

PLANNING COMMISSION

STAFF REPORT

Department of Growth Management



MEETING DATE:	April 23, 2025
PROJECT:	Cornerstone Church New Riverside Campus Preliminary Development Plan
APPLICANT:	Nathan Sturre, Sturre Engineering
PROJECT NUMBER:	DP-02-25-019597
PROJECT MANAGER:	Dan Frazier Planning Manager Department of Growth Management

REQUEST: The Applicant, Nathan Sturre of Sturre Engineering, on behalf of Cornerstone Church of Bluffton is requesting approval of a Preliminary Development Plan application. The project proposes site improvements to accommodate a new assembly hall and offices for church operations including stormwater, parking, and associated infrastructure (Attachment 1).

INTRODUCTION: The property is zoned Agricultural (AG) and Rural Mixed Use (RMU) and consists of approximately 41.3 acres identified by tax map number R610 036 000 0014 0000 located south of May River Road approximately 600 feet east of Stardust Lane. (Attachment 2).

BACKGROUND: This application is for a Preliminary Development Plan located within the Town of Bluffton Agricultural (AG) Zone District and Rural Mixed Use (RMU) Zone District and as such is subject to the standards set forth in the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO).

The Applicant proposes to construct the proposed improvements necessary to accommodate full church operations at the site. This includes full-site design to convert the existing stables, offices, and outparcel buildings into a fully functioning large church campus including but not limited to administrative offices for church operations and a main assembly hall. The site improvement areas include internal driveways, access, parking, utilities and stormwater improvements. The Applicant proposes the conservation of 30.57% open space to accommodate for potential future development.

Staff comments on the Preliminary Development Plan were reviewed at the March 26, 2025, Development Review Committee meeting (Attachment 3). The Applicant provided a response to comments and revised site plans on March 28, 2025 (Attachment 4). As reflected in the revised site plan, the proposed development tries to design around existing significant trees, as required by UDO Section 5.3.3.C.

The Applicant is currently coordinating with Beaufort County and SCDOT on the full extent of improvements to May River Road. As such, the work in the SCDOT right-of-way is excluded from the limits of disturbance until a final decision is made with Beaufort County and SCDOT. The Applicant proposes stabilization of the existing access easement along Meadow Drive with gravel and asphalt.

Per UDO Section 5.11.3.C, civic/institutional use, such as Religious Assembly, requires a minimum of one (1) space per 1,000 square feet. The Applicant proposes 239 parking spaces, which is sufficient for the size of the buildings at project completion. Additional submittal items include an Arborist Report, Landscape Plan, and Traffic Impact Study (Attachment 5).

REVIEW CRITERIA & ANALYSIS: The Planning Commission shall consider the criteria set forth in Section 3.10.3.A of the Unified Development Ordinance in assessing an application for a Preliminary Development Plan. The applicable criteria are provided below followed by Staff Finding(s) based upon review of the application submittals to date.

1. Section 3.10.3.A.1. Conformance with the applicable provisions provided in Article 5, Design Standards.

Finding. The proposed site improvements are in conformance with the applicable provisions provided in the Town of Bluffton Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) Article 5, Design Standards.

2. Section 3.10.3.A.2. The proposed development shall be in conformance with any approved Development Agreement, PUD Concept Plan, PUD Master Plan, Subdivision Plan, or any other agreements or plans that are applicable.

Finding. The proposed development is not within any PUD, Development Agreement, or Subdivision Plan.

3. Section 3.10.3.A.3. If the proposed development is associated with a previously approved Master Plan, then the traffic and access plans shall adhere to the previously approved traffic impact analysis or assessment, where applicable. If an application is not associated with a previously approved PUD Master Plan, then a traffic impact analysis shall be required at final development plan submittal.

Finding. The proposed development is not within any approved Master Plan or PUD.

4. Section 3.10.3.A.4. The proposed development must be able to be served by adequate public services, including, but not limited to, water, sanitary sewer, roads, police, fire, and school services. For developments that have the potential for significant impact on infrastructure and services, the applicant shall be required to provide an analysis and mitigation of the impact on transportation, utilities, and community services.

Finding. The proposed development will utilize existing well and septic systems onsite. The Applicant will coordinate with BJWSA and Bluffton Township Fire District to ensure adequate water and sanitary sewer services in support of the project.

Finding. The Applicant has provided a Traffic Impact Study and is coordinating potential road improvements with Beaufort County and SCDOT.

Finding. Letters from the agencies providing public services will be required at time of Final Development Plan submittal per the Applications Manual.

5. **Section 3.10.3.A.5. The phasing plan, if applicable, is logical and is designed in a manner that allows each phase to fully function independently regarding services, utilities, circulation, facilities, and open space, irrespective of the completion of other proposed phases.**

Finding. The project is proposed to be completed in one phase.

6. **Section 3.10.3.A.6. The application must comply with the applicable requirements in the Applications Manual.**

Finding. The application has been reviewed by the Town Staff and has been determined to be complete.

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTIONS: The Planning Commission has the authority to take the following actions with respect to the application as authorized by Section 2.2.6.C.5 of the UDO:

1. Approve the application as submitted;
2. Approve the application with conditions; or
3. Deny the application as submitted.

RECOMMENDATION: Town Staff finds that the requirements of Section 3.10.3.A of the Unified Development Ordinance are met and recommends that the Planning Commission approve the application as submitted.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Application and Project Narrative
2. Vicinity Map
3. DRC Comments and Original Civil Plans 3/26/25
4. Response to DRC Comments and Revised Civil Plans 3/28/25
5. Additional Submittal Items (Arborist Report, Landscape Plan, Traffic Impact Study)