

TOWN OF BLUFFTON



STAFF REPORT

Department of Growth Management

MEETING DATE:	June 28, 2023
PROJECT:	Refuel 1062 Bluffton: Landscaping, Lighting and Architecture Certificate of Appropriateness Highway Corridor Overlay
PROJECT MANAGER:	Katie Peterson, AICP Senior Planner

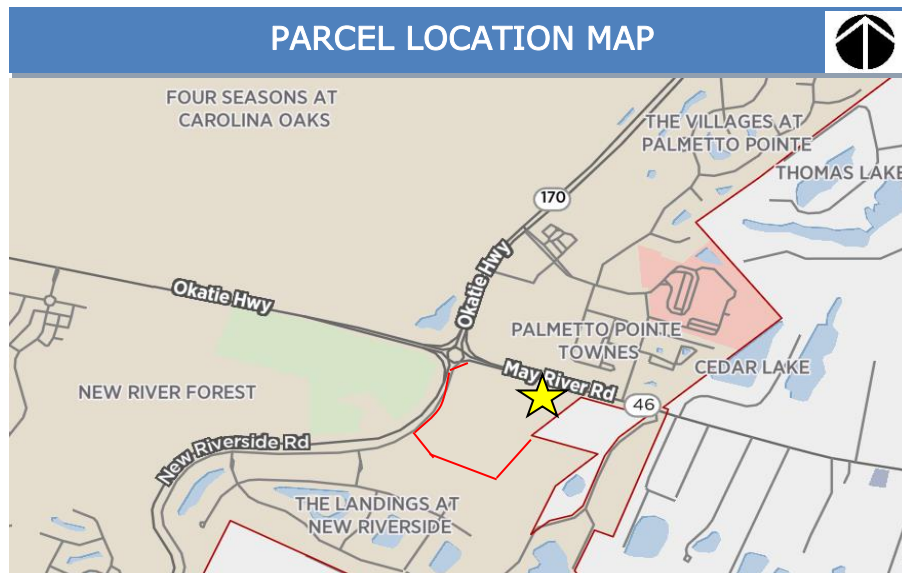
APPLICATION REQUEST: The Applicant, Narciso Lira of Odyssey Services Group, on behalf of the owner, Ian Bowers of Refuel Operating Company, LLC, requests that the Planning Commission approve the following application:

1. **COFA-04-23-017905.** A Certificate of Appropriateness to permit the landscape, lighting and architecture for Refuel convenience store and gas station, located along SC Highway 46 across from the May River Xing intersection. It is zoned PUD within the New Riverside PUD and New Riverside Village Master Plan.

INTRODUCTION: The conceptual plan for the New Riverside PUD was approved by Bluffton Town Council in June of 2004. The Concept Plan and Development Agreement define the allowed land uses in the various areas of the New Riverside Planning Area. The documents also define the development standards, which govern all development activity within the Concept Plan, including Parcels 4B-2 and 4B-3, which are the subject of this application. These negotiated land uses, and development standards are binding upon the Town and this Applicant.

The New Riverside Village Master Plan was approved with conditions in February 2020 by the Town of Bluffton Council. A Preliminary Development Plan for Refuel (DP-02-22-016354) was approved with conditions by the Planning Commission at the July 27, 2022 meeting. A Final Development Plan was heard at the May 10, 2023 Development Review Committee meeting where comments were provided to the Applicant (Attachment 5). Staff is working with the Applicant to review revised drawings and ensure all conditions have been met.

The Applicant has requested the approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness – Highway Corridor Overlay application which is subject to review by the Planning Commission providing authority over the architectural, landscaping, and lighting design only.



PLANNING COMMISSION ACTIONS: As granted by the powers and duties set forth in Section 2.2.6.C.6. of the Unified Development Ordinance, the Planning Commission has the authority to take the following actions with respect to this application:

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

REVIEW CRITERIA & ANALYSIS: Town Staff and the Planning Commission are required to consider the criteria set forth in Section 3.17.3 of the Unified Development Ordinance in assessing an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness- HCO. These criteria are provided below followed by a Staff Finding based upon review of the application submittals to date.

1. Section 3.17.3.A. The proposed development must be in conformance with applicable landscaping, lighting, and architectural provisions provided in Article 5, Design Standards.
 - a) *Finding.* The project is located in the New Riverside PUD and is part of the New Riverside Village Master Plan. There are specific design standards established by the PUD via the Beaufort County 1990/3 Zoning and Highway Corridor Overlay District (HCOD) within of the Town of Bluffton Zoning and Development Standards Ordinance (BZDSO), approved September 1999, modified June 2000, (Attachment 6) which are attached to the PUD through Appendix 1.3 of the Concept Plan. In addition to these standards, as a result of the adoption the Town of Bluffton's Stormwater Design Manual (SWDM) in September of 2021, the landscaping design criteria of Article 5 of the current Unified Development Ordinance are applicable to review of this application.

2. Section 3.17.3.B. 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.

The property is in the New Riverside PUD and is identified on the New Riverside Village Master Plan as a General Store. As a result, the property is subject to the Beaufort County 1990/3 Zoning and Highway Corridor Overlay District (HCOD) within of the Town of Bluffton Zoning and Development Standards Ordinance (BZDSO) Zoning and Development Standards Ordinance and Design Guidelines contain architectural, landscaping, and lighting design standards for properties located in the Highway Corridor Overlay District (HCOD).

