

TOWN COUNCIL

STAFF REPORT

Growth Management Department



MEETING DATE:	December 12, 2023
PROJECT:	Consideration of the Acceptance of University Investments, LLC's One Hundred Percent (100%) Annexation Petition to Annex Certain Real Property Contiguous to the Town of Bluffton's Corporate Boundaries Consisting of a Total of 65.592 Acres, More or Less, Located at the Southwest Corner of the Buckwalter Parkway and Lake Point Drive Intersection and to the West of the Retreat at Grande Oaks, and Bearing Beaufort County Tax Map Nos. R600-029-000-0014-0000 (Portion) and R600-029-000-2410-0000, and Referral to the Town of Bluffton Negotiating Committee if Deemed Necessary
PROJECT MANAGER:	Kevin P. Icard, AICP Director of Growth Management

REQUEST: Town Staff requests that Town Council consider the following:

1. Consideration of the Acceptance of University Investments, LLC's One Hundred Percent (100%) Annexation Petition to Annex Certain Real Property Contiguous to the Town of Bluffton's Corporate Boundaries Consisting of a Total of 65.592 Acres, More or Less, Located at the southwest corner of the Buckwalter Parkway and Lake Point Drive intersection and to the west of the Retreat at Grande Oaks, and Bearing Beaufort County Tax Map Nos. R600-029-000-0014-0000 (Portion) and R600-029-000-2410-0000; and
2. Referral of the request to the Town of Bluffton Negotiating Committee if deemed necessary.

INTRODUCTION: On November 11, 2023 in accordance with Section 5-3-150 of the Code of Laws of South Carolina and the *Town of Bluffton Annexation Policy and Procedure Manual* ("Annexation Manual"), the property owners, University Investments, LLC and Grande Oaks II, LLC, submitted a 100% Annexation Petition Application for two parcels totaling 65.592 acres located at southwest corner of the Buckwalter Parkway and Lake Point Drive intersection and to the west of the Retreat at Grande Oaks ("Property") into the Town of Bluffton's municipal boundary (Attachment 2).

Pursuant to the Annexation Manual, the Applicant will submit a concurrent Zoning Map Amendment application requesting the Property's incorporation into the Buckwalter Planned Unit Development ("Buckwalter PUD") should Town Council vote to accept the application. Additional concurrent applications include amendments to the Buckwalter PUD, Development Agreement, and Concept

Plan to incorporate the property, add requested development rights, add a new Grande Oaks Land Use Tract, and specify any additional terms. An application to amend the Town of Bluffton Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map will also be necessary.

Per the Annexation Manual, the initial step in the public review process is an initial briefing, or “intent to annex”, to Town Council for general discussion of the request and its associated applications such as the appropriate zoning classification and possible negotiation items. At the conclusion of the discussion, Town Council votes on the approval of Intent to Annex of the Annexation Ordinance.

Town Council considered an initial application for the annexation of 13.993 acres of the Grande Oaks PUD at their October 13, 2020 meeting. Council advised the applicant to expand the proposed annexation area for consideration and did not take action on the request.

As a result, the Applicant submitted a revised request on November 15, 2022 for an expanded annexation area consisting of two parcels which contained an approximately 86.36 acre portion of the Grande Oaks Planned Unit Development (“Grande Oaks PUD”) located at the southwest corner of the Buckwalter Parkway and Lake Point Drive Intersection and to the west of the Retreat at Grande Oaks for consideration. The Applicant proposed the creation of a new Buckwalter Land Use Tract and the addition of development rights totaling 53 residential dwelling units and 86.36 acres of general commercial. Town Council considered the request at their February 14, 2023 meeting and voted to decline to accept the annexation applications.

The current request before Town Council differs from the November 15, 2022 submittal by decreasing the acreage by 20.586 adjacent to the Hampton Lake development, removing the intent to request an additional 53 residential dwelling units, and reducing the request for additional commercial development rights to 32 acres general commercial.

BACKGROUND: The Property contains approximately 65.592 acres consisting of 27.436 upland acres and 38.156 wetland acres located within Unincorporated Beaufort County as shown on the Vicinity Map (Attachment 3). The Property contains a cellular tower and is otherwise vacant.

The Property is zoned as Grande Oaks PUD and designated as part of the Village Commercial V-1 Land Use Tract as shown on the Grande Oaks Master Plan (Attachment 4) which allows a mix of residential and commercial uses such as:

- | | |
|--|------------------------------|
| 1. Single Family Residential | 8. Drive Through Restaurants |
| 2. Multi-Family Residential | 9. Gasoline Service Stations |
| 3. Neighborhood Commercial | 10. Office Use |
| 4. Bed and Breakfast | 11. Restaurants |
| 5. Commercial Lodging - Hotels, Motels, etc. | 12. Civic |
| 6. Hospitals | 13. Church |
| 7. Conference Center | 14. Storage |

The immediately adjacent properties vary as to jurisdiction and zoning as follows:

