

**Beaufort County School District
River Ridge Academy Expansion
Addendum to Annexation Narrative**

This Addendum to Annexation Narrative provides additional information to the Town of Bluffton about the proposed early childhood center facility to be constructed in connection with expansion of the River Ridge Academy campus. Since the original annexation package was submitted to the Town of Bluffton, engineering analysis has indicated that another portion of the existing River Ridge campus property may be a better location for construction of the early childhood center. The early childhood center will be constructed on either (1) the Property to be annexed into the Town of Bluffton; or (2) a River Ridge campus athletic field owned by Beaufort County School District and currently within the Town of Bluffton. If the early childhood center is constructed on the existing athletic field, the athletic field will be relocated to the Property being annexed into the Town of Bluffton. The Property proposed for annexation will be a part of the River Ridge campus in some capacity.

13. When the early childhood center was approved.

The new early childhood center for Bluffton was a project approved by a public vote in the November 2023 Bond Referendum.

14. How the early childhood center is supported by the District's plans, policies, goals.

The need for a new early childhood center in Bluffton was reviewed by a Community Project Review Committee (CPRC 2.0) in Spring of 2023 and was included as one of the projects when the committee met with Dr. Rodriguez. This need has been outlined in Beaufort County School District's Facilities Master Plan published annually.

15. The programs the early childhood center will provide.

The early childhood center will be a multi-use building providing early childhood screenings and community-based early intervention services for the Bluffton community. The building will house staff that provide those services who are currently in a mobile unit on the Bluffton schools campus. It will also allow for expansion of pre-kindergarten services in the community for students who are not able to be served because of current inadequate space at the existing elementary schools.

16. Maximum attendance.

While still in design Beaufort County School District's goal is to serve no more than 300 students at the new early childhood center. However, due to the nature of the services provided those students may not all be in attendance at the same time.

17. Budgeting and funding such as if it was part of the Bond Referendum and estimated cost.

As noted above, funding for the early childhood center will be provided through the 2023 Bond Referendum. Beaufort County School District is very early in the design process, and final cost has not been determined.

18. School Board approvals for the project.

As described above, the early childhood center was approved by a CPRC in spring of 2023 and overwhelmingly by the voters of Beaufort County in November 2023. The School Board approved annexation of the Property into the Town of Bluffton at its February 18, 2025 meeting.



Rezoning Narrative

For Bluffton Early Childhood Center

Date: April 14, 2025

Owner: Beaufort County School District

P.O Drawer 309
Beaufort, SC 29901

Parcel:

Property IDs: R600 029 000 1736 0000, R600 029 000 011A 000, R600 029 000 0034 0000, R610 029 000 0012 0000, R610 029 000 0084 0000, & R610 029 000 0612 0000

Acreage: 77.9 Acres

Current Zoning: T2R, Beaufort County (being annexed into Bluffton), and RG, Town of Bluffton

Proposed Zoning: PR, Town of Bluffton

Beaufort County School District (BCSD) has acquired 24.14 acres (parcels R600 029 000 1736 0000, R600 029 000 011A 000, & R600 029 000 0034 0000), adjacent to their River Ridge Academy campus (parcels R610 029 000 0012 0000, R610 029 000 0084 0000, & R610 029 000 0612 0000), and are proposing to develop an early childhood learning center within the unimproved land. The southern 3 parcels zoned T2 Rural (T2R), restricts educational uses, and the northeastern 3 parcels zoned Residential General (RG), allows for many other uses the school district would not need. As such, all 6 parcels are proposed to be rezoned to Preserve (PR), with a text amendment to the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) to allow school uses within the Preserve zoning district. This approach helps ensure the properties are developed in manner supportive of the community with limited allowed uses beyond the intended school use. As such, BCSD believes the proposed rezoning is compatible with the surrounding residential area and supports the long-term vision for neighborhood-focused growth and development.

In accordance with Section 3.4.3, *Application Review Criteria*, of the Unified Development Ordinance, the following responses are respectfully submitted to address each of the specified criteria as required for the evaluation of this application:

- 1. Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan or, if conditions have changed since the Comprehensive Plan was adopted, consistency with the overall intent of the Comprehensive Plan, recent development trends and the general character of the area.***

The proposed rezoning is consistent with the Town of Bluffton Comprehensive Plan, which emphasizes the importance of community health, early education access, and the integration of supportive infrastructure within neighborhoods.