A. New Riverside PUD/PUD CONCEPT PLAN

The New Riverside PUD refers to the Beaufort County 1990/3 Zoning and Development Standards Ordinance (ZDSO) and The Town of Bluffton Zoning and Development Standards Ordinance (BZDSO) Highway Corridor Overlay District (HCOD) for development standards.

Landscape

- 1) *Finding – Foundation Buffer.* Per Section 5.15.8.D.(2) of the BZDSO, a landscaped buffer of at least eight (8) feet wide shall be maintained between any structure and any parking or driving areas, except for loading areas and areas where drive-through facilities are utilized. This space is to be reserved for plant material, either existing or planted. No such space is required at the rear of the building but is encouraged. Sidewalks and handicap ramps may be placed adjacent to the buffer on either side. The buffer may be penetrated to provide access to the buildings and is not required in loading areas. As proposed, the east side of the Refuel building does not meet this minimum requirement. The Landscape Plan must be updated to include additional plantings to create an eight (8) foundation buffer along the east side.
- 2) *Finding – Landscaped Peninsula.* Per Section 5.15.8.D.(5) of the BZDSO Each Landscaped Peninsula shall contain one (1) broad-leaf overstory tree with a minimum size of two and one half (2 ½”) caliper inches dbh and a minimum height of ten (10’) feet. The Washington Hawthorns used as Landscaped Peninsula trees are proposed at 1 ½” caliper dbh and must be increased.

Architecture

- 1) *Finding –Appropriate Exterior Materials.* Per Section 5.15.9.(C)(3) of the BZDSO, accessory structures should be architecturally compatible with primary structures. No elevations or details have been provided for the proposed screening for the propane enclosure and ice/outdoor coolers. Additional information on the proposed screening must be provided for review. It should be noted that exposed metal caging is not appropriate as this elevation faces towards Highway 46.

- 2) *Finding – Appropriate Exterior Materials.* Per Section 5.15.9.(D)(2) pitched roofs are defined as 4 and 12 pitch or greater. The carwash proposes the use of a 2 and 12 pitched roof. The roof pitch must be increased to meet this requirement. Further, a determination on the appropriateness of the curved gas canopies must be made, as they are not a typical roof type to the Lowcountry.
- 3) *Finding. Other Requirements.* Per Section 5.15.12(A) of the BZDSO, heating, ventilating, and air conditioning equipment, duct work, air compressors, and other fixed operating machinery shall be either screened from view or located so that such items are not visible from the highway. Additional information must be provided regarding the location of proposed service yards and utilities. Should they be located on the roof, a roof plan must be provided as not enough information has been provided to ensure they will be screened from view.

B. PUD MASTER PLAN

The New Riverside Village Master Plan document refers to the New Riverside PUD for design standards.

- 1) *Finding. New Riverside Village Master Plan.* As there are no design guidelines established in the New Riverside Village Master Plan for the site, no additional design review was performed.

C. DECLARATION OF COVENANTS, CONDITIONS, AND RESTRICTIONS

The Declaration of Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions for the New Riverside Village Master Plan.

- 1) *Finding. Declaration of Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions for New Riverside Village.* The applicant must provide a letter of approval from the Declarant for the covenants and restriction which are recorded with the New Riverside Village Master Plan.
3. Section 3.17.3.C. The application must comply with applicable requirements in the Application Manual.
 - a. *Finding.* The application has been reviewed by Town Staff and has been determined to be complete and that it meets all requirements of the Applications Manual. It should be noted that any proposed signage is reviewed through a Sign Permit process separate from this review. Any proposed signage will need to submit Sign Permits for review and approval prior to installation.

TOWN STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Town Staff finds that with the conditions noted below, the requirements of Section 3.17.3 of the Unified Development Ordinance will be met and recommends that the Planning Commission approve the application with the following conditions:

1. Landscape.

- a. Per Section 5.15.8.D.(2) of the BZDSO, the Landscape Plan must be updated to include additional plantings to create an eight (8) foundation buffer along the east side.
 - b. Per Section 5.15.8.D.(5) of the BZDSO, the 1 ½" caliper dbh Washington Hawthorns used as Landscaped Peninsula trees must be increased to a minimum of 2" calipers.
2. Architecture
 - a. Per Section 5.15.9.(C)(3), elevations showing the proposed propane enclosure and ice/outdoor coolers must be provided to ensure the design meets the requirements of the design standards.
 - b. Per Section 5.15.9.(D)(2), the 2 and 12 pitched roof must be revised to a minimum of 4 and 12.
 - c. Per Section 5.15.9.(D)(2), a determination on the appropriateness of the curved gas canopies must be made, as they are not a typical roof type to the Lowcountry.
 - d. Per Section 5.15.12(A), additional information must be provided regarding the location of proposed service yards and utilities, and if proposed on the roof, a roof plan provided as not enough information has been provided to ensure they will be screened from view.
3. Additional Requirements
 - a. A letter of approval from the Declarant for the covenants and restriction which are recorded with the New Riverside Village Master Plan.
 - b. All comments must be addressed, and a Final Development Plan must be approved prior to issuance of the Certificate of Appropriateness – HCO.
 - c. Signage Permits must be submitted to the Town of Bluffton for review and approval for the signage proposed at each site in the proposed development.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Application and Narrative
2. Site Plan, Elevations and Materials
3. Landscape Plans
4. Lighting Plan and Details
5. DRC Comments, May 10, 2023