Direction	Jurisdiction	Zoning District	Current Use
North	Town of Bluffton	Buckwalter Planned Unit Development	University Investments, LLC - Parcel 12 - Buckwalter Parkway - Vacant
	Town of Bluffton	Buckwalter Planned Unit Development	University Investments, LLC - Parcel 12C - Buckwalter Parkway - Vacant
	Town of Bluffton	Buckwalter Planned Unit Development	Town of Bluffton – Innovation Drive - Road Right-of-Way
South	Beaufort County	Grande Oaks Planned Unit Development	Beaufort County - Lake Point Drive - Road Right-of-Way
	Beaufort County	Grande Oaks Planned Unit Development	Arborwood Willows Homes Owners Association – No Address – Common Property
	Beaufort County	Grande Oaks Planned Unit Development	Retreat at Grande Oaks Homeowners Association, Inc – No Address – Common Property
East	Beaufort County	Grande Oaks Planned Unit Development	Grande Oaks, LLC - No Address - Vacant
	Beaufort County	Grande Oaks Planned Unit Development	Retreat at Grande Oaks Homeowners Association, Inc – No Address – Common Property
West	Beaufort County	Grande Oaks Planned Unit Development	Retreat at Grande Oaks Homeowners Association, Inc – No Address – Common Property
	Beaufort County	Grande Oaks Planned Unit Development	Beaufort-Jasper Water & Sewer Authority – 1023 Innovation Drive – Pump Station
	Beaufort County	Grande Oaks Planned Unit Development	Daniel J Mendoza Chacon Sr & Maria Jimenez Maria E – 1025 Innovation Drive - Single Family Home
	Beaufort County	Grande Oaks Planned Unit Development	Aaron S & Isabel B Cleland – 1032 Innovation Drive - Single Family Home
	Beaufort County	Grande Oaks Planned Unit Development	Arborwood Willows Homeowners Association, Inc – No Address – Common Property

	Town of Bluffton	Buckwalter Planned Unit Development	HL Development, LLC – No Address - Vacant
	Town of Bluffton	Buckwalter Planned Unit Development	Hampton Lake Community Association, Inc – No Address – Common Area

The Applicant proposes to create a new Grande Oaks Land Use Tract within the Buckwalter PUD for the Property, which is similar to the existing Buckwalter Commons Land Use Tract, the most permissive land use designation which allows a broad mix of residential and commercial uses. A comparison of current Grande Oaks PUD and the proposed Buckwalter PUD Grande Oaks Land Use Tract uses is provided as Attachment 5.

University Investments, LLC currently owns several adjacent properties to the north along the Bluffton Parkway which are within the Town’s jurisdiction and zoned as Buckwalter PUD and designated as part of the Buckwalter Commons Land Use Tract which follows the regulations set by the Buckwalter Development Agreement. They currently own a 12.86 portion of the Property and are under contract with Grande Oaks, LLC to acquire the remaining 52.732 acres. The proposed annexation would allow University Investments, LLC to consolidate the properties to allow for more flexibility while creating continuity of jurisdiction, zoning, and development standards. Currently, the Properties are subject to different zoning and development standards and require review and approval by Beaufort County. If development of a site consisting of property within the Town and the proposed annexation Property were to occur today, the plans would have to adhere to different regulations and require the Town and Beaufort County’s approval.

The Applicant’s associated request for an amendment to the Buckwalter Development Agreement and Concept Plan will include the addition of development rights consisting of 32 acres of general commercial and no increase in residential dwelling units.

The Applicant does not have a specific plan for the Property but notes that current preliminary planning for this expanded area contemplates a mixed use, village style, development, perhaps built with residential above commercial, and including extensive medical services and commercial establishments.

The Town of Bluffton Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map (Attachment 6) shows the Property is designated as Suburban Living which is defined as:

The Suburban Living category is intended to include low-density single-family neighborhoods. Much of this category includes portions of large Planned Unit Developments that are under active construction or are built-out. Allowable density is up to three dwelling units per acre and must be at least one dwelling unit per acre. Community amenities such as trails, parks, and centralized swimming pools are encouraged.

To permit the uses allowed within the Buckwalter Commons Land Use Tract and the utilization of the requested additional 104 Residential Dwelling Units development rights on the Property, the future land use designation will need to be changed to Neighborhood Center which is defined as:

*The **Neighborhood Center** category is intended to guide emerging neighborhood-focused retail clusters throughout the community. These centers, such as Buckwalter Place, provide the opportunity for residents to be within walking distance of grocers, restaurants, retailers, and medical offices. These centers help establish neighborhood identity and are best served when supported by a mix of middle housing and single-family residences within walking or biking distance. These centers are best designed to provide automobile access within a pedestrian-oriented environment. Inclusion of public green space is encouraged.*

Neighborhood centers are based on the same foundation as the Town Center, to create a pedestrian-oriented environment, but the overall design is open for interpretation / adaptation to localized design guidance. Plentiful pedestrian connections ensure long-term health of the neighborhood and anchors the community around the public spaces within the neighborhood center. While neighborhood-serving commercial uses are predominant within the designation, appropriately scaled commercial office space is encouraged to strengthen the mix of uses within the overall community.

Development within the district is pedestrian scaled. Buildings up to three stories are appropriate so long as they are properly buffered and screened from any lower intensity uses in the area. Out-lot parcel development should address the street, and parking should be consolidated to the greatest extent possible to enhance the pedestrian environment.

The Town of Bluffton Comprehensive Plan Figure 7.7 – Growth Framework (Attachment 7) shows a majority of the Property within a Town Center Node which the Unified Development Ordinance, Section 6.1.2.C defines as:

Located in the most intensely developed areas or those areas to be intensely developed, Town Centers consist of compact, complete, and highly connected neighborhoods that support a larger, most intense mixed-use development condition. Buildings within the Town Center are usually larger, attached, and may be up to five stories in height.

Lastly, all future development of the Property would be required to be reviewed through the applicable Town of Bluffton planning processes including an Initial Master Plan, Development Plan review and Building Permits.

SCHEDULE: The proposed schedule for the applications is provided as Attachment 8.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Presentation
2. Application Submittal
3. Vicinity Map
4. Grande Oaks PUD Master Plan Map and Text
5. Land Use Comparison
6. Town of Bluffton Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map
7. Town of Bluffton Comprehensive Plan Growth Framework Map
8. Draft Schedule
9. Proposed Motion