The Plan encourages the location of supportive civic/institutional services within walking or biking distance of housing. The addition of an early childhood learning center in Bluffton embodies this land use intent, providing child education, developmental intervention, and young family wellness support services to the public.

Additionally, this request aligns with emerging demographic and service trends. Bluffton's population growth has included a significant increase in young families, and with that comes increased demand for early education intervention programs and developmental resources. The proposed facility strives to help answer that need, in a location that fits well with Bluffton's community structure and land use goals.

2. *Capability of the site's physical, geological, hydrological and other environmental features to support the breadth and intensity of uses that could be developed in the proposed zoning district.*

A review of the physical characteristics of the site confirms that it is suitable for the limited range of uses permitted within the PR zoning district. From a physical and environmental perspective, the unimproved portions of the sites offer favorable conditions for thoughtful, low intensity development consistent with both the proposed facility and the Town's zoning framework.

Preliminary site investigations indicate the presence of stable, well-draining soils that are conducive to construction without excessive grading or soil stabilization measures.

The subject properties will comply with applicable stormwater management regulations, and any development will include appropriate best management practices (BMPs) to ensure water quality protection and minimize runoff impacts. Proposed development will be designed with sensitivity to the surrounding natural landscape, preserving open space where feasible and integrating native vegetation into the landscaping plan.

3. *Compatibility of all the potential uses allowed in the proposed zoning district with surrounding uses and zoning districts in terms of suitability of location, impacts on the environment, noise, density, nature of use, traffic impacts, aesthetics, ability to develop adjacent properties under existing zoning, and potential influence on property values.*

Beaufort County's Future Land Use Map illustrates the southern properties as Neighborhood / Mixed Use, as well as Neighborhood / Mixed Use surrounding the site. The Town of Bluffton Future Land Use Map identifies the River Ridge Academy properties as Community Services and the surrounding areas as Suburban Living. The community service category includes uses such as schools, administrative facilities, police, fire/EMS, parks, and government buildings. The suburban living category is intended to include low-density single-family neighborhoods. Noise, air quality, and light pollution impacts will be minimal due to the limited uses allowed under PR zoning and limited operational daytime hours. As such, BCSD believes the zoning designation of PR is compatible with the surrounding uses and zoning districts.

The presence of a high-quality educational facility is likely to have positive effects on surrounding property values, as families increasingly prioritize proximity to these services. It is expected to be a community asset by enhancing the quality of life and creating additional local access to vital services.

4. *Capacity of public infrastructure and services to sufficiently accommodate all potential uses allowed in the proposed district without compromising the public health, safety and welfare of the Town of Bluffton.*

The proposed PR zoning and intended Early Childhood Learning Center represents a low-impact, easily accommodated use that leverages the Town's existing infrastructure in a cost-efficient, sustainable, and community-positive way. Public water, Sewer, and vehicular access are all readily available to the properties, and the limited uses allowed under PR zoning in turn help limit the impact to these services without compromising the public health, safety, or general welfare of the community.

5. *Public need for the potential uses permitted in the requested zoning district.*

PR zoning restricts uses to land preservation, camping, and civic/institutional uses. All of which would be in support of the surrounding community, rather than adding additional density to the community. BCSD specifically is pursuing the development of an Early Childhood Learning Center within the subject rezoned properties.

There is a growing public need for early childhood intervention, screening, and education services. Long travel distances, high demand, and limited capacity currently challenge families in need of developmental evaluations and early educational services for young children. The proposed facility directly supports community wellness, school readiness, and economic productivity by allowing families to access support during the most critical developmental years of their children.

6. *Compliance with applicable requirements in the Applications Manual.*

This application has been prepared in compliance with the Town of Bluffton's Zoning Map Amendment Application Manual, and specifically meets the procedural, technical, and content criteria established for zoning changes under the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO).

The request is consistent with the stated purpose and permitted uses of the Preserve (PR) district and does not seek to introduce increased density or development scale inconsistent with the surrounding zoning fabric.

In conclusion, Beaufort County School District respectfully submits this rezoning request in alignment with the Town of Bluffton's Comprehensive Plan. The proposed Preserve (PR) zoning, paired with the submitted UDO text amendment to allow for school uses, helps ensure proposed development will serve the community in a manner consistent with surrounding land uses, existing infrastructure, and long-term growth objectives. This initiative reflects a thoughtful, forward-looking investment in the education and well-being of Bluffton's youngest residents.