providing recreational opportunities and access to open space, specifically to community facilities, Chapter 3, Goals and Objectives-Obj. 10- encourages

fostering a healthy community to support active lifestyles, and Chapter 3, Strategy 4.2- encourages adding more indoor recreational facilities.